

The Suzuki Method
Influences of Shinichi Suzuki on Japanese Music Education

Moriah Richards

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2017

Acceptance of Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

Paul Rumrill, D.M.A.
Thesis Chair

Katherine Morehouse, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Jeffrey Ritchey, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Brenda Ayres, Ph.D.
Honors Director

Date

Abstract

This thesis will study the history of Japanese music education philosophies and pedagogy techniques. Specific focus has been given to the music education methods and philosophies of renowned Japanese music educator, Shinichi Suzuki. Suzuki's views on the learning processes of children have greatly impacted the field of music education. Suzuki held the belief that the language acquisition process and the learning processes of children were intricately connected. He spent years applying his research to the field of music education. His resulting pedagogy techniques are now known as the Suzuki Method. The Suzuki Method, which has been adapted in various ways for different instruments and teaching styles, is still influencing music education in the United States and around the world.

The Suzuki Method: Influences of Shinichi Suzuki on Japanese Music Education

Introduction

It is often said that music is a universal language.¹ The implication of this statement is that music is a language spoken by every person in the world, and thus understandable across cultural and socio-political boundaries. However, music is much more than a universal language. Music is an intricate language that has many different dialects and expressions. Each culture's musical expression varies. As Matsunobu points out, music holds culture-specific meanings.² He goes on to explain that many ethnomusicologists and musicologists today agree that music is culturally universal but not a universal language, or universally understood.³

Music is a language system in and of itself. However, the expression of music is culturally defined. For example, musical expressions in Africa are very different from music in Asia. Asian music primarily functions within the pentatonic scale, while music and rhythm in Africa are primarily based on poly-rhythms.⁴ Expressions of music vary based on the specific culture and region of the world. Because of this, every culture approaches music education in its own unique way. Some cultures believe that every child has musical potential and thus opt for classroom music education. Others believe that not everyone can be a musician because musicians are a special "caste" of people

1. Koji Matsunobu, "Spirituality as a Universal Experience of Music: A Case Study of North Americans' Approaches to Japanese Music," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 59, no. 3 (August 2011): 273.

2. Matsunobu, "Spirituality as a Universal Experience of Music: A Case Study of North Americans' Approaches to Japanese Music," 274.

3. *Ibid.*, 274.

4. David Locke, "Review: African Polyphony and Polyrythm: Musical Structure and Methodology," *Music Library Association* 49, no. 2 (1992): 501.

who inherit the role. Nevertheless, the intricacies of music and its acquisition are continually the focus of study for many scientists as well as music educators.

The acquisition of the language of music is also highly impacted by the childhood language acquisition and learning process. Research has proven that children retain and learn much faster than adults.⁵ While it is presumptuous to assume that a child's linguistic performance is directly related to their competence, research suggest that a child's competence can be somewhat inferred from observable behavior.⁶ Greater insight into this correlation will be provided in the discussion to follow.

Music Education Around the World

In the United States, children begin learning music at an early age. However, each country and culture around the world chooses to educate children about music in a variety of ways. For kids growing up in a European or East Asian culture, they might learn a song to sing as they are out in the fields working the crop. Or, those who grew up in the African culture might have an innate sense of rhythm because they were taught to do work activities to a certain rhythm. Thus, music becomes an integral part of the education process for children.

This is true of almost every culture around the world. In Japan, specifically, music education is an important aspect of a child's educational process and development. In my experiences in Japan this past summer, it seemed to me as if music education is valued

5. Robert Dekeyser, Iris Alfi-Shabtay, and Dorit Ravid, "Cross-Linguistic Evidence for the Nature of Age Effects in Second Language Acquisition," *Applied Psycholinguistics* 31, no. 3 (2010): 413.

6. Ben Ambridge and Caroline F. Rowland, "Experimental Methods in Studying Child Language Acquisition," *Advanced Review* 4, no. 2 (2013): 149.

very highly in Japan. Because of this, students typically begin their music education very early in life because being a good musician is highly esteemed in Japan.

Objectives of Music Education

Every culture has its own way that it educates the next generation regarding the music of their culture. Each culture values music education in a different way. Some cultures value informal music educational practices while others value formal music educational practices taught by trained music educators. Many musicians have natural talent, while others gain talent through many years of study. But, it takes a musician who is also a gifted teacher to be able to teach the next generation about music.

Good music education requires the instruction of a gifted music educator. Being a music teacher and being a music educator are two different things. The first might have more one-on-one experience teaching a specific instrument or style of music, while the latter is typically thought of as teaching general music education in the classroom. These two different roles require the diligent, distinguishing effort of a musician who has a desire to teach the next generation about music. A music teacher is one who simply teaches a student how to play an instrument while reading the notes on a page. A music educator is one who has a desire to develop a well-rounded musician by providing a comprehensive music education to his/her students and investing in their musical career. These two roles are seemingly synonymous but are, however, very different in approach.

Culture in Japan

To understand music education in Japan, one must first start to understand the culture of Japan. Japan's culture is affected by its geography, as it is a chain of islands "stretching from cold and bleak Hokkaido in the north to the warm and lush Ryukyu

islands trailing southwest from Kyushu, Japan's southernmost major island."⁷ Although Japan was influenced by Chinese civilization, it remained relatively isolated until the nineteenth century, which allowed it to develop a distinct culture.⁸ While Japan has developed an amazingly homogenous culture (though ethnic diversity certainly does exist - particularly in rural areas), the country's historical isolation from outside political and cultural influences until the mid-nineteenth century supports this mindset of the Japanese as a strongly nationalistic and unified entity.⁹

Just as Japan itself is a compact country, with many people on a string of islands, "its traditional arts are few and well defined."¹⁰ Some of the traditional music in Japan is the court music and court dance, *gagaku* and *bugaku*, which are among the oldest continuously living musical genres on the earth.¹¹ A few of the traditional instruments that are essential in Japanese music are: the *koto* (zither), *shakuhachi* (flute), and *shamisen* (plucked lute).¹² Japanese music is characterized more by fixedness and great refinement of detail, which is found to be true of the education system in Japan as well as the culture as a whole.¹³ However, as many western ideas and music have filtered into the country, the popularity of traditional Japanese music has diminished over the years, and

7. Terry E. Miller and Andrew Shahriari, *World Music: A Global Journey (Concise Edition)* (NY: Routledge, 2015), 123.

8. Miller and Shahriari, *World Music: A Global Journey (Concise Edition)*, 123.

9. *Ibid.*, 123.

10. *Ibid.*, 142.

11. *Ibid.*, 142.

12. *Ibid.*, 142.

13. *Ibid.*, 143.

is now typically only heard in traditional settings like a temple or shrine, or a religiously-related service of some kind.

In Japanese culture, it is interesting to discover that much of what is considered Japanese culture today has been somewhat borrowed throughout the years from other cultures. While Japanese culture is distinctively its own, the culture has become more westernized over the years. Today, the culture is very western-oriented and is very open to western ideas and principles, while retaining its own ideas and beliefs. This is evidenced in many ways, but one way in which is that almost all Japanese people speak at least a little bit of the English language. The Japanese people seek to know more than just their own culture and language, and are fascinated by other cultures. Japan's music education system also exemplifies the westernization of Japan as a nation. But, in order to understand Japanese music, one must first study the history of music in Japan.

History of Music in Japan

The Garland Encyclopedia divides the history of music in Japan into four different time periods: the Imperial period (550-1192), the Medieval period (1192-1573), the Pre-Modern period (1573-1867), and the Modern period (1868-present).¹⁴ The Imperial period in Japan's music history was one in which there were multiple musical instruments that were used to accompany songs and dances in religious contexts as well as daily life.¹⁵ The main genres of this period were *gagaku* (court music), *shomyo* (Buddhist chant), and *kagura* (Shinto music),¹⁶ as briefly mentioned earlier. The

14. Dale A. Olsen and Daniel E. Sheehy, eds, "Section 7 East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea," *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 2 - South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*, 535-536.

15. Olsen and Sheehy, "Section 7 East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea," 534.

16. *Ibid.*, 536.

Medieval period saw some of the genres from the Imperial period being used in the court as well as in religious institutions.¹⁷ One of the main genres of this period was *heikyoku* (narrative music accompanied by a lute).¹⁸ During the Pre-Modern period, the genres that are now most popular were born. Some of these genres are: *kabuki*, *bunraku* (puppet theatre), and *syamisen* (chamber music for the lute).¹⁹

Typically, these relaxing forms of music can be heard in places like shrines and temples, or in a fancy traditional restaurant. It was also during this time that Western music, as well as Chinese music, was introduced to the music culture already established in Japan.²⁰ The Modern period of music in Japan is seemingly characterized as being predominantly Western. As discussed, Japanese culture has changed and become more Westernized in and of itself, and so has the culture of Japanese music gradually changed and taken a different form by becoming more Western. As Japanese people were exposed to western music, they adopted and integrated a lot of the same styles of music for their own culture.

Introduction of Formal Music Education in Japan

The introduction of music education in Japan was initiated in order to continue to help Westernize the Japanese nation.²¹ The Music Study Committee was founded in

17. Ibid., 536.

18. Ibid., 536.

19. Ibid., 536.

20. Ibid., 536.

21. Tadahiko Imada, "Post-Modernity and Japan's Music Education: An External Perspective," *Research Studies in Music Education* 15, no. 1 (2000): 19.

Japan in October 1879 under the direction of Shuji Izawa.²² Izawa was a Japanese music educator who “studied at Bridgewater Normal School in Massachusetts under the direction of American music educator Luther Whiting Mason.”²³ Together, Izawa and Mason produced the first Japanese music textbook series based on a German folk-song style.²⁴ However, before that time, “music education was not part of public education in Japan, and there was no systematic study of Western music.”²⁵ The attempt by Izawa and Mason was the first attempt to study Western music and to education the Japanese public in music studies.²⁶

Things changed dramatically, however, after the Second World War as the Japanese Ministry of Education produced an official guideline for public music education in Japan, called the “Course of Study” (COS), which is still in effect today.²⁷ The COS has two characteristics which are: 1) the use of Western music notation as it was developed by the end of the nineteenth century, and 2) an emphasis on Western aesthetics as advocated in the nineteenth century, with an emphasis on expression and appreciation.²⁸ The characteristics of the COS are important as they are a reflection of Japanese culture as a whole.

22. Imada, “Post-Modernity and Japan’s Music Education: An External Perspective,” 20.

23. Ibid., 20.

24. Ibid., 20.

25. Masafumi Ogawa, “Music Teacher Education in Japan: Structure, Problems, and Perspectives,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 12, no. 2 (2004): 113.

26. Ogawa, “Music Teacher Education in Japan: Structure, Problems, and Perspectives,” 113.

27. Imada, “Post-Modernity and Japan’s Music Education: An External Perspective,” 20.

28. Ibid., 20.

Music education is valued in this way as well, especially regarding childhood education. Music is viewed as increasing the intelligence of a child, and enhancing his/her ability to function well within the culture.²⁹ Thus, just like in the United States, a child who has access to music education is considered well-rounded, well-educated, and possibly even well-off to afford to attend a school with a good music education program.

As a culture, the Japanese people are very hardworking and devoted people. Even as students, children are taught that school and growing in knowledge should be their top priority. Thus, when it comes to studying and learning new things, students are expected to give their all and put forth their best effort – even studying for several hours a day to do well in their classes and schoolwork. These attitudes and values translate over to the education system in Japan, and to their music education system as well. In the world today, Japan is “the leading producer of classical musicians,”³⁰ probably primarily because Japanese people always put forth their best effort, striving to do the best they can for the benefit of their culture and community. In Japan’s honor/shame culture, students are expected to do well in school to please their family members, and to be beneficial to the community as a whole. Especially in regard to school, students are taught to be hard workers and soak in knowledge while they are in school, because it will help them to succeed later in life.

Bi-Musicality in Japanese Music Education

In between the 1870s and 1920s, Japan’s musical culture underwent a radical shift from traditional indigenous music to Western music, which was a direct result of the

29. Garth Boomer, “A Journal Extract: On 'Learning',” *English in Australia* 48, no. 3 (2013): 8.

30. Gloria J. Kiester, “A Look at Japanese Music Education,” *Music Educators Journal*, 79, no. 6 (1993): 48.

threat of colonization.³¹ A part of this radical shift was also seen in Japanese music education as many aspects of Western music “came to coexist with and often to displace indigenous Japanese music.”³²

Masafumi Ogawa explains this phenomenon by saying that “there exists a large gap between the music being taught in schools and that being experienced by Japanese society in general.”³³ Ogawa goes on to explain that Japan is a nation in which its music education is not based on its own indigenous music.³⁴ This is an interesting fact as most music education systems are based on the traditional music of the culture. However, this is one reason why Japan’s music education system is so unique and has influenced many other music education systems throughout the Western world.

Because of this gap between music education in schools and traditional Japanese music Zoltan Kodály, a Hungarian music educator, began the method of using traditional folk songs in formal music education.³⁵ His work was influential specifically in Europe, but it also made an impact in Japan as Japanese music educators sought to bridge this divide in music education in their country.

This puzzle began to create an issue in the younger Japanese generation as many music students began to become bi-musical: able to function in both Western musical culture as well as Japanese musical culture. This unique conundrum has provided for a

31. Alison Tokita, “Bi-Musicality in Modern Japanese Culture,” *The International Journal of Bilingualism* 18, no. 2 (2014): 159.

32. Tokita, “Bi-Musicality in Modern Japanese Culture,” 159.

33. Ogawa, “Music Teacher Education in Japan: Structure, Problems, and Perspectives,” 25.

34. *Ibid.*, 25.

35. Cary D. Gokturk, “Kodaly and Orff: A Comparison of Two Approaches in Early Music Education,” *Zonguldak Karaelmas University Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no. 15 (2012): 179-194.

somewhat confusing music education for many young Japanese people. However, the philosophies and methods of preceding music educators laid a strong foundation for the music education principles and practices implemented throughout the world today.

Methods and Styles of Teaching Found in Music Education in Japan

As Kiester writes about, the demanding Japanese school system requires eleven years of music and art education in a rigorous, sequential program.³⁶ This exemplifies the fact that Japanese value aesthetic development as basic to life and music as basic to education.³⁷ As previously discussed, music education is highly valued in Japanese culture because it is considered necessary to the education and development of a student as a productive member of society. In these eleven years of music instruction, students are typically instructed on western music traditions and musical qualities, including learning solfegge syllables and their corresponding tones, learning to play piano, and singing in 4-part harmony.³⁸

In elementary, middle, and high school, students have music instruction that ranges from listening to music, creating melodies themselves, taking music appreciation courses, as well as participating in ensembles and choruses.³⁹ These courses and activities have been designed and created to teach Japanese students about the arts and engage them in learning about music across the world.

36. Kiester, "A Look at Japanese Music Education," 44.

37. Ibid., 43.

38. Ibid., 44.

39. Naohiro Fukui, "Music Education in Japan," *Music Educators Journal* 49, no. 5 (1963): 103.

The Suzuki Method

Definition of the Suzuki Method

One of the most popular music education methods in Japanese cultures is the use of what is now known as the “Suzuki Method”. Shinichi Suzuki’s philosophy of music education highly influenced music education within Japanese culture.⁴⁰ Suzuki grew up in Japan and began developing an interest in music at an early age. He began playing around with the violins at his father’s violin shop, and began trying to play music by ear.⁴¹ His first introduction to music and violin pedagogy was so impactful that he went on to spend the rest of his life studying methods for music education. For many years, Suzuki studied many different music education practices and ended up developing his own method which is now famously known as the “Suzuki Method.”

The pedagogical principles utilized in the Suzuki Method are primarily repetition-based while introducing the idea of music education as “love education.”⁴² This philosophy incorporates the family aspect of music education, as well as introducing the idea of repetition to music education methods. While many have seen the Suzuki Method as “robotic” and “un-emotional,”⁴³ this music education method has produced some of the greatest musicians in the world.

The Suzuki Method is used all throughout the world, but most commonly used in violin instruction. Suzuki primarily based his music education principles on violin

40. Karen Hendricks, “The Philosophy of Shinichi Suzuki: ‘Music Education as Love Education,’” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 19, no. 2 (2011): 136-154.

41. Shinichi Suzuki et al., *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education* (Berkeley, CA: Diablo Press, Inc., 1973), 2.

42. Hendricks, “The Philosophy of Shinichi Suzuki: ‘Music Education as Love Education,’” 138.

43. *Ibid.*, 140.

pedagogy as it was his primary point of reference as a violinist himself. However, his fundamental philosophies stretched beyond violin pedagogy into the fields childhood education and music education. His music education philosophies can be applied to almost any situation involving musical instruction including classroom music education. His teaching philosophies have influenced both private studio teachers and classroom music educators.

Philosophies of the Suzuki Method

Estelle Jorgensen points out that of all the philosophies and methods of music education in the world, each has its own limitations and strengths.⁴⁴ She goes on to say that music educators need to stick together and be willing to learn from one another.⁴⁵ Shinichi Suzuki spent time learning from others, which then informed his own philosophies of education. One of the main philosophies that Suzuki held is that all children can learn if they are taught in the right way.⁴⁶ He also believed that ability is not innate but can be learned.⁴⁷ Suzuki's philosophy that talent is no accident of birth⁴⁸ was a huge shift from other music education philosophies of the time. At the time, many people held the philosophy that some children were born with innate musical abilities, while others simply did not have the musical "gift." Suzuki's philosophy was influential in helping to shift the mindset, particularly of parents, in the music education of children.

44. Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Reflections on Futures for Music Education Philosophy," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 14, no. 1 (2006): 20.

45. Jorgensen, "Reflections on Futures for Music Education Philosophy," 20.

46. Shinichi Suzuki et al., *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*, 12.

47. Boomer, "A Journal Extract: On 'Learning,'" 8.

48. Shinichi Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love* (New York: Exposition Press, 1969), 7.

Another main philosophy that Suzuki held was that hearing and playing good music helped children develop into good people, and outstanding members of society, who had a sensitivity toward others. He believed that, by having good hearts, young musicians could catch the feeling of composers without using words. His method is much more than just a by-rote teaching principle. Suzuki believed that by playing pieces over and over, children could begin to “feel” the intended meaning of the composer and begin to develop a level of expression and musicality that cannot be taught. This was part of Suzuki exposing his students to the culture of music and allowing them to experience the music, not just play the notes.

Approaches and Procedures of the Suzuki Method

Suzuki believed that children should begin learning music from an early age.⁴⁹ As evidenced in many Suzuki method books, Suzuki believed that teaching music to a child is not an impossible task. In the Western world, it is usually assumed that a child can begin taking music lessons once they are at least 6 or 7. The main rationale for this is that students cannot sit still or retain what they are learning until the child is a little bit old. Suzuki, however, believed that a child can learn and retain from birth. That’s why his method focuses on music education methods from even before the child is born. As Kendall points out, the age of a pre-school child is “fertile ground for the use of Suzuki’s ideas.”⁵⁰ Suzuki taught his students by embracing their youth and encouraging them to explore their instrument and explore music, primarily by using their ear instead of

49. Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 11.

50. John Kendall, “The Suzuki Violin Method in American Music Education,” *Alfred Music* (1973), 21.

reading notes and music off a page. He wanted to expose his students to the culture of music before letting them get caught up in just reading music and not experiencing it.

Another way Suzuki's methods differ from that of the Western world is that memorization is emphasized. Most Western music educators do not emphasize memorization, especially for a young child. In the Western world, the practice of memorization is seemingly viewed as something that comes the more a child practices a piece. While it is sometimes stressed in relation to a performance context, it is not typically stressed within the context of a lesson. This is the exact opposite of Suzuki's view on memorization, as he believed that a student internalizes the music on a deeper level if they memorize the music.

Suzuki also stressed the importance of performance and group interaction amongst his students. He would often have students sit in on the lesson of a peer, so that they could learn in the context of a group setting.⁵¹ This correlates to Suzuki's belief that a child should begin performing in public from a very young age. He believed that the more a child performed in public, the less nervous and anxious they would be in performances later on in life. This is one of the main teaching methods attributed to Suzuki that has proven to produce many successful and remarkable musicians over the years.

Pedagogical Techniques of the Suzuki Method

Suzuki came up with the term "tonalization" to describe his method of teaching students how to recognize and produce a beautiful tone on their instrument. He believed it was important for students to first know how to be able to produce a beautiful tone

51. Suzuki et al., *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*, 64.

before beginning to play a piece. This technique of tonalization stems from Suzuki's philosophy that music holds aesthetic qualities. If a student understands and respects the aesthetic quality of the music they are attempting to play, Suzuki believed that they are more likely to be able to reproduce an aesthetically pleasing tone and quality of sound, which is beautiful to the ears of the listener.

As he continued to explore music education methods, Suzuki employed the use of sound recordings. He used sound recordings to help students learn music, rhythm, and tone by ear. As was common for Suzuki, he focused on his students learning primarily by ear first before reading music. The reason for this is understandable, as only so much can be inferred from notes written on a page versus a recording which will sound the same every time it is played. This allows for more consistent practice for the student, as they listen to the same recording over and over again.

Another pedagogical technique that originated with Suzuki was the use of adapted instruments. Since many of Suzuki's students were very young beginners, their tiny hands and fingers could not handle a full-sized violin or cello. Thus, Suzuki began using instruments that were adapted for smaller children. This provided the same feel of an authentic instrument at a size that could be handled by a small child. This simply provided physical comfort, amongst other things, for young students who would often practice for hours on end. They were able to apply the techniques they were being taught but on a much smaller instrument that they could handle. This technique could obviously only be applied to some instruments like the violin and cello where the students were having to hold and play instruments. This technique was not applied to instruments like

the piano as it was not difficult, other than issues with reaching the pedals, for young students to play the piano.⁵²

Cultural Implications of the Suzuki Method

Suzuki's repetitive educational method also has high levels of parental involvement.⁵³ This is partially what has made the educational method so popular in Japanese culture. This Asian culture is a very family-oriented culture, with parents having a deep influence on their children and being highly involved in the education of their children. By being involved in the education of their child, parents are further enforcing deep cultural values and beliefs in the lives of their child. Shaping and influencing the beliefs and values of their child is considered an essential role of Japanese parents.⁵⁴

The Suzuki Method has high involvement specifically of the child's mother.⁵⁵ Suzuki's philosophy was that if a mother could play it, so could the child; the mother could model how to play for her child. This method was unique as Suzuki believe the mother needed to be just as much of a musician, if not more, as she wanted her child to be. Because of this, Suzuki created many materials for mothers to use with their children from a young age.⁵⁶

Japanese culture, much like many other Asian cultures, places a high value on education and the proper training of the younger generation. This includes the high value

52. Ibid., 23.

53. Ibid., 20.

54. Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 27.

55. Suzuki et al., *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*, 17.

56. Ibid., 20.

placed on music education and the arts, as parents encourage their children to be excellent in many different disciplines. Parents and teachers take this training so seriously that they will often physically discipline students to make them do something complete a task correctly, and with no errors. This includes the occasional discipline/correction technique of slapping a child's hands if they play a note wrong, along with other types of discipline. Some might even go as far to call this abuse. Whatever the case, these underlying cultural values reflect much of the cultures surrounding Japanese culture as well.

These correctional techniques seem to derive from the foundational principles and philosophy of the Suzuki Method. The Suzuki Method essentially ensures that, in order for a student to play something correctly, they must do it over and over again until they cannot get it wrong. This teaching and practicing method essentially drills into the student that they must repeat something (whether that be a measure, phrase, or entire piece) over and over until they have built up the muscle memory to do it correctly time and again.

Many Asian cultures, including Japan, seemingly stress perfection amongst young students. Most Westerners would evaluate this to be a core value of any Asian culture. However, many Asians would say that to be Asian is to strive for perfection and to be diligent in a task.⁵⁷ This correlation should be considered especially when studying the values of a culture. While the purpose of Suzuki's Method was not to shame students into performing correctly, shame does play a role in the overarching honor/shame framework of the Japanese society. However, at a deeper glance, this cultural value of attaining

57. Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 29.

perfection is not something that is necessarily a conscious association for Japanese people. It is simply something deeply ingrained in them since birth and should be something that Westerners should deeply appreciate in Asian culture. There are many cultural values associated with the Suzuki Method, but Suzuki wanted to further understand the effect of the childhood learning process on pedagogical techniques.

Influences of Japanese Music Education in the Learning Process

Repetition: Music and the Brain

In the article “Musicians and the Brain,” Lois Svard discusses how repetition and multi-modal processing enable a musician to retain, on a much deeper level, the music they are learning. Svard explains the multi-modal process of the brain by explaining that, for musicians, this process involves three different areas of learning: visual (seeing the music), auditory (hearing the music), and kinesthetic (feeling the music in the body as well as the muscle memory developed from repetition).⁵⁸ She goes on to discuss the role of the brain in this process. The article explains that, as neural pathways that are established through learning are repeatedly used, it lays down a covering on the axon called myelin.⁵⁹ This covering of myelin is repeatedly laid down every time the same action is repeated, making the neural pathway for that specific action deeper every time it is practiced.

Learning has been defined as “a change that occurs as a result of formal or informal experiences, active knowledge construction, and information processing.”⁶⁰

58. Lois Svard, “The Musicians Guide to the Brain: From Perception to Performance,” *MTNA e-Journal* (2010): 7.

59. *Ibid.*, 4.

60. G. J. Cizek, quoted in Carlos Abril, “Learning Outcomes of Two Approaches to Multicultural Music Education,” *International Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 1 (2016): 30-31.

These connections are fascinating in relation to how musicians learn and retain music, but specifically in the memorization process. The Suzuki Method, while sometimes negatively viewed as a repetition-only method, is very useful in correlating with how the brain functions in the learning process. Denise Epp also discusses how the process of assessment can aid the brain in the development and learning process.⁶¹ Almost unknowingly, the Suzuki Method has been very successful in creating amazing musicians because of the deep correlation that the process of repetition has with learning and retaining music.

Effects of Linguistics on Music Education

Most of Suzuki's teaching philosophy came from his study of how children learn language. Garth Boomer explains that Suzuki believed principles from language learning could be applied to learning music.⁶² Suzuki's view was that if one studied the way a child learned their first language, their mother tongue, principles and methods from that learning process could be applied to the learning of music.⁶³ These references to linguistics go back to the ongoing discussion about whether or not music is a universal language. By his plan of studying the mother-tongue learning process, Suzuki was ultimately suggesting that music is a language that is culturally defined. Just as language and dialect can differ greatly, so can the language of music.

Unlike other Asian cultures, the Japanese language is not a tonal-based language. Because of this, the Japanese language does not have much prior association with musical

61. Denise Epp, "Teaching in Japan: Using Assessment in Elementary School Music Education," *The Canadian Music Educator* 54, no. 2 (2012): 30.

62. Boomer, "A Journal Extract: On 'Learning,'" 9.

63. *Ibid.*, 9.

tones. Other Asian languages are tonal-based and certain tones can mean very different things. This allows for music education practices in Japanese culture to start from the very beginning, without much previous conceptions of musical tones or ideas.

Suzuki's mother-tongue teaching method had been corroborated by research done in the field of linguistics. Suzanne L. Burton suggests in her research findings that there is a connection between the processes of language acquisition and music acquisition.⁶⁴ Burton describes the childhood language acquisition process by pointing out that a young child develops a functional vocabulary base by engaging in early dialogue through imitation and conversation.⁶⁵ Burton further clarifies how this process connects to music acquisition. She explains that, like the process of language acquisition, the foundation for a child to comprehensively read and write music begins with listening to and engaging in musical dialogue through imitation and improvisation.⁶⁶ This connection between the processes of language acquisition and music acquisition has garnered greater interest in recent years, mostly due to Suzuki's pioneering work in the field of music education.

Suzuki's connection between linguistics and music education methods was the first connection of its kind to be made in the study of the learning process. Many of Suzuki's predecessors had studied the learning process, but Suzuki was the first to study the learning process with the intent to extract principles of learning and apply them to the field of music education. His research and findings contributed greatly to the study of the childhood learning process. This breakthrough in the field of music education made the

64. Suzanne L. Burton, Jenny Alvarez, and Audrey Berger Cardany, "Learning from Young Children: Research in Early Childhood Music," *ProQuest Ebrary*, Lanham: R&L Education, 2011, 23.

65. *Ibid.*, 24.

66. *Ibid.*, 26.

Suzuki Method, and its corresponding mother-tongue teaching philosophy, popular not only in Japan but around the world.

Introduction of Suzuki Method to Music Education in the United States

In 1964, Suzuki visited the United States. He continually came to the States for years after, presenting workshops and discussing his philosophy and methodology for music education.⁶⁷ His concepts were adapted for the American music education system and were later introduced into public schools, specifically for String Education.⁶⁸ As the Suzuki Method grew in popularity, many method books were published in the United States for the use of music educators.⁶⁹ His method influenced not only string instruction in the United States, but educational philosophy in general. There were also many other educators who impacted the adaptation of the Suzuki Method in Western music education.

Isawa Shuji was a Japanese music educator who had a profound impact on the integration of Japanese music education into Western music education. Shuji was a Japanese-born musician who was familiar with Western music education before coming to the states to study music. Later on, his work in the field of music education was associated with the combination of Western and Japanese music education methods and

67. Suzuki et al., *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*, Preface.

68. *Ibid.*, Preface.

69. Susan L. Haugland, "Potential: Suzuki's Mother Tongue Method and Its Impact on Strings in Music Education in the United States," *American String Teacher* 59, no. 2 (2009): 29.

philosophies. He influenced music education internationally as he brought Western songs to Japan and brought Japanese songs to the Western world.⁷⁰

Shuji's work was the beginning of the integration of Japanese music education principles into the western world. In the United States today, many private violin teachers use Suzuki method books to teach their students – both young and old. These philosophies of pedagogy have not only influenced Western violin education, but also that of piano and other instruments.

Suzuki's philosophy of parental involvement in their child's music education is one of the reasons many Western private music instructors require their student to keep a practice log of the times they practiced throughout the week and require a parent's signature confirmation. This teaching and practice philosophy holds both the student and parent responsible for the child's learning process. If a parent desires for their child to learn, then they must be responsible to ensure that their child is committed to the advancement of their musical skills.

Conclusion

Shinichi Suzuki's research had far-reaching effects into many fields of study including that of childhood language acquisition and learning processes. Even though Suzuki spent years researching in these fields, and could thus be considered a scholar in his own right, his ultimate desire was to teach in a way that resonated with his students. Suzuki simple goal was to teach music in a way that his students understood for them to thrive and be productive members (and musicians) of society.

70. Sondra Howe, Mei-Ling Lai, and Lin-Yu Liou, "Isawa Shuji, Nineteenth-Century Administrator and Music Educator in Japan and Taiwan," *Australian Journal of Music Education*, no. 2 (2014): 93-105.

Although Suzuki is the originator of many influential music education philosophies and methods, it is important to note that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to approach music education. There are many other scholars that have also greatly impacted the field of music education. While there are many who have spent years researching the childhood learning process and its connection to music education, some music educators prefer to simply teach how they were taught. While philosophies and pedagogical techniques play an important role in the music education process, ultimately music education is about much more than just philosophy or methods. Music education is about instilling into students a love for music and giving them a chance to creatively express themselves as they develop both as musicians and members of society.

Appendix A

Integration of Faith and Learning: A Note to Christian Music Educators

Shinichi Suzuki believed that man's ultimate direction in life is to look for love, truth, virtue, and beauty.⁷¹ This belief was passed on to every student that Suzuki taught throughout his time as both a violin teacher and music educator. This belief, while secular in nature, should be inspiring to the Christian music educator as they endeavor to teach students well.

For the Christian music educator, the purpose of music education should be to instill in the next generation a love of the arts and a love for music as all that God created it to be.⁷² This should be the passion of music educators, especially those who believe in Jesus as the Author of music: to instill a love for music into the hearts of children and through that show the love of Jesus and His desire for us to enjoy the music He created. In an increasingly evil world, Christian music educators should encourage students to look for beauty and virtue in others as well as in the mundane things of life.⁷³ But, even more than recognizing beauty and virtue in the temporal world, Christian music educators should encourage students to believe in Jesus, as the ultimate Source of eternal life and Author of all things beautiful.⁷⁴

God created music for our enjoyment. Christian music educators should take the task of developing this gift in young students very seriously, as it has the potential to influence not only one but many future generations of musicians. With this influence

71. Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 11.

72. James 1:17

73. Philippians 4:8

74. Psalm 36:9

comes a responsibility to model a lifestyle that reflects Jesus, which is of utmost importance for the Christian music educator.

Bibliography

- Abril, Carlos R. "Learning Outcomes of Two Approaches to Multicultural Music Education." *International Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 1 (2016): 30-42.
- Ambridge, Ben and Caroline F. Rowland. "Experimental Methods in Studying Child Language Acquisition." *Advanced Review* 4, no. 2 (2013): 149-168.
- Boomer, Garth. "A Journal Extract: On 'Learning.'" *English in Australia* 48, no. 3 (2013): 8-11.
- Burton, Suzanne L., Jenny Alvarez, and Audrey Berger Cardany. "Learning from Young Children: Research in Early Childhood Music." *ProQuest Ebrary*. Lanham: R&L Education, 2011. 23-38.
- Dekeyser, Robert, Iris Alfi-Shabtay, and Dorit Ravid. "Cross-Linguistic Evidence for the Nature of Age Effects in Second Language Acquisition." *Applied Psycholinguistics* 31, no. 3 (2010): 413-438.
- Epp, Denise. "Teaching in Japan: Using Assessment in Elementary School Music Education." *The Canadian Music Educator* 54, no. 2 (2012): 29-36.
- Fukui, Naohiro. "Music Education in Japan." *Music Educators Journal* 49, no. 5 (1963): 103-104.
- Gokturk, Cary D. "Kodaly and Orff: A Comparison of Two Approaches in Early Music Education." *Zonguldak Karaelmas University Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no. 15 (2012): 179-194.
- Haugland, Susan L. "Potential: Suzuki's Mother Tongue Method and Its Impact on Strings in Music Education in the United States." *American String Teacher* 59, no. 2 (2009): 28-31.
- Hendricks, Karen. "The Philosophy of Shinichi Suzuki: 'Music Education as Love Education'." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 19, no. 2 (2011): 136-154.
- Howe, Sondra, Mei-Ling Lai, and Lin-Yu Liou. "Isawa Shuji, Nineteenth-Century Administrator and Music Educator in Japan and Taiwan." *Australian Journal of Music Education* 2 (2014): 93-105.
- Imada, Tadahiko. "Post-Modernity and Japan's Music Education: An External Perspective." *Research Studies in Music Education* 15, no. 1 (2000): 15-23.
- Jorgensen, Estelle R. "Reflections on Futures for Music Education Philosophy." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 14, no. 1 (2006): 15-22.

- Kendall, John. "The Suzuki Violin Method in American Music Education." *About Suzuki Series*. New York: Alfred Music, 1973.
- Kiester, Gloria J. "A Look at Japanese Music Education." *Music Educators Journal* 79, no. 6 (1993): 42-48.
- Locke, David. "Review: African Polyphony and Polyrhythm: Musical Structure and Methodology." *Music Library Association* 49, no. 2 (1992): 501-507.
- Matsunobu, Koji. "Spirituality as a Universal Experience of Music: A Case Study of North Americans' Approaches to Japanese Music." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 59, no. 3 (2011): 273-289.
- Miller, Terry E., and Andrew Shahriari. *World Music: A Global Journey (Concise Edition)*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Ogawa, Masafumi. "Music Teacher Education in Japan: Structure, Problems, and Perspectives." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 12, no. 2 (2004): 139-153.
- Olsen, Dale A., and Daniel E. Sheehy. "Section 7 East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea." *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 2 – South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*. 1998. 533-798.
- Suzuki, Shinichi. *Nurtured by Love: A New Approach to Education*. Translated by Waltraud Suzuki. New York: Exposition Press, 1969.
- Suzuki, Shinichi, et al. *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*. Edited by Elizabeth Mills & Sr. Therese Cecile Murphy. Berkeley, CA: Diablo Press, Inc., 1973.
- Svard, Lois. "The Musicians Guide to the Brain: From Perception to Performance." *MTNA e-Journal*, 2010: 2-11.
- Tokita, Alison. "Bi-Musicality in Modern Japanese Culture." *The International Journal of Bilingualism* 18, no. 2 (2014): 159-174.