Louise
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Behrend & School for Strings

New York Story

Interviewed By Allen Lieb, Jr.

Louise Behrend is founder and director of the School for Strings in Manhattan, the first Suzuki program of its kind in the area and the only one to offer intensive teacher training. She also teaches violin and chamber music in the Pre-College division at The Juilliard School. Louise has served on the Board of the SAA and as editor of the Violin Column of the *ASJ*. She has been a regular speaker and clinician for numerous national and international Suzuki conferences, workshops, and institutes around the world. Last year she became the first teacher ever to have students win the Grand Prize in both the Pre-College and Pre-Professional divisions of the national ASTA competition. This interview took place at Miss Behrend's 31st floor apartment just a few blocks north of Lincoln Center.

Louise Behrend with a group of students in her first, experimental Suzuki program at the Music School of the Henry Street Settlement.

Young Violin Students at the School for Strings with Director Louise Behrend.

Photo by Hollis Melton

It's always interesting to find out what routes our friends have taken to get where they are today. Could you tell us a little bit about growing up in Washington D.C. and about your family?

Frankly, I feel that I come from a rather extraordinary family who saw to it I had a varied education and a rich musical background. My father was a doctor; my mother, a math teacher, though she was actually studying medicine when they married. They married rather late; he was already about forty, and she was in her late twenties. There's a lovely story about his mother saying, "Edwin, if you're going to marry this woman, maybe you'd better do it before she spends all her money on medical school." So he did. The family on both sides came from Hanover, Germany. Interestingly enough, my mother was born there, and my father's father was also born there.

How long has your family been in this country?

My father's father came to this country at the age of eight, brought by his father, who was avoiding the Revolution of 1848.

When my great-grandfather arrived here, he was somewhat of a philosopher. He'd never done anything like farming, but he decided that in this country he would be a farmer. He looked at some property around New York and was offered two pieces of land — one up in Sullivan County and one in a place nearby in New York City called Harlem. He didn't buy the Harlem property which is why we're not Vanderbilts.

My grandfather was apprenticed to a pharmacist when he was thirteen years old, fought in the Civil War on the Union side, had brothers fighting on the Confederate side and, afterwards went to medical school. My father played the piano very well, and, at the age of eighteen, had to make a decision whether to be a pianist or a doctor. He ended up being a doctor who always played the piano. My earliest memories of my father are of his coming up from the office, which was in our house, sitting down at the piano and improvising for an hour or so before dinner.

Even though all of the live music I heard at home was piano music, at the age of three I started asking for the violin. There was a violin teacher on the block who insisted I came and asked, when I was only three, whether I could have lessons. He refused, obviously. Nobody thought of starting children at three. There was no specific training for children of that age. Everybody thought, "This is lovely, but the kid doesn't know what she's talking about!"

I grew up hearing Kreisler recordings. There wasn't any radio, but our family had recordings very early. I don't know if you remember the last Violin Column I wrote for the *Journal* a few years ago? Among other people, I thanked my Uncle Emile Berliner, who invented the flat disk recording. He became a very famous inventor, responsible for the microphone, the long distance telephone, all kinds of things. It was mainly his invention of the disk that allowed the record business to develop. We still have records at home which predate commercial records, records that he made in his laboratory.

I was a sickly child. Because of my ill health, nobody did anything about arranging lessons for me. When I was six, despite the fact that I was a docile child, I remember having practically a knock-down, drag-out fight with my family because they said I had to go to school. I argued, "Okay, if I'm strong enough to go to school, why can't I study the violin?"

My father said, "You can't do both. You've got to grow up educated." The upshot of the whole thing was very funny because at the age of eight, I had an acute appendicitis attack. I had an atypical appendix which had been the cause of my on-going illness. After it was removed, I bloomed.

When I was nine, my parents finally agreed I could have some violin lessons. However, the teacher on the block, not knowing that I could read music already, insisted I should first have a year of piano lessons. We had a lovely piano teacher who came by the house to teach my sister, a wonderful German lady by the name of Greta von Bayer, who had studied composition with Max Bruch. She played beautifully. I liked to sit in and listen to the lessons, especially when she played to demonstrate. Those were my first formal instrument lessons.

I had already been exposed to Dalcroze eurythmics. I went to a French school, which had a teacher from Geneva, who had worked with Jaques Dalcroze. I had eurythmics from first grade on until I was about ten. Those Dalcroze lessons were really my earliest musical experience.

Why did your parents send you to a French school?

Because they felt very strongly that young people should learn languages. The family had spoken German at home prior to the First World War, when it was frowned upon. They sent us to a French school, so we would be taught French and German.

You were in D.C. proper.

Yes, right in the middle of the city. A large part of the student body of the school was diplomatic corps families. It

L. to r.: Evelyn Hermann, Dr. Masaaki Honda, Louise Behrend, Dr. Suzuki, and Sheila Keats, at the 1975 Honolulu, Hawaii International Teachers Conference.

Dr. Suzuki working with a young Henry Street student during the special week-long visit he made to the program in the late 1960's.

was a small private school, a very good one. It's no longer a French school now, just a private school. The school tried all kinds of innovative ideas: Montessori, Dalcroze, etc. I first learned to read music there. The Dalcroze teacher would put up on the blackboard an antecedent phrase, and we would compose the consequent phrase. It was fabulous. When I first started to play the piano, my teacher was stunned when she put a piece of music up and I read it. She said, "Do you read music?" I said, "Doesn't everybody? I read books; I read music."

I finally did start studying violin with the teacher on the block, a gentleman named Herman Rakemann. His family had sent him to study in Berlin with Joachim and Moser, and he had studied for a summer with Ysaÿe. He was already in his seventies — a fine musician but not the best violin teacher. I was the only youngster he was teaching, and he often sent me home in tears. Later, I had to relearn much about playing the violin because he taught me everything inefficiently, but he gave me a wonderful music background. He had me playing movements from Bach's solo sonatas before I was playing much of anything. I knew that I wasn't playing the violin well. He started me out with the old Hohmann method which starts with whole bows on the E-string in C Major. Everything that's impossible. Yet I realized afterwards, looking back, that I did learn a lot about music, if not about playing the violin.

My sister wanted to study singing and majored in languages extensively. Because she liked to be tops in everything, when she eventually discovered that her voice was not going to take her to the Metropolitan, she gave up singing and went to Barnard. Then she took her junior year abroad at the Sorbonne, where she majored in languages. It was after that summer that my mother decided to take both of us someplace where my sister could improve her German. We ended up in Salzburg.

What year was this?

1932.

Interesting time to be in Salzburg.

There were already Nazi troops wandering up and down the streets. Hitler was speaking at Berchtesgaden while we were there, and we met some friendly English people who were going over to hear him speak, but my mother refused to go. I later understood that she refused to go because we are Jewish. It was a very interesting time and a wonderful time to be in Salzburg. The music we heard was incredible, and I was lucky. I went to the Mozarteum and studied with the head of the violin department, a man named Theodore Mueller who had studied seven years with Ševčik. He immediately spotted all the things that were bothering me in my playing, put me on a diet of bowing exercises, vibrato exercises, shifting exercises, nothing but technique for six weeks. I ate it up because I knew I was going in the right direction.

I came back after the summer to the same teacher because there really wasn't anyone else in Washington. He didn't have any idea how to continue me in the direction I was going, but kept on giving me wonderful music. I kept up all the exercises by myself through that entire year because I realized what they were doing for me. It involved taking one exercise and keeping it going for a long time, à la Dounis concept and, interestingly enough, also the Suzuki concept. Then later that year I had the opportunity to play for Louis Persinger.

So you played for him right after your senior year in high school?

Yes. I played for him, and he accepted me as his student. I went to study with him that summer in Maine and then continued to study with him a total of five years before I went to Juilliard Graduate School.

How was it that you actually came to play for Persinger anyway?

An aunt of mine met a composer named Rosalie Housman on a ship, going to Europe. In discussing all kinds of things, my aunt mentioned a niece of hers who was very seriously interested in the violin and about ready to leave high school, but unsure of just where she was going to study. Rosalie offered to introduce me to Persinger whom she had known on the West Coast before he came to New York to the Graduate School to replace Leopold Auer. She made the introduction, and I played for him. He was then *the* big name; he had just made a big splash with several prodigies (Yehudi Menuhin, Ruggiero Ricci). I was very lucky.

Now you say you went to The Juilliard Graduate School. Did you just skip college?

Well, that's a funny story.

You were waiting for that, weren't you?

Well, in a way, except you must understand what the Juilliard Graduate School was then. You only needed a high school diploma. They called it Graduate School because they felt the students should be on a graduate playing level. It was like Curtis Institute of Music in that it was absolutely free. It was very small; they had only a complement of 40 violins, enough to make up the orchestra. I never went to college, and I have no degrees because the Graduate School only gave out a certificate, which stated that I had successfully completed their course of study. It was absolute heaven at the School because we did nothing but study music. When they decided we should have an academic course, they set up a poetry course or a literature course. It was a fabulous place!

Now when was this?

It was '39. I had already been studying with Persinger for several years. When I got to him I wasn't very advanced. I had only been studying the violin for six years, but apparently he saw enough that he was willing to teach me. I studied with him privately and took all kinds of courses at the Institute of Musical Art. You see there was this funny arrangement; the Institute of Musical Art and the Juilliard Graduate School had buildings side-by-side. They shared many teachers. Almost all of the wind instrument players in the Juilliard Orchestra came from the Institute. The Juilliard Graduate School taught piano, violin, cello, composition, voice and flute only. All the violinists played the viola. They had no viola major; we all had to do our stint, which was good training. The Institute of Musical Art was Frank Damrosch's school, founded in 1905. It had already merged with the Juilliard Graduate School.

Now, when you first came to New York, you weren't yet enrolled in the Juilliard Graduate School.

No, I was enrolled at the Institute of Musical Art to study theory and ear training because I had ambitions of being both a composer and a conductor, as well as a violinist. I wrote quite a lot of music when I was young, but I gave up writing when I discovered that though I had a facility, it was not the kind of musical, compositional gift that the world was going to miss

if I quit writing. When I was composing, I found that I couldn't concentrate on anything else, so I quit.

Tell me a little bit about New York at that time.

Very different. When I first came up here my mother was worried about settling a sixteen-year-old here without any school connection or anything. She established me at a place called The Studio Club on East 77th Street that was a Y residence club for women. I hated it. I spent only about three months there. Mrs. Persinger was very interested in the kids who were working with Mr. Persinger, L.P., as we all called him. She found a room for me in an apartment in their building. It was a horrible little room on the air shaft, completely dreadful, but I lived there. The apartment belonged to a school teacher who rented out a few rooms to students. She took me under her wing, kept an eye on me. I was really quite young to be in New York by myself, completely unattached to anything. The interesting thing is that I went everywhere by myself. I thought nothing of going out late at night. I went out for meals — there was no cooking there — but nobody worried. As a matter of fact my first job, which was considerably later, while I was at The Graduate School, was teaching down at the Henry Street Settlement Music School. I would ride the subways down there, walk all the way across Division Street to Henry Street, and come home late at night. No problems. A young woman carrying a fiddle. Nobody thought a thing about it. It was safe.

Now, let's see, Juilliard at that time was located in the same building where the Manhattan School is now?

That's right. That was the Juilliard School, and the Persinger's lived at 119th and Riverside. It took me quite a while to catch up to the Graduate School level because I was running pretty far behind. A lot of kids went in at seventeen, just out of high school. I was twenty-three the year I went in. Just to get the picture, there were 60 applicants for violin, and they took only ten.

It was all wonderful; we had our lessons, and we had chamber music galore — at least two groups, one with piano and one string quartet. We had people like Felix Salmond and Hans Letz coaching chamber music. A lot of people did sonatas with Persinger or with Carl Friedman. I started a sonata team very early on, even before I got into the school and got coaching on sonatas a lot, from Persinger and from my pianist's teacher James Friskin. We also had orchestra, which we griped about because we had to do over twenty concerts and four operas a year. It was a professional training, but we complained about it, of course.

When did you begin teaching? While at the Graduate School?

Well, I came from a family of teachers. My father taught at Georgetown University Medical School; my mother was a teacher; all my aunts were teachers; it was in the blood. And, realizing what a difference it made, I always wanted to teach. I actually started teaching inadvertently when I was twelve when a friend took up the violin. I felt she needed help, so I got myself going teaching her.

Now the Juilliard School, like Curtis, took an interest in its students. I remember being called in my second year and asked what I was planning to do, and whether I needed help finding work. I had already sent out letters to all the music schools around and had gotten a nibble from the Henry Street Music School because of my name. The director of Henry Street

The Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia summer school string quartet. L. to r.: David Wells, 'cello; Louise Behrend, 2nd violin; Marguerite Schenckman, viola; Josef Gingold, 1st violin.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND SUN, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1950.

Music

Louise Behrend Scores In Town Hall Recital

By ROBERT BAGAR.

The city of Washington may pat itself proudly on the back for having produced the fine young violinist, Louise Behrend, who gave her first Town Hall recital last evening. Few, indeed, are there local debuts as interesting musically as hers was. To make matters still more agreeable all around, Miss Behrends accompanist, David Garvey, played the piano with the sympathy, the agility and interpretative skill of the true collaborator.

It occurred to this ...

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1950.

LOUISE BEHREND, VIOLINIST, IN BOW

Young Artist Shows Mature Musicianship in Her Debut Recital at Town Hall

On the basis of last night's dis- ...

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1950

CONCERT AND RECITAL

By Jerome D. Bohm

LOUISE BEHREND
TOWN HALL

Violinist in recital last night. Accompanist, David Garvey. The program:
Sonata, A major, Op. 5, No. 6 .... Corelli
Adagio, E major (K. 261); Rondo, C major (K. 373) .... Mozart
Concerto Academico .... Williams
Sonata, Op. 30, No. 2, C minor .... Beethoven

Violinist in Debut

Uncommon talent was revealed by Louise Behrend, who gave her first local violin recital last night. The excellent taste with which she had devised her program was carried over into her performances, which were technically adroit, stylistically secure, pure in intonation and in sustained music, transparently sensuous in sound; in rapid, loud passages, her tone was less persuasive, taking on a rather wiry texture.

But there was full compensation for any shortcomings in tonal sensuousness in Miss Behrend's interpretations which, in addition to innate musicality bore the stamp of an enkindling imagination. For a player who had never previously appeared before a New York audience her work was remarkably assured and mature in conception.

Her firmly articulated rhythms imbued the quick movements of the Corelli sonata with the necessary vitality, and if its slow sections emerged rather too objectively, no such coolness was present in her accounts of the Mozart adagio and rondo, the first of which was imbued with truly Mozartean serernity of mood, the latter, with the essential blend of humor and melancholy so characteristic of this master.

... Williams's Concerto ... had not previ- ...

...WN HALL • WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1950 • AT 8:30 O'CLOCK

...UISE BEHREND

Violinist

...GRAM — DAVID GARVEY at the Piano

..., Op. 5, No. 6 . . . . CORELLI
...
Allegro
Adagio
Allegro
(Played from the Amsterdam edition with the graces attributed to Corelli himself. Figured bass realized by Louise Behrend.)

Adagio in E major (K. 261) }
Rondo in C major (K. 373) } . . . . MOZART

Concerto Accademico in D minor . . . . . . VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
Allegro Pesante
Adagio
Presto

Intermission

Sonata in C minor, Op. 30, No. 2 . . . . BEETHOVEN
Allegro con brio
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo
Allegro

Steinway Piano

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RHEA POWERS, Manager, Recital Division

at that time was Grace Spofford. Grace was a remarkable woman who had been an executive secretary at Peabody and then moved on to put Curtis on its feet. When she left Curtis, she came here and built up the New York College of Music, and then took over Henry Street Music School and transformed it into an extraordinary school.

I had a cousin, a pianist who went to Curtis and made quite a big name for herself, specializing in American music. Grace had known her at Curtis, so my name clicked with her. She called me and offered me a job, my first job. They were paying really munificent salaries at Henry Street at that time. I got a dollar fifty an hour. It was a great start for me because she really kept an eye on her faculty. They thought she was a dragon.

I loved to teach, and I did pretty well right from the beginning. I did an enormous amount of research on the materials. She liked that and was very pleased with me. Then, in my third year there, I decided my students were moving too slowly. It was all very solid, very good, but I wanted to speed up the progress, so I tried some experiments. At the end of that year Mrs. Spofford called me on the carpet and said, "What under the sun has happened to your teaching?" I explained.

She taught me a lot. She would wander into your studio, and if she didn't like what she heard, she would take over the lesson. She was a pianist herself, but that didn't make any difference to her.

What were you teaching when you first started? How did you put together a curriculum?

Well, I did an enormous amount of research to look over every method I could find and to pick one I wanted. Now, it so happened, I had already found out a little bit from the teacher I worked with in Salzburg about methods. Among the methods he was touting was Küchler, a major German method at the time. I looked at the well-known Belgian methods, then I looked at all the American methods, and I made decisions on what approach to the instrument seemed most logical. I discarded every single C major approach, and eventually started using a series called *Violin Ventures* that actually was based on the Küchler Method. It started with short bows, A major approach — all of the techniques that eventually became established elements of the Suzuki approach. All the good methods had already moved into this kind of thing. Then I looked for pieces that I thought were attractive and would work, and ended up teaching different materials to each student according to his/her needs.

I taught a huge variety of early music and new music. We had more available than you have now. A lot of good materials have now gone out of print. In those days you could go to a music store like Schirmers and look at slews of music, but now there's practically nothing to see. The music print industry is in real trouble, and as far as beginning violin teaching material, not too much has been published since Suzuki because most people moved in that direction, and that's probably wise.

However, I do like people to look at a lot of other methods and see what they offer, to see where Suzuki came from. The main difference, of course, from what Suzuki did, was that the other standard methods would have a mix of exercises preceding little duets in pieces. He just eliminated all that. His idea was that people should understand how to use these materials. The ideas didn't work when just put in black and white on the page. He wanted to teach them. That's why he didn't write a method book.

What were the ages of most of these students, or did it vary quite a bit?

It varied a lot in a place like Henry Street, which was a community music school teaching both children and adults. I don't think I taught anyone under five. Usually six to ten, anywhere in there.

One of my most interesting students at Henry Street was David Herman who came to me when he was twelve. He went to Yeshiva from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. and then practiced violin four hours a night. He made extraordinary progress and has now gone into violin- and bow-making. I got all kinds, but not all of them were as dedicated as he was.

I taught everybody, because that was the community music school view; it was very much like Suzuki. Every child can be educated and should have the opportunity. The Lower East Side at that time was still largely Jewish. So, a school like Henry Street had a large Jewish population with an educated, and a *musically* educated background.

New York is full of Settlement Schools — Third Street. Turtle Bay, Bloomingdale House of Music. They're all still what you'd consider Settlement Schools. The book *Voices of Henry Street: Portrait of a Community* by Harvey Wang tells about the whole settlement school movement. Cleveland has a huge settlement school that is still extremely active. There are hundreds of such schools and a very big one in Washington now, the Levine School of Music.

The community music school was based on the settlement school idea and is very big today. The National Guild of Community Music Schools, of which The School for Strings is a member, is very strong now. The School for Strings is considered a community school partly because of my Special Program.

So, in 1940 you were teaching at Henry Street?

Right. I had finished at Juilliard and had a working sonata team that had come together already.

What is a sonata team exactly?

In this day and age recitals often feature chamber music; everybody plays sonatas on recitals. Instrumentalists get together with the pianist for two or three rehearsals and play sonatas, but they are not always played well. At that time there were a few real sonata teams going where people continued to work as a team. There are a few violinists and pianists now who work together constantly, and it works because they play together all the time. A sonata team, purely and simply, is two people who get together to play the sonatas, practice at least three hours a day, and play all the literature. My pianist was a woman named Dorsey Smith. We gave several concerts in New York and out of town and had a wonderful time. We learned wonderful repertoire, and it was great fun.

When did you start teaching in the Prep Division at Juilliard?

I was teaching at Henry Street when I was asked to sub in the Extension Division at the Institute of Musical Art. This was in the middle of the year, and I went up and took over the class. At the end of the year, I was asked to come back, and that's the way it started.

For a number of years, I taught in the Extension Division — violin mostly. Then came the G.I. bill, and I also started coaching chamber music more, a lot of sonata coaching. With the G.I. bill, a lot of interesting students came back to study

through the Extension Division. Eventually Juilliard got concerned that people could come study the instrument, go out into the world and say, "I'm a violinist who studied at Juilliard" when really they had not been in either the Institute of Musical Art or in the Graduate School. Eventually they eliminated instrumental teaching in the Extension Division. I continued teaching the sonata classes. It was at that point that I was hired to teach in the Prep.

The two schools hadn't completely amalgamated yet, but William Schumann eventually changed things. The free school idea was abandoned, along with the Juilliard Graduate School concept. It became the Juilliard School of Music, and the names Juilliard Graduate School and Institute of Musical Art disappeared.

Could you talk a little bit about the 50's?

Well, my sonata team broke up after we had been together about six years, and I started thinking more about solo playing. I went to Persinger when I was getting ready to play my Town Hall debut recital and said, "I need a good pianist. Do you have someone to recommend?" He recommended a young man who was playing in his studio named David Garvey. David's first Town Hall recital was with me, and later he went with me on the Far East tour. He, of course, went on to a prestigious career, perhaps best known for his collaboration with Leontyne Price.

In the summer of '53, I played in a quartet with Joseph Gingold. It was a great experience playing with Joe.

Who were the other members of the quartet?

Marguerite Schenckman was the violist; David Wells, the cellist, a very young man at the time. I still remember our *Death and the Maiden.* It almost ended up being our death. They didn't have air conditioning in those days, and here we were performing in this very nice little hall. It was one of these humid, hot nights; it must have been 95 in the shade. We were ending the program with *Death and the Maiden,* and I can remember thinking, "I don't dare get up because I'm sure there's a puddle in the chair."

I was wearing contacts and Joe was wearing glasses. When we got to the *accelerando* at the end of the last movement, he took a tempo he had never taken before. We got to the end, and I couldn't believe that we had all stayed together! He played like crazy and afterwards I said, "Joe, what hit you?"

"You know, I got so fogged up I couldn't see anything. I thought, 'I've got to get through this as fast as I can or I'm not going to be able to play to the end of the piece.'"

It was a wonderful summer. I got to know Joe very well, and we have maintained a friendship ever since.

Tell us about your early experiences with Dr. Suzuki.

In 1962 I decided to go out West, mountain climbing. I had fallen in love with mountains in Austria, and I contacted a cellist friend with whom I played a great deal at Juilliard named Bettina Roulier, who had a Swiss background. I said, "Bettina, I'd love to go on a trip out West and maybe go to mountain climbing school." She thought it was a great idea since she'd done a lot of climbing in Switzerland. I had a Plymouth Valiant, and we drove cross-country and went to mountain climbing school in Wyoming in the Tetons, and to rock climbing school. It was a wonderful experience.

Bettina was a member of ASTA, and there was an ASTA conference in Colorado Springs, so we went down from Estes Park to Colorado Springs for the conference. John Kendall had just come back from Japan, and his presentation at the conference was my first real contact with Suzuki. John showed a tape of the Bach Double Concerto and gave talks about the new exciting method he had discovered in Japan. My own reaction at that time was fairly skeptical. First of all, I thought the sound of the Bach Double was kind of dreadful. Of course, it was a bad tape anyway. I thought, "One of these mass production things. I'm not sure about all this." I certainly found some of Suzuki's teaching concepts very interesting, but I was a little worried about quality. I went away just vaguely interested.

At the same time, I was reading one of the Szigeti books in which he comments on visiting Japan and seeing this marvelous group of children playing. I was very much interested in Szigeti and always have been. I always loved his playing and his books. However, it wasn't until Suzuki himself came that I was sold on his approach.

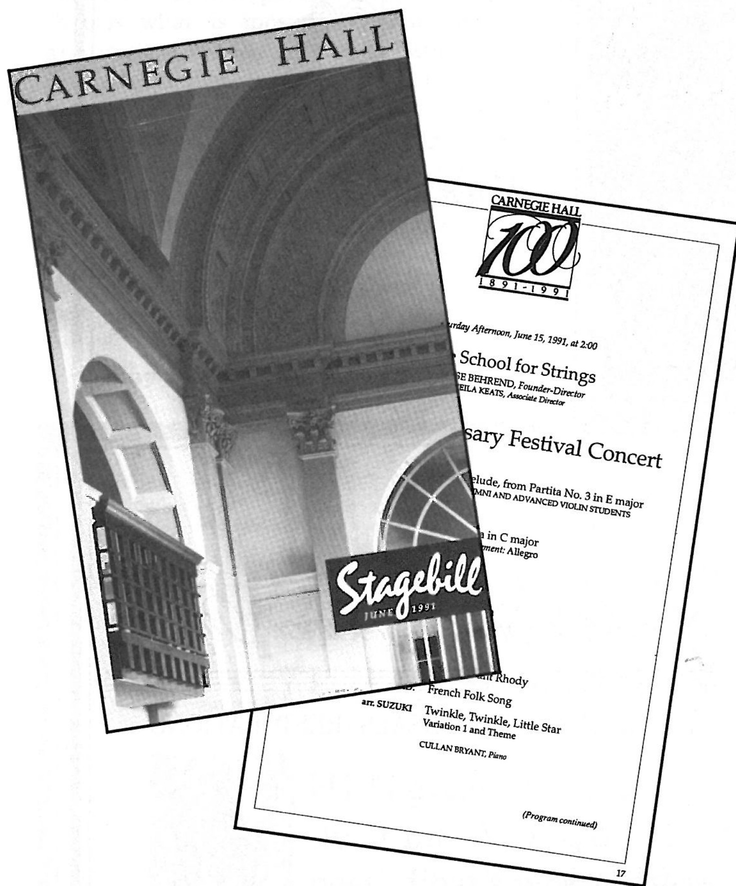
So that would have been the next year?

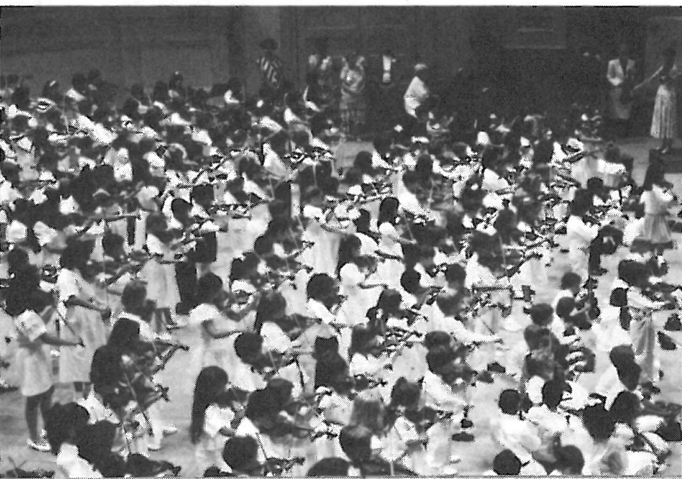
Suzuki brought that first tour group to Juilliard in 1964. The thing that got me was, I was preparing a recital with the Veracini E minor Sonata as an opener. I remember sitting in the audience as a seven-year-old played Veracini A minor Sonata. I sat there and said, "Wow." That's when I realized that it wasn't just mass production, that these very young kids could produce beautiful music.

I had taught small children for years, and I was considered pretty good at it, in the normal run of people teaching small children. I thought, "This guy is doing it better than I am." If someone does something better than I do, I have a propensity to want to find out how they do it, so I can do it better. That made me think about going to Japan and finding out a little more about this.

At the time, I managed to interest the National Guild of Community Music Schools in this whole idea, and they charged me to report back to them, because, after all, Suzuki's concept that every child can be educated and can be taught music was also the philosophy of the Community Music School.

The human fly rapelling down the side of one of the Tetons is — you guessed it! Louise Behrend. Shortly after this feat, she descended to Colorado Springs where she met John Kendall and enjoyed her first introduction to Suzuki ideas.





After planning a trip to Japan, I went to a conference of the National Guild in Chicago, and Herbert Zipper, who was then the conductor of the Manila Symphony, invited me to play with the orchestra since I was going to be in the area. A former student, an extraordinary woman named Elaine McKinnes, who later became one of the most outstanding teachers of Zen Catholicism, had opened a music school near Osaka, with several other nuns. She organized five concerts for us in the south of Japan, and Sheila Keats rounded up some additional concerts. I ended up with a concert tour playing nineteen times in one month!

Several hilarious situations arose while we were on that tour. When we got to the Philippines, the university was afraid their auditorium would not be big enough. They had us play in their sports auditorium that seated 10,000 and had open sides. I got onto the stage and said to David Garvey, "Play something." I went back in the auditorium. I couldn't hear a thing. We had to mike it. That was a real wild experience.

Then there was the appearance at the Women's University where the auditorium was on the top floor. It was a four o'clock concert and a big thunderstorm came up, no air conditioning, you understand — windows wide open. I still remember the experience. We were playing Bartok's 2nd Sonata, which has wonderfuly quiet, mysterious sections. I looked down at Mrs. Casilagh, who was the director of culture in the Philippines, and she was looking up, raptly. I thought to myself, "She can't hear a note I'm playing." I began to feel I was going to break out laughing in the middle of the concert. These things happen when you go on tours.

We played in Singapore and had a weird experience there too. Singapore had just seceded from the Malaysian Federation. We were told that we wouldn't be able to do the television taping they had projected for us because the television station had burned down. We went down there thinking, "What are we getting into?" It turned out that they had televised a rally of the Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts had built a bonfire next to the TV station and, well, . . . So we did a taping in an open sports palace. We had to stop every two minutes while fire engines went by. The whole experience was fantastic.

I tied all that in with going to Japan, one week in the Tokyo area, where Dr. Honda and Hirose took me all around. I spent, all-in-all, a month in Japan tied in with that tour to the south of Japan. Two weeks in Matsumoto. (This was before the school was built, so summer school was held in the mountains.) The week before summer school I spent every day with Suzuki all day long in his home, watching him teach. I discovered, first of all, what an extraordinary mind he had. It was fascinating watching the children. I can remember one child, an eight-year-old playing *La Folia*. I thought that was terrific. We don't think anything today of an eight-year-old playing *La Folia*. How times have changed!

When I returned, I wrote, "No Shortage of String Players In Japan" for the National Guild to report on the experience. In that report, I mention some of the things that so impressed me, especially the originality of Suzuki's thinking. He had by himself come up with so many ideas that were universally found in different places. For instance, he showed me one exercise he thought was very good, and I said, "Oh, that's a Capet exercise." He had never read Capet and did not know Capet's work. He showed me another exercise he was doing for developing a sense of the string and the bow and I said, "Oh, I've seen that done by Luigi Silva." He had never heard of Luigi Silva,

a great cello teacher here. In other words, I had a lot of this knowledge from the universal reading and contacts I had made, but he had evolved it all on his own. I was very much impressed with this kind of mentality.

I will admit that in the summer school, I was fascinated by the whole thing, and I was terribly amused when he asked me to give a lecture on vibrato. He hadn't yet evolved his own thinking about vibrato, which he said would happen by the time he was ninety. Interestingly enough, his concepts of teaching the vibrato, now that he is past ninety, are the same traditional ideas that everybody uses.

The whole experience left me feeling absolutely "ga-ga" about what he was doing with small children. In that article, I stated that the one thing that first struck me was that it was not what I had expected — not a new method of playing the violin. It was an important educational philosophy. I still feel that is what is most important about the whole Suzuki approach, and even more so as I am watching what's happening in the United States with music education. I really feel we're just at the beginning. With what is happening in the world today, especially in the United States, where we have a big Suzuki Association and a lot going on, this method has taken hold with youngsters. We have built while the public schools have gone "boom." There is a connection here, also with Community Music Schools. They, too, are having to take over what the public schools have not done. It's a tremendously important job.

Why has the philosophy been so successful?

We have been doing this since time immemorial, and people never realized what it was all about. If you look into the history of outstanding performers, you discover they were using Suzuki's approach because they were involved in their families and in their homes with this kind of teaching from the beginning. Here I must admit, there is such a thing as talent. Many of these performers had what Suzuki likes to refer to as better ability to adjust to their environment. I feel that Suzuki's saying that talent is completely related to environment is his way of emphasizing the importance of the environment. When Suzuki says that the only difference is some children have a greater ability to adjust to that environment, he is admitting the fact that there is "such a thing as talent." But that doesn't mean that every child cannot be educated up to a certain level in music. I think every child can be, and I believe it 100 percent! The development of a high level of ability is what Suzuki has been projecting for every child. Given some basic talent, a child brought up in the right environment, with the right teaching, evolves into something wonderful. The levels of abilities are going to be different, and they're going to be strong in different areas of interest, but we know that. We know that genes affect our inner ability to function in every way.

I feel that more and more people are becoming aware of the importance of the early years. Finally, we may break through enough to prove that music as an alternative way of learning is crucial. People are waking up to the idea that the arts are not just an end in themselves, that the arts are an important facet of humanity's ability to communicate, to grow and to evolve. I'm taken back to something my father once said. As an adolescent I was going through some kind of emotional

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horror and was trying to solve it, and he looked at me and said, "You know, people think man is a creature of intellect, but man is a creature of his emotions." We are emotional beings. Where can we best channel our emotions, evolve our emotions and communicate our emotions, except through the arts? And it seems to me, that music has always been the best of the nonverbal modes of communication. That is why I think, as people wake up to this, and I think they are beginning to, what Suzuki has done is going to be crucial.

Why do you think the Association has been experiencing a reawakening, a regeneration of activity, over the last two or three years?

I think what's happening, frankly, is what happens to every organization. It is going to be happening in School for Strings, too. As the older generation begins to phase out a little bit, a new generation comes in with new thinking, new ideas, that "reawaken" the organization. I think that the people now who are moving into positions of advocacy and are taking over the hard work of the organization, are younger and look at things a little differently, often having grown up with Suzuki teaching themselves. Those of us who first got it going in this country are probably a little played out. We don't have the same view of it.

Where did you first begin your Suzuki teaching?

I started teaching with the Suzuki approach at Henry Street Settlement Music School, in the traditional Japanese way, bringing parents in and so forth. I also experimented with teaching by the Suzuki approach without involving the parents closely. The Henry Street Settlement sponsored a nursery school that was part of a Head Start program in P.S. 134. I started my first experimental work down there, and we had a very good program. I did a traditional Suzuki program with parents at Henry Street and worked without parents in the pre-kindergarten program.

The School for Strings has been operating for 23 years. How did the apprenticeship program get started?

It started with Nancy Dexter. She was the general music teacher at the Day School of the Church of the Heavenly Rest and was, by profession, a bass player, not a violinist. The director of the Day School had married a Japanese woman and was very interested in the whole Suzuki idea. He wanted it brought into his music program. I was the only person around who had any knowledge of Suzuki teaching, so she came to me to learn to play the violin and to learn how to teach it.

I was also teaching two other adults who were interested in Suzuki: Margo Sokoloff and Stanley Kurtis. (Stan Kurtis is pretty famous now. He's the tango man in Al Pacino's film. He made those tango recordings.) I had a waiting list of about twenty parents and children. I said to Nancy, "Look, let's try something. If you can get us a couple of rooms after school at the Day School, I'll divide up these families among the three of you, and I'll supervise it. I'll work with you after we finish the teaching, we'll go over all the materials, the purposes, the procedures. It will be a teacher training course on an apprenticeship basis."

I'd never thought of doing teacher training until then. I had always liked the idea of training teachers by having them get experience. Nancy went to the director of the Day School. He said, "Fine, let's do it." He gave us some space there. We started out with 20 families, 3 apprentices. It went very well, and we learned a lot. For one thing, we found out that it was absolutely impossible to get the American parent in New York City to do the traditional Suzuki master class set up, where the families come in at 2:00 and sit for four hours, while one child at a time is taught. Our parents would not do it, and we discovered our American children were so rowdy, they wouldn't sit still long enough for us to work with anyone else. We tried it for several years and finally had to give it up.

By the second year, to my astonishment, I had six apprentices and fifty children. We needed more space in the Day School. At that time I went to Sheila Keats, who was working for Lincoln Center, writing materials for them and doing some management on the side. I said, "Sheila, how would you like a job managing this little project of mine?" That's where she came into the picture. I don't think it ever occurred to her to start doing Suzuki piano teaching. She'd always done some piano teaching, but this is the way she got involved.

I'd like to digress at this point to tell you more about Sheila. I hate running things and always look for someone to do what I consider the "dirty work" in running any project I dream up.

Sheila was the answer to a prayer. I had met her some years prior to this when she was the secretary and I was the treasurer of the Juilliard Alumni Association. She is a woman of extraordinary abilities. Her education included Radcliffe College and a degree in piano from Juilliard. She is a brilliant writer and editor; she worked with Richard Franko Goldman at Juilliard as his administrative assistant and became, among her other responsibilities, editor of *The Juilliard Review*. Later, Richard asked her to take over the management of The Goldman Band, which she did for a number of years.

While managing the Band, she also wrote extensively for the Lincoln Center Student Program, did all the program notes for Leopold Stokowski's American Symphony Orchestra, edited art books for the Harry N. Abrams publishing house, and also acted as personal representative for a number of concert artists. (Note her name on the publicity flyer for my Far Eastern tour in 1965.) While doing all of this, she continued playing and teaching the piano.

After joining us at The Day School, she took over the administration of The Suzuki Program (as we called it then). When we incorporated as a not-for-profit organization, it was she who thought of calling the school "The School for Strings." We wanted a name that would allow us the scope to expand into chamber music and into advanced study, two areas where I felt that the Suzuki beginnings would lead us.

All of the materials of SFS list Sheila as Associate Director. The development of the school as an organization has been her doing. I couldn't possibly have done this myself! Years ago, Marge Aber commented how lucky I was to have Sheila working with me, and she couldn't have said anything truer. What's more, Sheila developed the piano department of the school, as well as our Teacher Training Program in Piano. She has kept up her own playing, acting, in the early years, as official accompanist at the school and, for over twenty years now, as accompanist for my students at Juilliard.

I never think of SFS as "my" school, but rather as a remarkably succssful collaborative venture with Sheila. I know that without her it could not have evolved as it has.

Now by the third year, we had ninety kids. We had branched out from the Day School and had some space in a church on 90th Street and Central Park West. It was obvious

we had to find some place of our own. We had only one floor at first; then the second floor above us was vacated, and we needed more space, so we added the second floor and gained a very nice, big recital room. We were there close to fifteen years until the building got into the hands of ABC who refused to give us a lease because they were planning to demolish the whole block and put up a new building.

Now you were out looking for a building in mid-town Manhattan!

We didn't want to go north of 96th or south of 23rd if we could help it. We looked; we scoured. Every place we found that looked suitable was either too expensive or had a demolition clause. Finally Sheila found a little building on West 54th. We had been putting aside monies because we knew there would be renovation costs. We found that it was really quite reasonable. We envisioned we would have to make it bigger and so forth. It was only two stories, an old carriage house. We went out on a limb and bought it.

Two horrible years followed when we were in transit, when our renovation was supposed to be finished and was not. That was a New York horror, which put us in terrible debt. We have been in our current location for about six years.

Let's talk a little about the development of the Special Programs.

Okay, first I will talk a little about how the school has evolved. The more I began to see what was happening with the Suzuki approach in this country, the more I felt that we had to have a clearer picture of where we were leading the children. In Japan, there is such a different picture. They don't have school orchestras. They don't have the teenagers continuing the way we do, so Suzuki pushes the kids fast when they are young, since they do not have the time to go on studying if they are not professionally-oriented.

It became very clear to me, perhaps because of my own involvement in chamber music, that the obvious way for the Suzuki student to be directed was toward chamber music. Chamber music provides a lifetime of performance with friends and is a continuation of the Suzuki student's group performances. Students who might not otherwise become deeply involved, will learn to enjoy music if they are guided very early on into the glories of chamber music. Chamber music was designed for people to play together, make music together, which of course is what Suzuki is doing with children too. As soon as the youngsters reached a certain level and read with some facility, they started playing string quartets. At the Book 4 level, they went into string orchestra; and by Book 5, quartets.

In every culture and every country Suzuki takes on a different purpose. Ideally it will expose every child well to music and create a better-rounded humanity. The Greeks knew music was one of the important parts of education. Maybe we will get back to that idea.

I realized that whereas at first, all of the teaching had been done by apprentices, this could not go on. I now had two tiers. I had people learning how to teach and people who were already experienced teachers. I decided I would start a small community music school within the regular music school, where I would bring in children from economically deprived families and give them Suzuki lessons with my apprentice teachers. That is exactly what I have done through the Special Program. The students in the Special Program get an individual lesson and a group lesson. I have managed to adopt the Suzuki technique of having the children watch each other's lessons because it is in a short time span. It is not an advanced level program; the students can only be in it for a maximum of three years. The important teaching experience the apprentices need is with beginners and with parents of beginners. The apprentices who

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Louise Behrend with lutheir David Herman, a former Henry Street student.

Three Suzuki stalwarts, Anastasia Jempelis, Louise Behrend, and Margery Aber, in a cooperative performance at the Honolulu, Hawaii 1975 Conference.

Louise Behrend with Sheila Keats at the surprise 75th birthday party given at Juilliard for Miss Behrend by her students.

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LOUISE BEHREND

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teach in the Special Program are experienced musicians and many of them have already taught at other levels.

I offer those Special Program students who have kept to their contract of practice and listening and work well with their parents whatever they need as scholarship in the regular program. We operate exactly according to the standard community music school concept. The students pay a basic rate, which is already a scholarship rate, since all of the teachers are apprentices. Those families who cannot afford the reduced rate fill out a scholarship form and pay what they can. We insist they pay something.

Do you have any conservatory students taking teacher training?

I have quite a few, some Juilliard, some Mannes, and Manhattan youngsters who try to do this simultaneously with their conservatory studies. I'm happy to say that we got a grant last year that allows us to give scholarships to teacher trainees. That makes it easier for the kids in the conservatories to pay the double tuition, which is what they have to do. There are some schools that do give credit for this as an outside course — Queens College and Columbia Teachers College. Though I still hope someday it can be a regular course of study with credit available, I have discovered that very few apprentices seem to think it is important to get the credit. They want the training and the experience.

What do you think the reluctance is for so many of these high level conservatories to emphasize or even just to give a passing glance to pedagogy?

Why can't administration recognize that, of all those performers they are training, 95% of them, even if they are successful performers, are going to do some teaching? A lot of them are going to end up teaching children and for those who end up teaching at the college level, the knowledge of what to do at the beginning levels will help them teach the upper levels, let me tell you. Very few of us end up teaching only at the top coaching level. It should not be a required course in the conservatories necessarily, but it should be available. String players have outlets of orchestras and chamber music that pianists do not have. I guess that is one of the reasons schools that accept piano pedagogy think string pedagogy absolutely unnecessary in a conservatory designed to train performers. But a teacher is not going to be a good teacher unless he or she is a good performer too, so there you go. It's a weird blindness.

So often the freelance musicians around town feel they would have to be really desperate to resort to teaching. That attitude seems to be prevalent among a lot of people who do a lot of playing.

There is a talent for teaching that is a mixture of enjoying communication, enjoying sharing what you know with other people, and enjoying people, working with people. For successful Suzuki teaching, you have to enjoy children. When I find someone in my seminars who is really not functioning well with the children, I say, "Look, you've learned a lot of interesting things, but this is not for you. You are going to have to do your teaching, if you are interested in going on with the idea of teaching, at a different age level to be happy and successful with it." I am sure you have seen people who go into Suzuki teaching because they think it will make money, and they are dreadful. You do not make a lot of money. You can make a living; there is a demand. It's the only facet in the music profession today where, frankly, the demand is greater than the supply.

The School for Strings is now well-established with a fine reputation. You have trained — how many people, do you think?

Probably several hundred.

What is your vision for the School's future?

I'm hoping I can make clear the goals and ideals of the school, so that when I am no longer involved and somebody else is directing the school, those standards will be maintained. It is important that we strengthen the Board and understand our goals. I do feel very powerfully that there is a four-pronged focus for the school: A) keeping the Suzuki outlook alive and functioning, B) moving it into chamber music and making that an important part of the school's development and focus, C) continuing the teacher training, and D) maintaining the Special Program — the community outreach aspect. At the moment I am hoping we can make a connection with one of the colleges, so that we can get more outside support. I am very proud of the fact that School for Strings has provided the five violin teachers for the Music Advancement Program at Juilliard, which received funds to bring classical music training to minority students.

I remember a discussion at an SAA Trainers' Conference a few years ago in which you stated that we should try to push for long-term training for our teachers whenever possible.

I still feel the same way because the smorgasbord that people pick up in short-term training when they go from one workshop to another workshop often leaves them without a sense of continuity. I feel the long-term is more valuable. It gives the trainer more flexibility. Every class takes on its own character. Some move slowly; some move fast. I do find that now I take longer and longer over the beginnings and skim the ends much more. By the time you get into higher books, you are dealing with materials we have always taught. It becomes more of a master class situation where you are discussing the music and playing the instrument more than discussing the philosophical concepts that are so important in the beginning training.

You came to this kind of teaching pretty much mid-career. What are some of the attitudes you have encountered towards what you decided to do, which direction you decided to take your life?

Well. That's a very potent question. At first, everybody thought I was crazy. I was always a little bit of an oddball because of my interest in teaching. Most of my friends, when I was at the Graduate School, just planned to perform. I think I was the only one in my class that included, interestingly enough, Dorothy Delay and Margaret Pardee and Bobby Mann, all that crew who are teaching at Juilliard today — I was the only one who knew I wanted to teach to begin with.

Then I became involved with the Suzuki system, and they all thought I was nuts. I didn't drop playing. I didn't drop the teaching at Juilliard. I just added this on. More and more, my colleagues at Juilliard send me their college students to take my teacher training. More and more, the performing musicians around town are coming around to realizing maybe this is not such a crackpot notion. As you say, the diminishing free lance scene has brought me an awful lot of free lance players who are deciding maybe they had better look to something else. Many of them will make fine Suzuki teachers.

The SAA is concerned about quality control issues. Do you have any thoughts on this?

The only way, I suppose, is the thing we have really been ducking — certification. Certification has locked organizations in at times. This is something that we want to avoid because one of the strengths of the whole Suzuki idea is the notion that we must always look for better ways. We must always try something new and something different. Suzuki does not lock himself into ideas, though sometimes some of his followers do.

I always tell people the story of when I heard Dr. Suzuki in his hideaway in the new Smith building practicing for two hours on the first two measures of Bach Bourrée. I came out to take a break; he was still going at it. Lo and behold, the next day . . .

A new idea.

A new idea about string crossings. We should all try this. So we all tried it; it was a great idea. Two or three weeks later he came out with some other idea, and we all thought it was nuts. When all the teachers tried it, and it did not really go anywhere, that was the end of it. You never heard about it anymore. It was researched and discarded.

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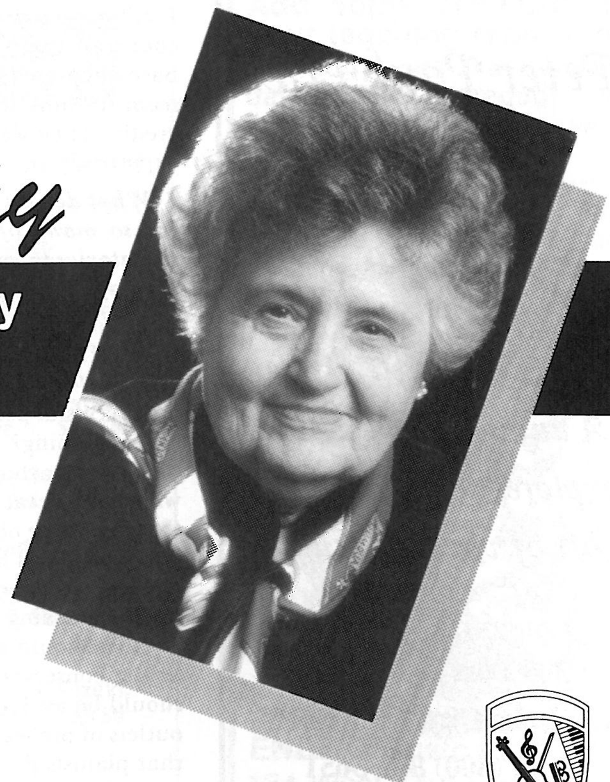

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Any last shot? Advice for the Association?

I've always said I want the School for Strings to be a prototype for what can be done with the Suzuki approach in this country. The one thing I must add to what I said earlier about the mission statement for the School for Strings is that all children deserve a professional-quality education. That's what I want the school to do. I want a high level, a high standard. How do we know this child we're working with isn't going to be a super performer? We don't, but every child should be given exactly the same type of high level professional training, and they will be what they will be. That's where I think sometimes Suzuki programs slip. They make the mistake of being so deeply concerned with the average child — it's the same mistake public schools have made — that very often the super kids get lost. Every child is entitled to the same high quality and high level of training.

So your emphasis then is not necessarily on the people who come to you, but rather on the kind of training they get.

Right.

Which I think maybe is what the Association is striving for.

Yes. Get the performance level up. Get the teaching level up. Constantly go higher.

Allen Lieb is a violin teacher-trainer with the SAA and a frequent contributor to the *ASJ*. He is currently on the faculties of the Diller-Qualie School and the School for Strings in New York City, and the Thurnauer School of Music in New Jersey.

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