

Suzuki or Traditional Lessons?

When it comes to learning how to play the piano, there are two primary types of piano lesson theories. Almost all teachers subscribe to one version or another, although they may operate with any combination of the two. For early learners - particularly toddlers and small children - the Suzuki method is one of the most popular choices. However, it offers a somewhat unique approach to musical education, so it is not without its opponents. For all other learners, the instruction method of choice is traditional music education. This is the principal type of music taught in schools all over the world.

The Suzuki Method

The Suzuki method of music instruction isn't just for piano lessons. It is offered as way to teach everything from guitars to flutes, with an emphasis on each instrument individually. As an instructional method, Suzuki training copies patterns of language acquisition, in which children learn how to speak by being immersed in the language of their parents and environment. By listening to music repetitively and watching as their instructors break down the steps for playing specific songs (usually starting out with something very basic like Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star), children learn how to repeat the music and experiment with sounds on their own.

The Suzuki method for piano instruction is still somewhat controversial as an educational format. It is geared toward very young children - typically between the ages of three and five - an age at which many feel that children are not physically or emotionally prepared to begin structured instruction. It also sidesteps reading musical notes and learning the correlation between notes and the keys on the piano in favor of rote memorization.

The Traditional Method

In traditional piano lessons, the emphasis is placed on learning how to read music and apply the notes to the piano's keys. Students often start by learning the basic scales, eventually moving up to play simple songs and start incorporating two hands to create melodies and harmonies. For the most part, traditional piano lessons move in a linear format, offering easy steps at first and eventually teaching students to work their own way through more complicated sheet music.

Most educators rely on the traditional method because, throughout history, it has been the one most commonly found in schools and colleges. Students who first learn to read sheet music and how to keep time are generally better able to transfer those skills to other areas of music education and instruments. However, young children are typically unable to grasp many of the concepts, and some believe that traditional lessons actually reduce the overall amount of creativity children are allowed to put into their musical education.

Which Piano Lesson Theory is Right for You?

Only you can decide which learning style is right for you or your family. If you have a young child or a child you feel isn't quite ready to grasp the concepts of reading music, it might be better to start with the Suzuki method and eventually transfer to traditional education once the child gains a little more maturity. However, if you want to stay on a single path, it might be better to wait a few years and simply stick with the traditional method.

No matter what you choose, you're doing a great thing for yourself and your children. At the end of the day, it doesn't really matter how you learned to play the piano, as long as you are enjoying yourself, increasing your capacity on a regular basis, and looking to continue your education for years to come.