

“EVERY CHILD CAN BE EDUCATED”

— Let Us Adopt Methods for Developing the
Abilities of Every Child —

Shinichi Suzuki

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It is a great privilege for me to be invited to speak to you, who have the noble mission of imparting musical education to the children and youth of the United States. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity, and I have brought with me today a group of young Japanese children.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to speak to you and to tell you about some of the ideals at which I am aiming in my work.

Ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely urge you to take steps towards a revolution in musical education for the sake of the happiness of each and every child in the United States. I wish to encourage you all to explore and develop the means by which all children can be educated to make full use of their abilities.

Not only in music, but in many other fields as well, children are often educated in a way which stunts and damages their abilities. It is my belief that attention should be given to a child's education from the day of his birth. Educators are often presented with pupils whose correct education has been neglected, whose abilities have been impaired, and who have been turned into pitifully stunted, thwarted children. When confronted with such pupils, educators in the past were often inclined to think that such children were born with innately inferior abilities. Today, the time has come when we must reject this attitude as an erroneous one. Every child, except a baby one day old, is what he is because of what he has been taught. The abilities displayed by any child are the results

of the training which he has been given in the past.

In considering the inborn nature of human beings, we ought, I think, to give deep thought to the nature of a baby on the day of its birth.

One day about thirty years ago, I made a discovery which overwhelmed me with astonishment. I discovered at that time that all children throughout the world are educated to speak their native languages with the utmost fluency. This education in their native languages enables them to develop their linguistic abilities successfully to an extremely high level. This discovery made me realize that any child will be able to display highly superior abilities if only the correct methods are used in training and developing these abilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, is this not an astonishing fact? All children everywhere in the world are educated by a method which has been in continuous practice throughout all human history. A child's abilities develop by being developed.

The method of education which I have been using thus far is nothing but this method of education in the native language applied without any essential modifications to musical education.

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Today, I should like to report to you concerning two principles which I regard as the most important elements in this method of education which I have been using.

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The first principle concerns musical education for developing an ear for music.

In the past, it was generally believed that an ear for music was

something innate. However, this idea is an error. An ear for music is something which has to be acquired by listening, and the sooner this is begun the more effective it will be. However, it is evident that an ear for music is not innate. My thirty years of experience have taught me clearly that this is so. An ear for music is a human aptitude which can only be developed by listening.

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I invite you to try it. Select one piece of great music for a newborn baby. Train the baby by letting him listen every day to a record or a tape recording of this same piece of music.

The baby is made to listen to only one piece repeatedly. If this is done, it will be found that any baby, after five or six months, will have clearly memorized the piece of music. If the child is brought up day after day in this atmosphere of good music, there can be no doubt that the child will eventually grow up into a young person with an excellent ear for music. This experiment has already been carried out successfully by hundreds of families.

By the same token, if a baby is brought up listening day after day to a melody played off-key by a tone-deaf person (it is a necessary condition that the baby should be made to listen to the same piece repeatedly), then any baby brought up under such conditions will grow up tone-deaf. Examples of this may be found everywhere in families where the parents are tone-deaf.

Ladies and gentlemen, the day is already past when musical education regarded an ear for music as something innate and when it was not considered necessary to train it. I invite all of you to prove this

experimentally. In short, this means that there is no such thing as an innate aptitude for music.

Instead of this, I regard the following as the basic principle governing the development of human abilities :

“Abilities are born and developed by the workings of the vital forces of the organism as it strives to live and to adjust to its environment.”

Of course, there are individuals who are born with inherently superior or inferior qualities, and differences in ability no doubt occur because of these innate differences. However, it is my belief that innate superiority or inferiority is basically nothing but a relatively superior or inferior ability to adjust to environmental conditions.

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On the basis of these ideas and of the results of my work for the past thirty years, one of the educational methods which I should like to recommend to you is the following.

Education for the development of an ear for music should form a part of all musical education, whether private teaching or musical instruction in the school. The methodology which I recommend is the following. The piece which is to be learned should always be played beforehand to the pupils every day by means of records or tape recordings in order to develop their ear for music. The pupils should also continue to listen to the records or tapes while they are learning the piece. Of course, in order to carry out this method, it is essential to have records or tape recordings of superior performances of the music. This method is employed, not in order to familiarize the pupils with new pieces, but rather to develop an ear for music in each child. It may safely be

predicted that the ear for music will develop in direct proportion to the number of times the piece is heard by the pupils. This method will be equally effective if the music is played in the room while the pupils are studying another subject, for instance arithmetic. As long as the music is audible, the life forces of the human being will unconsciously absorb it, making it a part of the individual's abilities.

I have followed this method faithfully thus far, and I have been quite amazed at how wonderfully the children's ear for music has developed.

I feel strongly that education aimed at developing the ear for music is undoubtedly the most important element in musical education, and I am sure that someday the day will come when this method will be accepted as a matter of common sense in musical education all over the world. It cannot be otherwise, for the results have been revealed only too obviously.

However, one must not expect far-reaching results after only a short period during which the pupils listen to only small amounts of music. Such expectations would be doomed to disappointment. Musical sense develops gradually and imperceptibly, just as linguistic sense does. The same thing is true of the learning of speech patterns by American children. Children who grow up in Boston will by an imperceptible process become speakers of American English with a distinctive Bostonian melody, while those who grow up in New York will also gradually become speakers of New York English. This is so because of the conditions under which the “ear for language” develops. The same conditions apply also to the development of the ear for music.

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The second principle in musical education is the need for attaining thorough mastery.

This is one of the most important elements in developing performing techniques. It also is a method which comes from the methods of learning the native language.

The principle is this: "From the very beginning, every step must by all means be thoroughly mastered."

This is an important principle in education for the purpose of developing the abilities.

There are some teachers who go on immediately from one piece to the next as soon as the pupil has learned how to play. I am sure that all of you know of many examples of pupils of such teachers who have turned out as failures. This system results in failure because it concentrates merely on increasing the number of pieces learned, rather than on developing ability, which is what is really important. Failures of this type are especially frequent in beginners who have not yet attained the necessary ability.

There is a certain period when the pupil has finally become able to play his first piece. I call this period the time when the pupil is "prepared." I tell the pupil: "Now the lessons will really begin. From now on, your abilities will begin to develop." From this point, I start to train the pupil, and I continue this until he has attained thorough mastery.

For instance, let us suppose that the pupil has become able to play piece A well. At this time, I will add piece B. We will then work on piece B while still continuing to work on piece A. The lessons

will include both piece A and piece B. As soon as the pupil can play piece B quite well, I will add piece C to pieces A and B. When finally piece D has been added to the lessons, the emphasis on piece A will be reduced, and the lessons will consist of pieces B, C, and D. This is the method by which I instruct beginners.

By this means, while new pieces are added, emphasis is laid on increasing the ability to play the pieces already learned, thus increasing little by little the performing skill.

In this way, a regular sequence is followed, and the ability is developed to play all of the pieces which have been learned, pieces A, B, C, and D. As the abilities are developed gradually in this way, the skills accumulated will add up to an ever increasing store of basic ability making possible further great advances in ability.

I feel strongly that every child attains the superior ability to speak American English fluently and skillfully precisely because this method of education is adopted in teaching speech habits. The above method of attaining thorough mastery is the second method which I wish to suggest to you.

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Ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely urge you to conduct a mighty educational movement to develop an ear for music in all American children. Today when we have records and tapes, this method of education may be carried out anywhere. However, the most important thing of all is to conduct a social movement to encourage parents in the home to give their children an ear for music from the time when they are still babies. If only this practice were to become a matter accepted as common sense

in all families in society in general, it would undoubtedly resolve our difficulties in music education in the school. If only this were done, children would come to school with a well developed ear for music, and wonderful results could be attained in music education.

How is it possible for us to give musical education to children who have been made tone-deaf in their homes? Musical aptitude is not inborn.

Let us work together to bring about an age of a new human race.

Ladies and gentlemen, I urge you to explore and develop new paths for the education of children so that all American children will be given the happiness which they deserve.

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When Pablo Casals came to Japan three years ago, he said:

“It may very well be music which will save the world.”

These words of Pablo Casals express perfectly the hopes for the future of mankind which are entertained by all persons engaged in music. And I am profoundly convinced that this is the mission which has been laid upon our shoulders.

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この冊子について

今から60年前、1964年の3月5日、鈴木鎮一先生は、私を含む10人の子どもたちを引率し、3週間にわたる全米演奏旅行に出発されました。第一回目のテンチルドレンツアーです。

このツアーの成功がきっかけとなって、スズキ・メソッドの全世界への発展が始まりました。

Every Child Can Be Educated (“どの子どもも育つ”) という、この冊子は、1964年の米国ツアーのコンサート会場で配布されたものの複製です。

“すべての子どもたちの能力を伸ばす方法をとりいれましょう” という副題のもと、その方法とは「母語教育」を音楽教育に適用したものであることが1～2ページで紹介されます。

続いて、音楽を聴く耳は生まれつきではない。聴くことによって音楽を聴く耳が育つのだと、3～5ページ目で強調されます。

これが、鈴木先生が重要と考える第一の原則です。

そして6～7ページで、二つ目の原則、すなわち徹底的に繰り返し、習得することの重要性が語られます。

最終ページでは、パブロ・カザルスが来日した時の言葉、『音楽は世界を救うでしょう。』を引用しつつ、人類の未来への希望と、鈴木先生の子どもたちの教育への使命感が力強く述べられています。

少し古風な言い回しもありますが、辞書があれば中高生でも読めると思いますので、是非とも、原文にチャレンジしてみてください。

2024年1月

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