

AUTHENTICITY, SHINICHI SUZUKI, AND “BEAUTIFUL TONE WITH LIVING SOUL, PLEASE”

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Abstract

While there is a great deal of scholarly inquiry into the Suzuki Method of music instruction, few resources examine how the various aesthetic and pedagogic themes associated with the Suzuki Method are grounded in Dr. Shinichi Suzuki's sense of self. Using the notion of authenticity—being true to oneself—as an investigative underpinning, I trace the trajectory of Suzuki's personal grounding from the pivotal events of his youth to the emergence in his eighties of the signature statement, “Beautiful tone with living soul, please.” What comes from this investigation is an appreciation that Suzuki's sense of self carries with it not only a consideration for the life affirming and transformational potential of music, but also an invitation for teachers to purposefully engage in meaning-making and music-making experiences reflective of what it means to be true to oneself.

Keywords: Suzuki Method, authenticity, tone production, beauty, spirituality, music instruction.

During his lifetime, Japanese violinist, educator, and founder of the Suzuki Method of music instruction, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki witnessed his pedagogic efforts grow to international significance. In recognition of his contribution to music education, Suzuki received nine honorary doctorates, a medal from the World Organization for Human Potential, and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.¹ Currently, Suzuki Method music instruction is prevalent throughout Australia, North and South America, Europe, and Asia and includes instruction for violin, viola, cello, bass, piano, flute, guitar, voice, recorder, harp, organ, trumpet, and mandolin. Suzuki Method instruction incorporates a “mother tongue approach” to educational theory, an emphasis on methodological principles regarding teaching and learning to play a musical instrument, and a philosophical concern for character development. Formal academic research into the Suzuki Method is extensive, focusing primarily on historical,² cultural,³ pedagogical,⁴ and instrument-specific perspectives.⁵

This article examines how the various aesthetic and pedagogic themes associated with the Suzuki Method are grounded in Suzuki’s sense of self. Using the notion of authenticity—being true to oneself—as an investigative underpinning, I trace the trajectory of Suzuki’s personal grounding from the pivotal events of his youth to the emergence in his eighties of the signature statement, “Beautiful tone with living soul, please.” My purpose in this investigation is to stimulate a kind of deliberate consciousness about the role of authenticity in music education and to contribute to conversation and discussion on this important topic. Beginning with an examination of authenticity, I take into consideration its historical and philosophical roots and its importance in educational settings. I continue with a biographical sketch of Suzuki’s life that serves to underscore his intensely personal and pivotal relationship with music. Delving more deeply into Suzuki’s personal grounding, I use the signature statement, “Beautiful tone with living soul, please,” as an outline for further examination and analysis. Finally, I consider the question: How is Suzuki’s example of being true to oneself valuable to contemporary music educators?

AUTHENTICITY

“Authenticity” is a term with diverse meanings relevant to music education, musical interpretation, and philosophy of music. As criteria for music performance, the term authenticity is often used regarding the composer’s performance intentions and faithfulness to historical performance and period sound especially in terms of techniques and instruments.⁶ Dennis Dutton makes a further distinction regarding authenticity in art and musical performance denoting that “nominal authenticity” involves correctly identifying an object’s origins, authorship, or provenance in contrast to “expressive authenticity,” which has to do with art or

music as the true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs.⁷ My concern in this article is neither with authenticity as a matter of historical reference nor accurate naming. I consider authenticity from an expressive or personal perspective as a quality/dimension related to the way an individual experiences his or her life and self.

Synonymous with such terms as genuineness or realness, authenticity encompasses the matter of being true to oneself and connects notions of personal grounding, sense of self, and identity with the matter of self-alignment. In this respect, authenticity is distinguished by the consistency individuals have in aligning their actions or behavior with their "motivations or intentions."⁸ As Brian Goldman has affirmed, authenticity is experienced in the "unimpeded operation of one's core or true self in one's daily enterprise."⁹ Authenticity is achieved "when people take hold of the direction of their own lives without the direction being determined for them by external factors."¹⁰ From an historical, linguistic, and cultural perspective, authenticity has known various interpretations, each demonstrative of two critical factors as reflected in the context of its respective era. First, authenticity always involves the individual's turning inward, and second, authenticity is always connected to its social context and how that social context takes its shape. In this way, authenticity is underscored by the playing out of such inward turning considerations as self-examination, self-redemption, or self-reflection, and such outward connecting considerations as religious dogma, cosmic order, or social conventions.¹¹ Authenticity as we know it today is very much a reflection of the eighteenth-century Romantic ideal that considers the individual as independent and freethinking.¹² Developments during the Romantic era were significant in that the notion of authenticity moved away from prior externally imposed classifications and social structures to embrace an interpretation of the individual as liberated and self-determining. The individual's natural inner voice of personal feelings and emotions emerged as the voice of personal authenticity.¹³ This inner voice was not the internal awareness of the voice of God previously envisioned in the Middle Ages; rather, the inner voice of the Romantic era exemplified the self-determined individual's feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Moving to the final decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, contemporary philosophers have responded to the subjectivist and relativist distortions associated with authenticity. Charles Taylor suggests authenticity necessitates a moral and social orientation because it is impossible to become an authentic human being without a moral stance, without standing for something that has life-valuing importance in a community of meaning.¹⁴ He regards authenticity within a moral communitarian framework, involving what he describes as "openness of horizons of significance" and the "dialogical character" of human interaction while staying true to the Romantic considerations

of personal discovery and originality.¹⁵ Charles Guignon also contributes to the contemporary framing of authenticity, suggesting that authenticity necessitates a “social dimension.”¹⁶ While holding on to the Romantic predilection for the individual’s “feelings, desires and beliefs,” he emphasizes authenticity as operating within a framework of belongingness and social indebtedness. In this way, authenticity continues to be interpreted as involving the individual’s sense of being true to oneself within the entirety of the individual’s existence. Carving out the individual’s life involves an overlapping attentiveness to the individual’s authentic self as embedded in the extended horizon of living in the real world.

Most pertinent to this investigation is the recognition of authenticity as an important and desirable educational element by many North American and European academic scholars.¹⁷ Writing from the adult education perspective, Stephen Brookfield has lauded authenticity as one of the top two traits students desire in their teachers, acknowledging that students are interested in teachers whose knowledge, competency, and credibility is held in place by an anchor of authenticity.¹⁸ Estelle Jorgensen affirms the notion of being true to oneself as fundamental to the integrity and wholeness of the teacher’s example;¹⁹ while Parker Palmer calls teachers to listen to “the voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self.”²⁰ In this way, mainstream educational research has established that a “strong identity and sense of being” are essential ingredients in transformative teaching and learning.²¹ With authenticity as the investigative underpinning for this article, I continue by considering how Suzuki’s sense of self is anchored by his own self-described and pivotal autobiographical events.

SUZUKI’S LIFE: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Shinichi Suzuki was born on October 17, 1898, in Nagoya, Japan, the fourth of twelve children in an upper class Japanese family of formerly samurai heritage. His father, Masakichi Suzuki, a considerably progressive man who spoke English and frequently travelled abroad, founded the largest violin factory in the world: the Suzuki Violin Seizo Company of Nagoya.²² In preparation for a career managing his father’s violin factory, from 1912 to 1916 Shinichi Suzuki attended the Nagoya Commercial School whose motto “Character first, ability second” would provide “a light” to his life’s path.²³ However, the direction of his life turned permanently away from business management at the age of seventeen as a result of two pivotal 1915 events. As he described it:

I consider that seventeen was the age at which my foundations were laid. In a manner of speaking it was the year I was born, the year I emerged as a human being. It was the year before I graduated from commercial school.²⁴

The first remarkable event occurred one day in his father's violin factory when Suzuki caught himself lying rather than admitting to his guilt in a case of wrongdoing. To rid himself of the annoying guilt, he went to a bookstore where he came across a copy of Tolstoy's *Diary*. He opened the book and his eyes fell on the following words, "To deceive oneself is worse than to deceive others." This pierced the young man to his core.²⁵ Reading Tolstoy, Suzuki encountered someone who wrote eloquently and thoughtfully of personal struggles with the significance of conscience, faith, and God. Tolstoy's disenchantment with the idleness of his aristocratic life challenged Suzuki to consider his own character and the meaning of his own upper class privileged position. Tolstoy's writings thus provided Suzuki with a sort of philosophical prodding regarding his sense of self, the meaning of life, and what it meant to live his life purposefully—opening his destiny, teaching him about meekness, and introducing him to the voice of conscience.²⁶ Taking Tolstoy's reminders to avoid self-deception, Suzuki considered life as an opening to be true to his own inner voice, to pay attention to who he was as a person. In this somewhat turbulent environment of personal awareness, a second remarkable event occurred when Suzuki's family obtained a gramophone.

Although Suzuki's father was the owner of a violin-manufacturing factory, for most of his youth Suzuki considered the violin as nothing more than a toy better suited to playing games than making music. When he heard the violin for the first time in 1915—a recording of the violin virtuoso Mischa Elman performing Schubert's *Ave Maria*—the experience opened his eyes to music, moving his soul. Inspired by Elman's beautiful tone, Suzuki brought a violin home from the factory and taught himself to play a Haydn minuet. It was undoubtedly an excruciating experience—scraping the bow across the strings day after day until the teenager could more or less play the piece. Yet Suzuki's youthful efforts stimulated a connection to the beauty of music so compelling that it propelled his pursuit of formal violin studies in Berlin from 1920 to 1928. Studying the violin, attending concerts by the musical icons of the 1920s, and socializing with the likes of amateur violinist and scientist Albert Einstein, these personal, musical, and philosophical experiences deeply influenced Suzuki's understanding of music and awareness of his own sense of self.²⁷ During this period in Berlin, his reverence for Tolstoy's ideas and his awe for music merged into a personal ideology anchored by his relationship with music. Music became Suzuki's conduit to understanding the meaning of life.

After his family's fortune collapsed in the 1929 stock market crash, Suzuki returned to Japan with his German wife Waltraud Prange and began his career as violin performer and teacher at the Imperial Musical School and Kunitachi Music School in Tokyo. Requests in 1932 by the fathers of two four-year-old

boys—Koji Toyoda and Toshiya Eto—sparked his search for a teaching methodology appropriate for such young children. Observing that “All Japanese children speak Japanese,”²⁸ he realized this simple but remarkable observation of mother tongue acquisition could serve as the theoretical model for an approach to music education.

Suzuki’s efforts in developing the methodology were cut short by the arrival of World War II. Living in Tokyo, he witnessed the 1942 air raid bombings and delayed his departure out of concern for his students. Following his move in 1943 to the mountain village of Kiso-Fukushima outside of Tokyo, he nearly starved to death due to the lack of food provisions and severe rationing.²⁹ With the end of the war in 1945, Suzuki moved to Matsumoto in the Japanese Alps, deeply affected by the persistent, horrifying raids on Tokyo, an unprecedented bombing strategy from February 25 to August 15, 1945 that resulted in the deaths of over one hundred thousand men, women, elderly, and children and over one million residents losing their homes.³⁰ Living in the aftermath of massive firebombing that ravaged Japan, Suzuki’s dedication to the lives of children and his commitment to international peace intensified. He envisioned the creation of a better world for the children of Japan through music and shifted his focus from the theoretical and methodological roots of the Suzuki Method to embrace the philosophical dimension he had encountered in Tolstoy’s writings. He emphasized that the goal of Suzuki Method instruction would go beyond producing professional musicians³¹ to be an influential, intimate, and personally rewarding vehicle for personal development. Suzuki promoted music education in terms of developing “noble hearts and minds in children” and creating “the better world through music.”³² These phrases capture the aspirations of his explorative youth and his post World War II vision of music education, while more importantly underscoring his interpretation of music instruction as the development of “noble human beings in order to make the world more peaceful and loving.”³³

As Suzuki’s teaching progressed, Japanese teachers came to Matsumoto to study his work and helped spread the Suzuki Method throughout Japan. International interest in Suzuki’s teaching surged as a result of several key events: the 1955 film of fifteen hundred Suzuki students performing in the first Annual Concert, the 1963 performance of Vivaldi’s *Violin Concerto in A minor* and Bach’s *Concerto for Two Violins* by five hundred Suzuki students at the International Society for Music Education conference in Tokyo, and numerous performances by the Suzuki Tour Group in North America and Europe. In response to such international interest, Suzuki traveled extensively to work with teachers and students, while many foreign music educators journeyed to Matsumoto to study the Suzuki Method firsthand. Construction of the Talent Education Institute building in 1967 made it possible to accommodate the growing local, national, and

international interest in Suzuki's teaching. He continued to work with teachers into his old age. Suzuki died at his home in Matsumoto on January 26, 1998 at the age of 99.

What seems significant in this brief look at Suzuki's biography is that he never lost sight of two vital life themes: his passion for music and his fascination with the meaning of life. Beginning in his youth, the interweaving of these two themes speaks to Suzuki's attentiveness to who he was as a person and how he implicitly and explicitly lived his life. In this way, the cornerstones of his approach to teaching are not isolated entities forced into an education process; rather, his vision of music instruction is grounded in his personal connection with music and fascination with the meaning of life.

From this brief examination of Suzuki's biography, I move to consider the personal dynamics embedded in a signature statement from Suzuki's mature years. "Beautiful tone with living soul, please" (from the Japanese "*Utsukushiki oto ni inochi o*") emerged in Suzuki's teaching during the mid-1980s. This phrase poignantly encapsulates his thoughts and experiences as a mature pedagogue and philosopher. In this respect, "Beautiful tone with living soul, please" provides a highly appropriate frame for further consideration of Suzuki's sense of self.

BEAUTY

The topic of beauty is one of importance, inspiration, and personalization for musicians, artists, philosophers, and poets. As Soetsu Yanagi, founder of the Japanese Folkcraft Museum, asserted, beauty is of "deep import to our modern age" because of its essential relationship to life's meaning, peace, and harmony.³⁴ Yanagi seems to grant beauty with a kind of personification capable of bridging the various cultures of humankind. American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson described beauty as an "invitation from what belongs to us."³⁵ It is not an entity or force that actively pursues a passive audience; rather, human beings are the ones who take action, who engage, who respond to beauty. While from a completely different direction, harpsichordist Wanda Landowska proposed, "The most beautiful thing in the world is, precisely, the conjunction of learning and inspiration. Oh, the passion for research and the joy of discovery!"³⁶ In this way, debates on beauty pull from and stimulate a richness of cultural viewpoints, personal values and beliefs, and aesthetic interpretation.

Notably, the most prevalent philosophical issue addressing the nature of beauty concerns whether it is a subjective or objective matter. While this argument stretches from the ancient Greek to medieval philosophers and subsequent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought, Crispin Sartwell offers insight in his book *Six Names of Beauty*. Crispin disagrees with the claim that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," arguing beauty is a feature of a situation that includes

both a beholder and an object. “We give beauty to objects and they give beauty to us; beauty is something that we make in cooperation with the world.”³⁷ Thus, beauty is not a fixed state of interpretation; it is revealed in the interactive relational encounter between perceiver and perceived. Beauty is a kind of involvement or juxtaposition in that the beholder is not merely judging or assessing the object, but is responding to something in the object that produces a sense of appreciation, satisfaction, or pleasure. Often, the awareness of beauty is shared by communities connected in their mutual appreciation and acknowledgement of beauty. As Jorgensen affirms, beauty as a social construction is “complex, ambiguous, and liable to change over time.”³⁸

To qualify sounds as beautiful implies they are “inherently meaningful or capable of assuming a meaningful role in the listener’s scheme of activity.”³⁹ This indicates a process of meaning-making in which the individual creates relationships with sound and recognizes one’s response to those relationships. In this respect, beauty is not a concrete entity; rather, beauty is the interpretative result of a meaning-making process based on the individual’s personal experience. With Suzuki’s interest in beauty in mind, it is interesting to note how his connection to beautiful tone may be more fully understood through the framework developed by H.E. Huntley in his book *The Divine Proportion*.⁴⁰ Huntley’s interpretation of beauty highlights three aspects: surprise, curiosity, and wonder. This is not to say that surprise, curiosity, and wonder exclusively point towards beauty; rather, that surprise, curiosity, and wonder contribute to, prompt, and elevate the individual’s awareness or appreciation of beauty. As surprise, beauty is unanticipated, unexpected, and interruptive. An encounter with beauty has an arresting quality that grabs a person’s attention, however subtle or direct, and a quality of delight that relates to discovery and creation. As curiosity, beauty invites exploration. The person craves to know more, to get closer. As wonder, beauty opens unexplored worlds; it invites contemplation and instills transcendence. There is an element of freedom, of being spiritually transported.

Returning to Suzuki, he describes his initiation to a recording of violin virtuoso Mischa Elman performing Schubert’s *Ave Maria*.

The sweetness of the sound of Elman’s violin utterly enthralled me. His velvety tone as he played the melody was like something in a dream. It made a tremendous impression on me. . . . Elman’s “Ave Maria” opened my eyes to music. I had no idea why my soul was so moved.⁴¹

It is as if Elman’s sound has caught Suzuki off guard—almost by surprise—and the curious Suzuki is compelled to teach himself how to play the instrument. While this *surprise* acquaintance with Elman’s performance turned Suzuki decidedly towards the beauty of the violin, *curiosity* and *wonder* would dominate

the bulk of his musical formation over the period of eight years he spent in Berlin, studying the violin and attending concerts by the most respected musicians of the time.

Glazunov conducting his own composition with the Berlin Philharmonic, . . . the beautifully grand way the great composer Richard Strauss used to conduct. . . . Busoni's piano playing that made one think of the sweet, lovely fragrance of white lilies in the garden at eventide; when Busoni played on it, the piano in Berlin Philharmonic Hall sounded like a different instrument, . . . the Sunday concert series in which dignified Schnabel played all the Beethoven sonatas.⁴²

Listening to the great numbers of performances and studying with the German violinist Klinger, Suzuki's senses of curiosity and wonder influenced his musical development. However, his ultimate desire was not to become a performer, but to understand art and his transformative connection with musical performance.

During the eight years he spent in Berlin, Suzuki gradually came to an understanding of beauty, of what he called the meaning of musical performance, that beauty was not something distant and beyond understanding:

It was through music that I found my work and my purpose in life. Once art to me was something far off, unfathomable and unattainable. But I discovered it was a tangible thing. . . . The real essence of art turned out not to be something high up and far off. It was right inside my ordinary self.⁴³

Beautiful tone, musical appreciation, and musical expression were intimate meaning-making experiences that prompted Suzuki's understanding of himself. The essence of art, the meaning of music in tone and sound was something that existed within his ordinary daily self, captured not only in musical performance, but in the way a person greets people or expresses one's self. His relationship with beauty in music led to an unanticipated yet empowered understanding of who he was as a person. It is as if beauty—surprise, curiosity, and wonder—pulled him into a heightened awareness of his own sense of self.

From Suzuki's perspective, beauty in music acts as a vehicle for self-understanding, as a vehicle for considering what it means in terms of being true to oneself. Beauty is not a distant, unachievable destination; rather, beauty is reflected in the ordinary actions of everyday life. Suzuki asserts that beauty in musical performance is a reflection of the individual as a person, a reflection of the individual's attitude towards others and one's approach to life that involves the individual's whole personality, sensitivity for personal awareness, and capacity for being true to oneself. Beauty is something the individual understands by understanding oneself.

tone

Music—whether art form, entertainment, activity, or pastime—may be understood in terms of such practical elements as melody and harmony, pulse, tempo and rhythmic variation, consonance and dissonance, texture, and instrumentation. Within the dimension of music, tone refers to sound quality, resonance, or timbre; and tone production brings into play the relationship between performer and instrument, as well as the question of how tone may be interpreted as belonging to the instrument and as belonging to the performer. According to Edward Lippman, tone is a sign of life in that it reveals something of the physical nature of its source and the bodily activity from which it arises.⁴⁴ Performers have the ability to manipulate an instrument's tonal potential because all acoustic instruments have the capability of producing a wide variety of tone qualities relative to the inherent physical properties or structural design of the instrument, even though those tonal qualities may have desirable and undesirable attributes. Tone is more than the performer's intellectual choice of sound or the physical manipulation of an instrument. It is also influenced by the performer's emotional and spiritual states because changes in one's own feelings in turn cause the individual to vary the "intensity of sounds" that one produces.⁴⁵ In this respect, tone is not heard as sound alone, but as possessing a quality that is representative of who the performer is as a person. As philosopher of musical aesthetics Naomi Cumming explains, the musician's tone production is not an "impersonal or accidental event."⁴⁶ Tone production involves the performer's natural and yet intentional engagement of an instrument and of oneself.

Historically, tone quality has been considered as a most essential artistic ingredient because it is mastery of tone production that enables artistic expression. Pianist and pedagogue at the Moscow Conservatory, Heinrich Neuhaus, identified tone production as the "first and most important among other means of which a pianist should be possessed," while cautioning that tonal mastery remains a means of musical expression, not its purpose.⁴⁷ Hungarian-American pianist Gyorgy Sandor, who studied piano with Bartok and composition with Kodaly, considered tonal expression and technique as indivisible and that a malfunctioning technique affects almost everything that is vital to musical performance.⁴⁸ Conceived in such extensive but essential terms, it is easy to appreciate how the challenges associated with tone production and technique have produced a considerable variety of technical interpretations.

While Suzuki's affinity for tone shares an immediate alignment with historical perspectives regarding tone quality as an essential artistic ingredient, his interest in tone demonstrates a noteworthy personal connection. Acknowledging the dramatic impact of his 1915 encounter with the sound of the violin, listening to the performances of Elman and other violin virtuosos of that era compelled

Suzuki to learn to play the violin. However, more importantly, the captivating sound of the maestros fueled his own personal and practical exploration of tone.⁴⁹ He purposefully took on the exploration of tone, not because he was instructed to do so by a reputable violin pedagogue. Rather, his attention to the violin's sound—both as listener and student performer—reflected a meaningful awareness of tone as something that surged deeply within his own self, as something genuine that he could not ignore.

During the early 1930s, as Suzuki considered the structure for an approach to teaching the violin, he remained faithful to his youthful affinity for tone by incorporating tone development as the foundation for learning to play musical instrument. In contrast to traditional approaches that incorporate note-reading as the first step in music instruction, he introduced a series of developmental exercises designed to fulfill the basic tonal requirements of each particular instrument, while emphasizing tonal refinement as ongoing and integral to all stages of instrumental study. He describes this process as “tonalization,” a reworking of the term “vocalization” applied to the kind of training vocalists receive in vocalizing exercises.⁵⁰ Suzuki's fascination for tone production dominated his own musical studies and his ongoing evolution as a teacher. The meaning he derived from refined tonal explorations simultaneously anchored and stimulated a lifetime of deliberate personal awareness and engaged music making.

LIVING SOUL

Throughout his life, Suzuki's fascination with the meaning of life took inspiration from two sources: his fundamental interest in philosophical literature and his enduring relationship with music. Beginning at age seventeen when he devoured the contents of Tolstoy's *Diary*, what emerged from this youthful philosophical exploration was a profound and instrumental questioning of himself as a person. Describing his own philosophical development, Suzuki acknowledged the influential significance in the music of Mozart as having taught him to know “perfect love, truth, goodness and beauty.”⁵¹ In particular, a performance of Mozart's *Clarinet Quintet* stands out for its impact on the twenty-four-year old Suzuki. He described his reaction to the *Clarinet Quartet*:

An indescribable sublime, ecstatic joy had taken hold of my soul. . . . Through sound, for the first time in my life I had been able to feel the highest pulsating beauty of the human spirit, and my blood burned within me. It was a moment of sublime eternity when I, a human being, had gone beyond the limits of this physical body.⁵²

This 1922 performance induced a state of profound spirituality in Suzuki and a recognition of his relationship with music as something integral, indispensable,

and transformative that opened him to a deeper understanding of his work, his purpose in life, and who he was as a person.

Thirty years following his formative years in Berlin, the language he used to describe his understanding of life evolved to take on greater meaning. In 1953 at the age of fifty-five, Suzuki received word the violinist Jacques Thibaud had died in an airplane crash. Responding to Thibaud's death, Suzuki incorporated the idea of "life force" into his philosophical language.

Having listened to [Thibaud's] recordings for twenty-odd years, I could sense his personality. . . . Through sound Thibaud had come to life in my soul. Music. Sound. Tone. . . . I realized at that moment, man [sic] does not live in intellect. Man lives in the wonderful life force. . . . The human heart, feeling, intellect, behavior, even the activity of organs and nerves, all are but part of the life force. We must not forget that man is the embodiment of life force, and that it is the power of the life force that controls human seeking and finding.⁵³

Through the experience of listening to Thibaud's performances, Suzuki felt he knew Thibaud as an expressive artist because each musician has the capacity through music, sound, or tone to communicate something of his or her own self. Thibaud's performance sounded like Thibaud because it carried the essence of Thibaud's authentic self. With his identification of life force, Suzuki purposefully departs from his youthful commitment to conscience. He considers life force as embodying the power of the individual's sense of self. It compels the individual to live life, to seek out experiences, relationships, and knowledge. While there may have been an implicit assumption that life force incorporated a spiritual element, his philosophical language evolved still further in the 1970s to explicitly take up this thread.

At the 1975 Suzuki Method International Teachers' Convention, Suzuki included in his summary of purposes for music education an emphasis on "breath and spirit in playing."⁵⁴ One year later, in a document titled *Teaching Points for 1976*, he introduced the affirmation "Tone has the Living Soul" and shared his thoughts on *Training Spirit and Breath*:

A performance without spirit results in music without heart and tone without soul. Not only in music, but also in the formation of personality, it is necessary for all humanity to have spirit. Forming people who have spirit is one valuable goal of education.⁵⁵

Finally, in the mid-1980s, Suzuki expressly brought together beauty, tone, and living soul in his signature statement "Beautiful tone with living soul, please" from the Japanese "*Utsukushiki oto ni inochi o.*" Working with teachers at the

Matsumoto Talent Education Institute, tone production was the fundamental, elusive, empowering, enveloping, and inescapable institutional theme of the era.

Suzuki's use of language in this signature phrase is noteworthy because, although the Japanese words *utsukushiki* and *oto* may be directly translated into "beauty" and "tone" respectively, the Japanese term *inochi* has broader meaning than may be expressed in its traditional English translation as "life." In the Japanese language, whereas the word *seimei* refers to "life" as the bio-phenomenon that can be defined objectively, *inochi* is an expressive term more concerned with the individual's subjective experience of living.⁵⁶ Dating from eighth-century literature wherein it referred to "lifespan" and "the power of living," the ancient word *inochi* has become established as one of the most popular words in Japanese.⁵⁷ It is considered to be made up of *i* and *chi*, the former standing for "breath" and the latter standing for "dynamic energy," and has three basic denotations. A first meaning refers to an interconnected wholeness of living and the mystery of irreplaceable energy shared by all living creatures. *Inochi* has spiritual undertones suggestive of religious experiences that involve a person's soul and the phenomenon of *anima mundi* or soul of the world⁵⁸ affected by each living thing. A second meaning points to the idea that *inochi* is limited in time and space. Here, *inochi* infers the process of being born, growing, aging, and dying, the interplay between existence and death. A third meaning refers to the concept of eternal life. In consideration of life and death, *inochi* expresses the notion of an infinite chain and connections beyond space and time. In this way, *inochi* may be interpreted as a vision of living that embraces notions from the individual to the universal, from the physical to the spiritual, affirming a wholeness of life and treasuring all life as irreplaceable and interconnected, finite and infinite. Being aware of *inochi* involves a reverence for the emotions of human existence, the mystery of human living, the subjectivity of active experience, and curiosity for the spiritual world. *Inochi* brings together a composite of images, thoughts, principles, impressions, and ideas that capture how individuals see themselves and understand the world around them.

As Suzuki's language shifted from "life force" to "breath and spirit" to "living soul" from the 1950s to the 1980s, an implicit theme of *inochi* is evident throughout. During this time period, he recognizes the challenge of accurately conveying his thoughts regarding *inochi* and a vision of living to audiences outside his own Japanese heritage. He endeavors to find meaningful language for his non-Japanese connections, possibly inspired by his German Catholic wife, Waltraud Prange, who translated his first book into English during the 1960s, his contact with non-Japanese through international teaching tours, speaking engagements, and working with foreign teachers at the Matsumoto Talent Education Institute. He begins by drawing attention to "life force," followed by "breath and spirit,"

and while these expressions reveal something of *inochi*, they seem to fall short of encompassing *inochi's* broader meaning as a vision of living.

Suzuki's interpretation of *inochi* as "living soul" is remarkable for several reasons. Firstly, by using the verb "living" instead of such nouns as "life force" or "breath" he affirms that life is experienced in living. Life involves active and participatory experiences that may arise, grow, and develop, become static, and decay. "Living" underscores the energetic dynamism of *inochi* that is the mystery of irreplaceable energy shared by all living creatures. Secondly, by using the term "soul," Suzuki draws attention to the spiritual dimension of *inochi*. He affirms the idea that living involves a sacred richness and a spiritual grounding that uplifts individuals and connects human beings in the manner of *anima mundi*. Thirdly, by joining "living" and "soul" together, Suzuki makes reference to *inochi's* characteristic of interconnected wholeness. Living is enriched not only by the individual's active composite of body, heart, mind, and spirit, but also through extensions and connections to community, culture, nature, and the universe. How individuals see themselves and understand the world is influenced by their intellectual, emotional, and physical experiences of everyday life, by their own spiritual awareness, insight, and vision, and by their perceptions of and interactions with the world. In this way, Suzuki uses the expression "living soul" to bring together a meaningful blending of beliefs, attitudes, spiritual practice, feelings, and principles that inform ongoing and evolving processes for how individuals may understand who they are and interpret the world around them. He makes an intentional invitation for others to engage in explorations that draw from the individual's intimate sense of self and the individual's all-encompassing experience of living in-the-world.

Inochi and "living soul" have notable qualities in that each of these perspectives may act as a meaningful yet fluid personal lens for interpreting the experience of living, especially as related to notions of authenticity and being true to oneself. With these reflective viewpoints, Suzuki addresses the complexity of human living as involving the emotions of human existence, the mystery of life, subjective experience, and spirituality without becoming prescriptive or dogmatic. In this context, personal authenticity flourishes in the potential of interconnectedness and wholeness, reminding us that who we are as persons, how we understand ourselves and express ourselves is not a matter of self-isolation or distancing oneself from the world. Being true to oneself involves the ongoing blending and connecting with one's self and the world.

However, Suzuki's emphasis on *inochi* or "living soul" goes beyond a theoretical approach to personal understanding or being true to oneself. He is concerned with transformative self-understanding and self-expression through music performance and study. His efforts are directed towards "noble hearts and minds," the

creation of a “better world through music,” and a peaceful and loving world. In this way, “Beautiful tone with living soul, please” represents Suzuki’s aspirations for humanity in the sense that tone, beauty, and living soul act as the influential, intimate, and rewarding vehicle for personal development. These are not separate entities pulled off a metaphorical shelf and forced into an educational process. Rather, music study and performance provide opportunity for each of us to genuinely experience who we are and how we might live respectful of others and connected to the world around us.

RESONANT THEMES

Conscience, music, beauty, tone, life force, *inochi*, and living soul: such are the resonant themes that triggered and accompanied Suzuki’s lifelong journey of personal exploration and self-understanding. It all began with his serendipitous youthful discovery of philosophy and music, both of which underscored the grounding of his own authentic inner voice. In midlife, affinity for life force drew attention to the musical embodiment of the individual’s true or authentic self. Finally, in his eighties, he proposed the synthesis of beauty, tone, and *inochi* or living soul—a purposeful fusion of music and being true to oneself. What seems evident in examining Suzuki’s biography and life themes is that long before he considered the notion of music study as character development, his fascination with life and connection to music brought him to grapple with the implications of being true to oneself. His life grappling was not about turning into something new or something that was not there before; his approach to life involved being aware of and recognizing his own personal development.

Having examined Suzuki’s life experiences from this perspective, there seems to be an opening to consider—What can music teachers learn from Suzuki’s example of being true to oneself? How is Suzuki’s outlook valuable to contemporary music educators? The following broad strokes may be noteworthy.

Musical Catalysts. In spite of our contemporary technological ease of access to music and abundance of musical performances, it is not hard to imagine the curiosity and wonder the seventeen-year-old Suzuki might have felt in his first-ever listening experience of Elman performing Schubert’s *Ave Maria*. As a musical catalyst, this event stands out as a reminder of how stories reveal a great deal about every music teacher’s personal history. Events like the purchase of a gramophone or the first-ever listening experience hold the stories of who we are as music educators. Such narratives carry with them not only the details of time and place, but also the people and relationships that allow musicians to get a glimpse of themselves and come to know who they are. As an example, my own childhood was filled with music of the vibrant prairie farming community I grew up in. So, when our piano ceremoniously arrived on a rainy October Saturday in 1958, my

father's brothers and cousins generously muscled the unwieldy instrument into its new home—symbolic of the value I place on musical communities to this day.

For music educators, Suzuki's example of musical catalysts suggests a meaningful personal exploration of events, people, relationships, performances, and repertoire. Such explorations might be viewed as an invitation for music instructors to uncover the musical catalysts of their own musical history, to consider how and what students come to know about their instructors' own musical narratives, and what musical catalysts reveal about their own sense of self.

Philosophical Prodding. Following his fateful encounter with Tolstoy's *Diary*, Suzuki carried this pocket-sized book in his jacket for another decade. Tolstoy's thoughts served as a philosophical prodding that encouraged Suzuki's reflective questioning of himself as a person and what it would mean to live his life with purpose, not only as a young man, but throughout his life. His relationship with Tolstoy is remarkable in demonstrating how the values individuals develop are related not only to their own inner rumblings, but also surface in response to the various jarring and affirming experiences that take place in daily life. In this respect, the events of life stimulate, support, and challenge each music educator's personal grounding and the values teachers may draw from in their own philosophy of teaching. Teachers take value from the experiences of their lives, no matter how formally structured or unanticipated such experiences might be.

Suzuki's experience of philosophical prodding has relevance for music educators in prompting the interrogation of their own internally and externally influenced personal and pedagogic values. Such an interrogation might call into question the thought-provoking encounters and relationships that impact each educator's personal awareness and philosophy of teaching. This ongoing reflective and active process of deliberation may take into consideration each educator's philosophical perspective, how teachers come to know themselves, and how their philosophical perspectives show up in show up in their own teaching.

Vision of Living. For Suzuki, the all-encompassing yet intimate aspects expressed in *inochi* were fundamental to who he was as a person. His perception of *inochi* involved beliefs and attitudes that sought to give meaning to the mystery of human existence, the subjectivity of active experience, and curiosity for the spiritual world. By interpreting of *inochi* as "living soul," Suzuki sheds light on personal authenticity as flourishing in the potential of interconnection and interaction between self and soul, suggesting a spiritual awareness of one's self and a kind of sacred wholeness with the world around us. This interplay of spirituality and self-expression is especially relevant given the generations of composers, performers, and music instructors whose spiritual devotion has served and continues to serve as meaningful anchors. Yet, there are challenges in transplanting Suzuki's expression "living soul" into today's teaching context. First, notions of

spirituality have taken on a broad range of interpretations—everything from religious dogma to new age mysticism and eco-spiritual practices that incorporate an attitude of a respect for all forms of life.⁵⁹ In this respect, spiritual connotations may have vastly different meanings for different individuals. And second, many of today's educational settings have taken on increasingly spiritually neutral characteristics that challenge educators to incorporate meaningful spiritual language.

My own experience of teaching with living soul has meant developing appropriate and flexible language. Knowing that my background—Lutheran childhood and adult hippy spirituality—has little in common with the majority of my students, I tell stories about the spiritual connections many musicians feel towards music. I explore indigenous spiritual beliefs that respect, express, and celebrate spiritual connections to our environment.⁶⁰ I facilitate discussion that builds on who I perceive my students to be and their capacity for connecting emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually with the world around them. Thus, I use an interpretation of living soul that links comfortably to my own background and approach to teaching.

What seems significant in Suzuki is that he entrusts teachers with the meaningful task of “life education”⁶¹ as something that draws from and is influenced by their vision of living. Teachers bring passion and expertise to their *métier* because music and life matter to them, because education and children are important to them, and because they cannot ignore the personal value that comes from being true to oneself. For today's music educators, Suzuki's example acts to interrupt the ongoing routines of instruction with questions regarding our own visions of living and how such visions actually align with what we do as instructors. In this regard, *inochi* may serve as an effective launching point for explorations into the emotions of human existence, the mystery of human living, the subjectivity of active experience, and curiosity for the spiritual world. Questioning and reflecting upon our own visions of living, we may consider the explicit and implicit stories we tell about our selves, the stories we invite our students to share, and find out how we relate to each other and to the world around us.

EPILOGUE

My purpose in this article has been to stimulate meaningful discussion on the relationship between music education and authenticity by taking a closer look at Shinichi Suzuki. What I appreciate about examining Suzuki from this point of view is the awareness that being true to oneself takes meaning as a matter of listening to our own inner voice and figuring out how we live in-the-world. Authenticity involves the big and small movements of synchronicity wherein the sense of who we are aligns with what we do, how we express ourselves, the thoughts we hold onto, and the beliefs, values, and attitudes we carry forward.

Seen from this perspective, Suzuki's sense of self plays out not as some kind of absolute model of authenticity; rather, his affinity for tone, beauty, and living soul modestly invites other music educators to engage in music and meaning-making experiences reflective of what it means to be true to oneself. Taking the broad strokes of music catalysts, philosophical prodding, and vision of living as a kind of exploratory personal framework, Suzuki's example may serve to remind music educators of the intimate connection between music teaching and the individual's fundamental recognition of oneself and relationship with music. Moreover, because musicians are holistically and irrepressibly connected to music, their love of music provides the ideal setting for open and life-affirming exploration of the philosophies, values, beliefs, and attitudes that reinforce both the music educator's and the music student's valued sense of self. In this way, music study and performance bring about two substantial accomplishments. Perhaps most obviously, musical explorations provide the safe yet dynamic environment for artistic flourishing and empowered self-expression, while simultaneously, such musical adventures pull each of us to consider not only who we are, but also what we have yet to imagine about ourselves and each other, about music, the world, and life.

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