







Twice I was able to take part in the four-day annual national Suzuki Teachers' Conference. All teachers from Japan met here. Suzuki was always eager to keep the teachers „on the go“. Every time he played lottery with them – like with children. Some teachers drew a card and within three seconds had to play the beginning or certain parts of the piece that was written on it. Even though there were hundreds of teachers in the conference hall, each one of them was highly concentrated. Because all of a sudden Suzuki would have the teachers aged between 20 and 30 years come onstage, then those between 70 and 80, and finally all above 80. There were still 10 of them in the last category, and each one had to perform.



*At the Teachers' Conference 1982 with Hirose Sensei*

We, the foreign students, were no better off. We, too, had to come forward and prove to the ever cheerful Suzuki our individual capabilities. The large audience commented our efforts either with applause or, as the case might be, with loud laughter. . .

Another inspiring and motivating situation occurred every two to three days. In the middle of a lesson the door would open suddenly and Mrs Suzuki's head would appear. Often she joined us; sometimes she just gave me a brief, cheerful look meaning: „Do come and join me for a cup of coffee in Suzuki's office when you can.“ Since the two of us were the only Germans far and wide, we always enjoyed a little chat. On those occasions I learned much that later helped me to a better understanding, e.g. about problems with the introduction of the Suzuki method in other countries. At other times she would speak to me of very personal details of her life, like how she would sometimes overcome Japanese courtesy rituals by her typical Berlin vivacity, and how she never lost her sense of humour and her optimism in spite of some hard personal experience. Without her active support in the background, especially during the years after the war, setting up and spreading the Suzuki method would have been less successful.

And there was so much for us, the students, to learn when Suzuki was sitting in his lecture room drinking tea with us and talking about subjects which were particularly close to his heart. He often talked about questions of education for children and of self-education, about the purpose of art, the necessity of understanding one's own role in life and living accordingly, about key experiences in his life, important words of great personalities, and much more. Now and then, tears might come to his eyes and he, who usually was so cheerful, would struggle for words.



Suzuki wanted to give his students more than mere facts and instrumental technique; he wanted to prepare them for the responsibility required by their profession, and for an understanding of higher values. With his unorthodox ways he tried to encourage us to think about the questions behind our visible actions. Because only those who are concerned about the meaning of life will not lose sight of their personal course even in difficult times. In addition, he gave individual guidance to his students.



He did it smilingly, without exerting any pressure. Only those of them who lived long enough within his sphere of influence started feeling an indirect pressure which might lead to a change of character. Students who were taught by him only for a few days, weeks or months were usually treated with kindness and encouragement. In this way, each student received helpful impulses and impressions which he could take home and use for a positive start of his own teaching activities.