

Suzuki Method is Ear Development. June 1, 2009 Armena Marderosian

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Thinking about Suzuki method! Suzuki Method is ear development. The way to let the ear get good at hearing + deciphering sounds in the air, + good at feeding the information to the hands at the instrument, is to JUST listen.

When a student, parent, or teacher trainee comes to me already able to read music, I still let them learn to listen + play by ear the Suzuki pieces, to close the book to open the ears. At lesson, listen to live playing + CD playing; at home listen to live + CD playing.

Learning by listening to the sounds in the air is a different ability from learning by looking at the written notes. Hearing vs. seeing are two different learning processes. We want both abilities, + nurture each ability separately as needed. Eventually these abilities merge. If students who can already read music learn the Suzuki pieces by reading them, these students are robbed of developing the wonderful + freeing ability to learn music just by hearing it, + the resultant ease of playing "by heart", from memory.

We best use the Suzuki pieces + recordings for learning to listen to + feel the music. Our Suzuki pieces are chosen for "hear it-play it" ease (not "see it-play it" ease of reading methods' pieces). For learning to read music notation, use other music as "reading pieces" to learn these pieces only by reading them. Save the Suzuki repertoire for our important on-going process of being able to hear then play the music, already memorized. Suzuki kids' hearing gets more + more advanced as they listen to more complicated music. Keep the ear ever-opening. Ears open, eyes closed; close the eye channel to focus the ear channel.

After the notes of the Suzuki piece are learned this way, then open the book + see what the piece looks like written. Use the written notes of the Suzuki pieces for learning to read the pieces we already can sing + play, to learn to read music just like we learn to read our language. We say our own name, learned before we could read, then we see how to spell it. Likewise, copy the written notation of our Suzuki pieces, cut them up into measures, or phrases, or even notes, then use them as flashcards to learn to read music, noticing patterns, intervals, chords, melodic lines, everything, anything, while we hear it in our minds because we already know the music in our heads + hands!

In the first Suzuki books, keep focus on playing by ear with the Suzuki pieces.

If a child can read music, to save the Suzuki pieces for ear-learning, let the music for reading be different from the Suzuki pieces. Use OTHER pieces for music reading ability development. All kinds of other pieces. If we save Suzuki pieces for high level ear development, we get great ears! + memories! We can get great reading eyes too, from reading the pieces we already know how to play from having learned them with ears, the same way we learn how to read "dog" + "cat" after we know how to say them. AND we get music-reading eyes from reading music pieces we have not heard + therefore HAVE to decipher the written symbols, the written notation.

Every person can develop this "by ear" ability, as human children naturally do when they learn to talk. Learning by ear comes from listening repeatedly (without written symbols). Once the ear is able, we show the written symbols of what they can already play + this helps them learn to read even better, with the sounds in their ears. (as opposed to readers who see the written symbol as a letter name, or place on the instrument, but without a sound in the mind, without relation to sound, thus more a typewriting, not a listening experience, which may negatively affect the quality of sounds they produce, since listening is not the primary experience for them).

Listen daily all day to your new study piece, programmed to repeat enough for your learning to be accurate in notes, rhythm + form. The spirit, the character of the music will come thru. The tone quality will permeate your mind as the emotional conveyance. Listen everyday also to the whole book, to earlier + more advanced books too. See my article "Suzuki Kids Listen Ahead + Listen Back" in www.suniproject.org in the Sing For Your Baby Music Education section

Sound quality, tone quality are first for us, as the expression of human feeling. Co-founder of Suzuki Piano Method Mrs. Haruko Kataoka would say, "Practice this SOUND".

see my article "Playing Along: Living Tone" in www.suniproject.org in the Sing For Your Baby Music Education section