

## The World Convention, My Memories

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

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

The following 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 the Institute's hall. Dr. Suzuki's 13 year-old student played me the Sibelius Violin Concerto. I sat and my eyes were full of tears. I was touched by the child's playing and the thoughtfulness of Dr. Suzuki. I knew from 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 19<sup>th</sup> 1986 changed my life totally: the decision to develop the Suzuki Voice Program starting with expectant mothers was made on that day. My life long journey with Suzuki Voice students began. Two years later in 1988, Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki heard for the first time Suzuki Voice students singing in Sweden, and in 1989 a Suzuki Voice group of 30 persons participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Suzuki Method International Conference in Matsumoto. The youngest of our group was 4 months and the eldest 8 years old. I was expecting my first child. I remember how delighted the audience was when 1-½ year-old Christian sang on stage with others in canon the 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 the recital and they thanked even the smallest one.

In 1993 I came the third time to Matsumoto before the South-Korea World Convention. My father was helping me as I was expecting my second child. Every day I studied at the Institute's new Library. (My doctoral thesis - 17 years follow-up study about the 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 the Suzuki Voice Program. The Suzuki Voice students had met them in Australia in 1991 and 1993. The next time we met was 1995 in Dublin, Ireland during the 12<sup>th</sup> World Convention. I remember how two fathers carried Mrs. Suzuki on a chair upstairs to where we had voice lessons. In a lesson was also my third 5-weeks-old baby who was producing intonations while we were singing. We felt like a big Suzuki Family, as in our group there were also grandparents helping.

In 1998 Mrs. Waltraud Suzuki sent us a letter the 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 for "the world without war". In the 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 "Songs for Sharing" Suzuki Voice Workshops started in 1999.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Suzuki World Convention was held in Matsumoto in 1999 and a Suzuki Voice Group of 30 came from Finland including my fourth 1-year-old child. In 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 88<sup>th</sup> birthday in Matsumoto. During the convention, in addition to normal voice lessons, we had one big group lesson with 600 children. What a joy it was to sing - the Happy Suzuki way!

We did not know in 1999 that we were seeing Mrs. Suzuki for the last time. We received a postcard from her just before she passed away December 24<sup>th</sup> 2000. The 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> Suzuki World Convention be successful!

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