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Honorary Degree
at Oberlin!
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"Prospective Suzuki Teachers should
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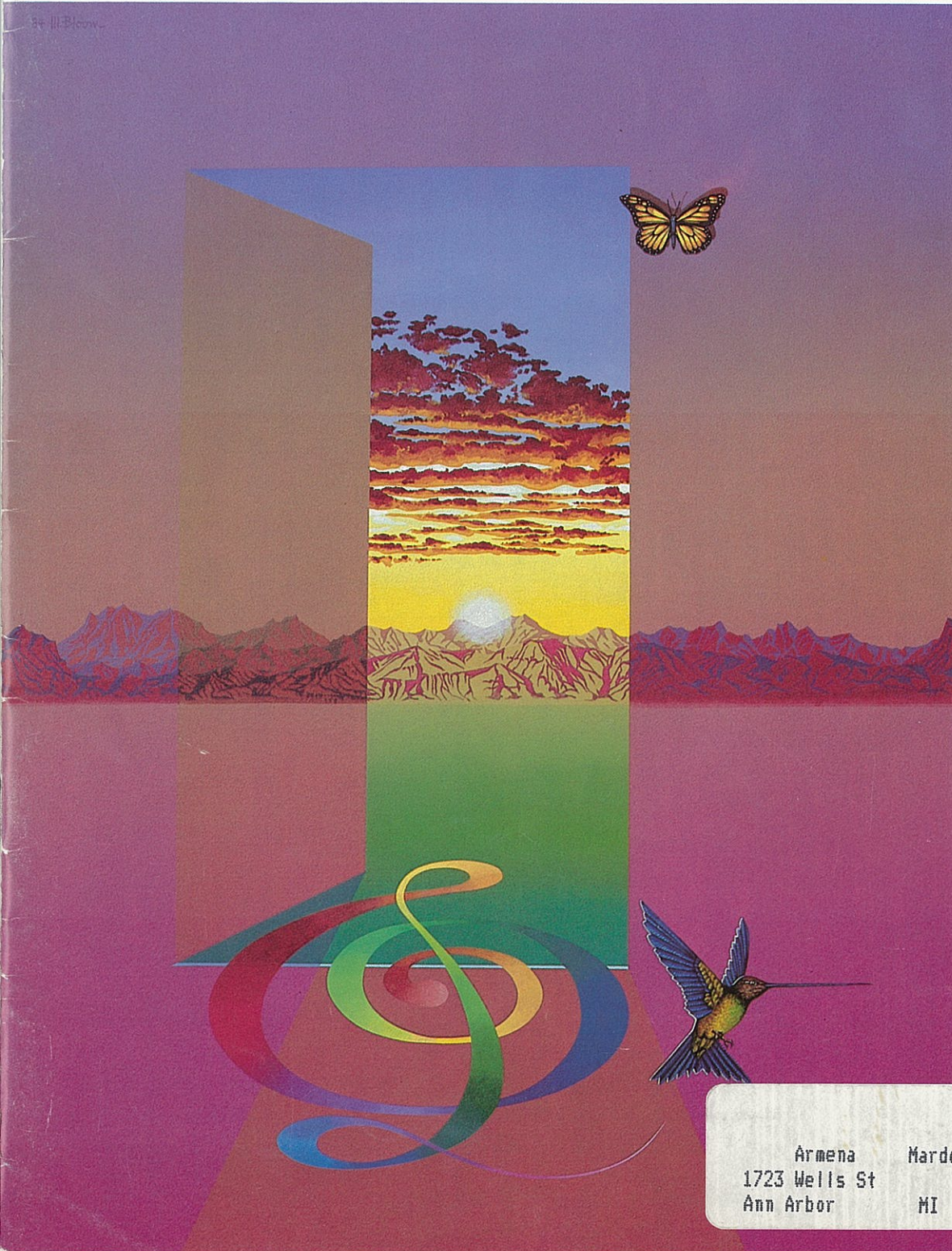
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"Prospective Suzuki Teachers Should Apprentice with Master Teacher!"

Are teacher development opportunities offered at Suzuki institutes adequate preparation for would-be teachers, or is more intensive training with a master teacher required? A Suzuki teacher expresses her opinion . . .

. . . . on Training Suzuki Teachers

To receive adequate training for Suzuki teaching, an adult needs the same one-to-one individual lessons in each piece of the repertoire that children receive, particularly in the "Twinkle" variations and Book 1. With an experienced, established teacher trainer, the adult should start with "Twinkle" and continue to study it with the teacher for as many lessons as it takes him to play it well and also to understand how much more there is to work on in the Suzuki-style lifelong quest for the ultimate in tonal and rhythmic, musical beauty.

Each of the "Twinkle" variations is very difficult despite the ease with which we memorize the simple rhythmic patterns played over the same pitches each time. Irregularities in rhythmic execution and tonal control will show up glaringly in these pieces where the same performance deficiencies might go unnoticed in more complex works. Thus, in the Suzuki method the "Twinkle" variations are not just warm-up pieces to be passed through lightly as may be the beginning pieces in some other methods. On the contrary, taught and studied respectfully and thoroughly, they provide the student with fundamental listening and playing skills.

Each new, beginning Suzuki student should be allowed to continue practicing the first step *only* of the first "Twinkle" variation for as long as he or she needs to. The teacher should provide examples and inspiration for greater achievement, but must ultimately let the student set the pace. Some children spend a year studying only the first variation while others may play many pieces well in the same amount of time. All of them may become equally fine and fast-learning musicians later, regardless of the speed of their initial skill acquisition.

Prospective teachers need the same careful, individualized beginning training as do children. The teacher trainee should play

all the Book 1 pieces *by ear from memory*, learning them by listening, just as the children learn to do! This develops the ear so necessary to Suzuki teachers. The amount of study required to achieve this will vary with the individual.

Most adults would require weeks or months of study to play and understand the "Twinkle" variations and Book 1 adequately. In order to become teachers who guide children in this same body of material, shouldn't these adults be thoroughly prepared? Two weeks of study of Units 1A and 1B at a teacher workshop course are very unlikely to provide adequate training to a prospective Suzuki teacher, even if that person were the only student in the class. Skills of listening and of technique usually require much more time to develop.

In Japan: Intensive Training

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki has created a teacher training system in his Talent Education institute in Matsumoto, Japan. Teacher trainees usually study for many months (often two years or more) before Dr. Suzuki is satisfied that they are ready to nurture children properly. Do American children deserve any less? I feel that we should promote the same kind of teacher training in America that Dr. Suzuki has established in Japan.

After some training, teacher trainees need to do practice teaching under a master teacher's guidance, and need to receive constructive criticism about their teaching.

Unconscious habits and underlying implicit assumptions often do not manifest themselves until a person actually has to teach a child. The master teacher needs to see the trainee in action in order to point out tendencies which are not in harmony with Suzuki teaching, and to reinforce with praise those that are.

Studio Setting is Revealing

In addition to taking lessons, before practice teaching, teacher trainees need to observe the master teacher *in his own studio* dealing with the day-to-day problems of his *own* Suzuki families over time. They need to observe how the teacher creates the right studio environment and lesson content, and how to guide the parents in the establishment of the home environment so essential to success. The trainee should see the teacher guide the parent who is negative and punitive, the child who has become discouraged and lost interest, the child with chronic technical errors, the family that does not provide enough home listening or praise. They should see the slow, careful nurturing of skills over many weeks, and the teacher's experimentation with approaches over time in hope of better results.

Observing the entire system in a master teacher's home studio can reveal many fine details that are not present in an institute setting where the clinician is working with children and parents *not* under his or her home cultivation! The prospective Suzuki teacher can observe experienced parents and children working together with their home teacher according to already internalized principles of Suzuki method, and also see how that teacher inculcates those principles into the behavior of new families.

In institutes, teachers are working with children and parents whom they do not know, and whom they may never see again. In some ways they may be starting "from scratch." Children and parents with serious problems, especially motivational, are probably not attending these institutes. *The*

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