

Suzuki piano teacher training *in Britain*

by Grant Mead

The Suzuki approach is fundamentally different from most styles of music teaching. It is an instrumental method that places great emphasis on aural development, with an early start, listening, memorisation, performance and review of previously learnt material as the foundation on which to develop children's musical and technical ability. Suzuki teachers undertake specialised training in how to facilitate very young children's music learning in a positive, natural and nurturing way and become highly skilled at developing musical concepts through self discovery, review and repetition.

Historically, many piano teachers taught the way they were taught. While this can work for some children, for many young beginners their teacher's inexperience of a child's "natural learning" often results in failure to succeed. The systematic approach to technical and musical development in Suzuki education ensures that, at every stage, children can master the pieces that they have been assigned, without failure.

Teacher training courses help teachers discover and develop their potential to make every child successful and provide the foundations required to work effectively with three and four year old children through to advanced levels. Working with pre-school children requires a good understanding of child development and an awareness of motivational games and activities which encourage and promote appropriate learning behaviour. Careful attention to technique and posture from the beginning is also crucial for setting foundations for future success. The study of child development, psychology and approaches to education help trainees gain a broad knowledge of what to expect when working with children of all ages and levels.

On the training courses, trainees learn how to introduce and reinforce teaching points effectively while building strategies and methods to overcome and correct technical,



Suzuki piano teacher trainers and trainees

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physical and musical problems. The British course includes topics such as Suzuki philosophy and methodology, pedagogy, performance and memorisation, technique and tone production, aural and theory training, child development and psychology, observation of teaching, supervised practice teaching, group teaching and approaches to music reading and parent education.

There is a collegiate atmosphere on the British teacher training course, with a non-competitive and supportive environment where teachers work together, sharing their ideas and experience. Suzuki teachers rarely work in isolation and frequently combine for student concerts, group lessons and workshops. Following training, graduate teachers have established large and successful studios and as the teacher's diploma is an international qualification, there are many opportunities to teach at workshops and summer schools throughout Britain, Europe and worldwide. The demand for trained Suzuki teachers is so high that the association is unable to supply teachers for the thousands of enquiries received each year. ■

■ Grant Mead has been a Suzuki teacher for 26 years and is Director of Piano for the British Suzuki Institute.

The British Suzuki Institute is responsible for conducting Suzuki teacher training as part of the European Suzuki Association system. The part-time, long-term courses have five levels of training each requiring attendance at an average of 18 days during the year. Trainees usually take a year to complete each level and start teaching children within the first year of training. The BSI teacher training is the only internationally recognised training course for Suzuki teachers in Great Britain.