

The World Convention, My Memories

Suzuki Voice Students, Families and Suzuki Voice Teachers all around the World are looking forward to come to Matsumoto – the home town of Suzuki Method!

How my life-long learning with Suzuki started? I met Dr. Shinichi Suzuki and Waltraud Suzuki, Mrs. Haruko Kataoka and Mr. Toshio Takahashi the first time in Easter 1986 in Finland. During the European Suzuki Conference, I received the invitation to come to Matsumoto to study Suzuki Method. Mrs. Suzuki was happy to found out that I was a young singer from Sibelius-University.

Next Autumn I came to Matsumoto and I got lost the first day. I will never forget, how welcome I felt, when I was finally found and I entered to the Institute's hall. Dr. Suzuki's 13 year-old student played me Sibelius Violin Concerto. I sat and my eyes were full of tears. I was touched of the child's playing and the thoughtfulness of Dr. Suzuki. I knew on that moment, this is the right place and this is the right method for children to learn Music.

My first time in Matsumoto was full of many highlights. But I can easily say that Wednesday November 19th 1986 changed my life totally: The decision to develop the Suzuki Voice Program starting with expectant mothers was made on that day. Life long journey with Suzuki Voice students started. Two years later Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki heard the first time Suzuki Voice students singing in Sweden 1988 and 1989 Suzuki Voice group of 30 persons participated in the 9th Suzuki Method International Conference in Matsumoto. The youngest of our group was 4 months and the eldest 8 years old. I expected my first child. I remember, how audience was delighted, when 1,5-year-old Christian was singing on stage with others in canon Volume 2 songs: "Alle Vögel" and "The Cuckoo and the Owl" and happily bowed at the end. It was a touching moment, when Suzuki Voice students met Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki after recital and they thanked even for the smallest one.

1993 I came the third time to Matsumoto before South-Korea World Convention. My father was helping me as I expected my second child. Every day I studied at the Institute's new Library. (My doctoral thesis - 17 years follow-up study about Suzuki Voice Program was completed 10 years later.) I do not forget the beautiful dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki. It was nice to talk about the progress of Suzuki Voice Program. The Suzuki Voice students had met them in Australia 1991 and 1993. Next time we met 1995 in Dublin during the 12th World Convention. I remember, how two fathers carried Mrs. Suzuki with a chair to upstairs, where we had voice lessons. In a lesson was also my third 5-weeks-old baby, who was producing intonations, when we were singing. We felt like a big Suzuki Family as in our group was also grandparents helping.

1998 Mrs. Waltraud Suzuki sent us the letter week after Dr. Suzuki passed away and she wrote: "Now all teachers have to take more responsibility to keep Suzuki's spirit alive." Dr. Suzuki wished the most "the world without war". In Suzuki Voice Program we have wanted to follow this personal request that children learn to respect and appreciate other cultures and traditions by singing and sharing songs from around the world. International "Song for Sharing" Suzuki Voice Workshops started 1999.

The 13th Suzuki World Convention was held in Matsumoto 1999 and Suzuki Voice Group of 30 came from Finland including my fourth 1-year-old child. For the memory of Dr. Suzuki I sang his favourite lied - Schubert's "Ave Maria" with the pianist Lola Tavor. I had sung this lied last time with Dr. Suzuki's violinists at his 88th birthday in Matsumoto. During the convention in addition normal voice lessons, we had one big group lesson with 600 children. What a joy it was to sing - Happy Suzuki way!

We did not know that we saw Mrs. Suzuki the last time 1999. We received a postcard from her just before she passed away December 24th 2000. Suzuki Voice Program has grown step by step. “Without hurry! Without rest!” as Dr. Suzuki used to say. We have participated in 41 conferences, conventions and /or workshops. Suzuki Voice students have sung in 15 countries and we have trained Suzuki Voice Teachers from 20 countries.

2012 is our 25th Anniversary year. Many students who started the Suzuki Voice Program during pregnancy are now adults. Singing has become an important part of their life and many are studying music or voice as a profession (opera, solo, musical theatre or Music science studies).

We are grateful that the Suzuki Method has given us a wonderful opportunity to grow through music. This time Suzuki Voice students will participate in the convention from many different countries!

On behalf of Suzuki Voice Families,
May the 16th Suzuki World Convention be successful!

Dr. Päivi Kukkamäki
ISA Suzuki Voice Committee, chair
The Founder of the Suzuki Voice Program