A STRUCTURED COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SUZUKI AND *COLOURSTRINGS* VIOLIN METHODS WITH CRITICAL REFERENCE TO THE TEACHING OF NOTATION READING SKILLS

CATHARINA JANSEN VAN VUUREN

29228370

Catharina Jansen van Vuuren

50 Phyllite Ave

Zwartkop X8

Centurion 0157

PO BOX 9091

Centurion 0046

0844878046

carinvv.elska@gmail.com

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Catharina Jansen van Vuuren

29228370

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Magister Musicae (Performing Art)

Department of Music

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pretoria

Supervisor: Dr H.S. Rhoodie

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explain and compare the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* violin methods and their respective approaches to the teaching of notation reading skills to beginner violinists. A thorough literature review on the introduction of notation reading skills to the beginner violinist, as well as the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* violin methods in general was conducted. The biographies of the founders and a brief history of each method are given. A structured summary of the approach to notation reading skills, and the foundations and methodology of the respective methods are discussed. Based on these findings, an analysis of each method's pedagogical literature is made to identify and give a deeper understanding of the approach towards notation reading skills. These findings are compared and recommendations are made on how the respective methods can be used in support of the other.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die Suzuki en *Colourstrings* vioolmetodes, asook elkeen se benadering tot die aanleer van notasielees vaardighede vir beginners, te ondersoek en verduidelik. 'n Deeglike literatuurstudie oor die inleiding tot notasie en die aanbieding van die onderskeie metodes in die algemeen is gedoen. Die biografieë van die stigters asook 'n kort geskiedenis van die onderskeie metodes word uiteengesit. 'n Gestruktureerde opsomming van die benadering tot notasielees en die onderskeie metodes se fondasies en metodologieë word bespreek. Die pedagogiese materiaal van elke metode word op grond van die bevindinge geanaliseer om sodoende elkeen se benadering tot die aanleer van notasielees te identifiseer en 'n dieper insig te verskaf. Die bevindinge word gebruik om 'n vergelyking te tref en aanbevelings te maak ten opsigte van die onderskeie metodes se benadering, met die doel om mekaar te ondersteun of aan te vul.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

KEY WORDS

- *Colourstrings* method

- Suzuki method

- Violin method

- Kodály methodology

- Teaching

- Notation

- Reading skills

- First position

- Solfège

- Relative solmization

TERMINOLOGY

1. <u>Method/methodology</u> – *Dictionary of music education,* M. C. Ely & A. E. Rashkin (2005:265, 266)

   In education, an orderly and systematic process of imparting information to students. Methods or methodologies are often associated with the people who devise them and are purposeful and specific in nature. Teaching techniques, curricular content and design, teaching styles, types of activities involved, and types of pedagogical approaches used are important factors or considerations in establishing any methodology. The manner in which these factors are incorporated, emphasized, or used characterizes each methodology. Method can also refer to a way of teaching unique to a specific teacher, or it can refer to a recognized system of instruction adopted by many teachers. In music education, some of the recognized methods are Kodály and Suzuki.

2. <u>Solfège</u> – *Dictionary of music education,* M. C. Ely & A. E. Rashkin (2005:420, 421)

   An approach to sight singing in which each note is assigned a syllable. Researchers have shown that the use of solfège systems can improve musicians' sight singing abilities. There are two primary approaches in use today: fixed do and movable do. In the fixed-do system, the syllable "do" designates the note C and only the note c; other syllables are similarly assigned to other notes. In the movable-do system, most commonly used in the United States, the syllable "do" is used to designate the tonic of the key or scale being used; again, other syllables are assigned to the other scale degrees accordingly. The syllables commonly used in both solfège systems, in ascending order, are "do," "re," "mi," "fa," "so," "la," and "ti".

3. <u>Tonic sol-fa</u> – Dictionary of music, M. Kennedy (2004:741)

   English system of sight-singing and notation. Based on movable-doh system of solmization. Notes of major scale are named doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, te, where doh is the tonic of the moment, not fixed in pitch.

4. <u>Relative solmization</u> – *Musical reading and writing*, E. Szőnyi (1974:10, 11)

The essence of this method is that the tonic or keynote of every major scale is called *do*, regardless of its placing on the five-line stave. So, in addition to the reading of music itself, sol-fa can also express the characteristics and tonality of the various keys. Accordingly, sol-fa performs two functions. It teaches us sight-singing before we have learned the great many absolute fixed-pitch names. It also enables us to recognize immediately characteristics of keys, and to understand such internal features as the harmonic structure underlying the melody of a piece of music – not only the names of the notes, but their function. These two qualities explain why sol-fa is equally beneficial at all levels of music training; from elementary to advanced.

5. <u>Technique</u> – *Dictionary of music education,* M. C. Ely & A. E. Rashkin (2005:453)

A term referring to some aspect of pedagogy or to the way something is done to facilitate the learning process. Techniques are usually related to task performance and are commonly associated with method or methodology, which is a systematic approach for disseminating information based on philosophical beliefs. That is, method is an approach to teaching, whereas a technique is also frequently used to describe an individual's technical abilities and skills on his or her instrument.

6. <u>Skill</u> – *Dictionary of music education,* M. C. Ely & A. E. Rashkin (2005:416)

In general, the ability to perform physical and mental actions necessary for task proficiency. Skills are normally developed through practice and training, but are influenced by such factors as knowledge, experience, age, and natural ability. In music, development of performance and non-performance musical skills is generally a lifelong process.

7. <u>Curriculum</u> – *Dictionary of music education,* M. C. Ely & A. E. Rashkin (2005:118)

In education: can refer to all course offerings at an institution, or it can refer only to those courses that lead to a particular degree or certificate. It can also refer to those courses or

offerings in a particular area of study. It may also be used when discussing the content of a particular course.

"My ultimate realization after half a century of meditating on tone is that strings 'only sing the heart of the one who plays them.' […] At each lesson I say, 'Put your heart into your tone, your spirit into your tone,' because our entire personalities are revealed in the tone we produce. To make music is to serve the strings; to create a beautiful, resonant tone; to sing with one's heart and the living spirit of music."

-    Shinichi Suzuki (2007b:4)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

For the past four years I have been teaching violin to pre-school, primary and secondary school children using a synthesis of the Suzuki- and *Colourstrings* violin methods. It became clear that teaching violin, apart from performing, would be a definite part of my music career, and an essential tool to expand and share my knowledge and love of music. A deeper understanding of the primary violin teaching methods is needed in order to unlock my full potential and abilities as a violin teacher.

Furthermore, I encountered difficulties in establishing a well-founded violin technique for beginners especially concerning notation reading skills. Gudmundsdottir names two most noted issues regarding music-reading skills as follows: initially certain factors may cause a halt in the development of reading skills due to its complexity, depending on the student and teacher, and secondly, it being a highly specialised skill which needs to be carefully taught and mastered (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:333). Playing the violin has proven to be one of the most difficult skills to master due to the fact that the manipulation of the instrument requires many different hand functions and skills (Courvoisier, 1897). In addition to this, each student requires careful individual monitoring in the first few years as the playing style of each student is unique and requires different approaches, especially when teaching notation reading skills. The term 'notation reading skills' will be used throughout the dissertation, which can be explained as the "act of decoding the symbols of staff notation using a musical instrument" (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:331).

The personal aim of the study is to gain more knowledge and insight regarding the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* violin methods and to contribute towards the teaching skills and methods of violin teachers. Recommendations will be made based on a comparison between the two methods to support the teaching of notation reading skills to beginner violinists.

1.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1   Main research question

Based on a structured comparison between the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* violin methods, what is the recommended approach towards the teaching of notation reading skills to beginner violinists?

1.2.2   Sub-questions

In order to fully comprehend the main research question, the following questions need to be answered:

- In terms of teaching the violin, what is understood by 'notation reading skills' and what must be taken into consideration, keeping in mind the physical layout of the instrument?
- According to the Suzuki method, what should the approach be to teach beginner violinists notation reading skills?
- According to the *Colourstrings* method, what should the approach be to teach beginner violinists notation reading skills?
- What are the similarities and differences in the approach of the two methods respectively?
- How can both methods be used in support of each other in order to successfully teach notation reading skills?

1.3   AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the literature and gain a deeper understanding of the teaching of notation reading skills from a Suzuki and *Colourstrings* violin method perspective. Recommendations on the methodology of notation reading skills from the literature will be given.

1.4   TARGET GROUPS

The main target groups in this study are violin teachers and beginner violinists.

1.5 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

In the following overview, the author points out key aspects of the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* violin methods from various sources that enhance the significance of the study.

1.5.1 Introduction

The reading of staff notation is regarded as an important but also neglected field in music education research, according to Helga Rut Gudmundsdottir (2010) in *Advances in music-reading research*. She points out that research in the development of music reading skills during the early childhood years is not as advanced as research on music reading skills in adults. The acquisition of music reading skills "most often occurs during the childhood years" (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:331). She also states that music students, even after many years of music study, lack music-reading skills (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:333).

Gudmundsdottir (2010) names two distinct skills involved in the process of music reading: the reading skill and the mechanical skill. She also states that studies have found "pitch information and timing information are processed [and perceived] separately" (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:332). In the case of the beginner violinist, he or she will need to read and perceive the specific pitch and rhythm information while at the same time execute the mechanical skill needed i.e. use of the bow on the correct string and use of the correct finger. In the end, the expert beginner will be able to read a single pitch out of context to a group of pitches as a particular chord or finger setting. (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:334).

Many difficulties arise with beginner violin students and even advanced students when notation reading skills are not mastered at an early stage. Without notation reading skills, the understanding of musical ideas and style and the musical development of the child are at risk. When the teaching and learning of notation reading skills are initially postponed, future reading skills will be impaired. It will also negatively impact the child's esteem and self-confidence as it would any child experiencing reading problems in school. (Kotzé, 1987:69–72; van Wyk, 1980). The focus of this study is therefore two frequently used violin methods, Suzuki and the *Colourstrings*, in order to explore and understand the approach and avoid negative consequences with regard to notation reading skills.

1.5.2 A review of the Suzuki violin method

"Aural transmission of music and ear-based performance are the norm" (Woody, 2012:82).

In the books *Nurtured by love: The classic approach to talent education* (Suzuki, 1983) and *The Suzuki violinist* (Starr, 2000) the authors explain and discuss the Suzuki violin method in detail. These books emphasize the Suzuki method's holistic approach towards child development. Shinichi Suzuki's philosophy and principles, as well as the Suzuki violin repertoire and violin techniques taught in the Suzuki volumes, are discussed. *A comparison between the Suzuki and Colourstrings violin and music teaching methods* by Mia Snyman (2007) discusses the Suzuki method and its origins as well as the similarities and differences of the two methods respectively. In *The Suzuki Concept* (1973), an introduction to the method is written by various authors in different chapters in the book. The material underlines the method's philosophy, psychology and procedure. This source will be used to underline the research focus of this study: notation reading skills. The books, *Suzuki Violin School* Volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4 introduce the method in the first four stages (Suzuki, 2007a–d). These primary sources along with *Nurtured by love* and *The Suzuki violinist* will be explored.

1.5.3 A review of the *Colourstrings* violin method

The *Colourstrings* method "[awakens] the interest and involvement of the child and play a crucial part in the creative processes of structured hearing and musical cognition while [he/she plays] the violin" (Boucneau, 2000:1).

String teaching plus Kodàly equals "Colourstrings" (1998) examines the *Colourstrings* method and its primary foundations: historical foundations, philosophy, teaching concepts and technical aspects. Four exercises from the method are included. In this article, the author Dr Brenda S. Mitchell states the aim of the method as a means to develop individuals with versatile personalities who appreciate discipline and find joy in making music. The focus is not on producing professional musicians only. Accordingly, the *Colourstrings* method motivates teachers throughout these books to emphasize the holistic development of the "intelligent" student and not only technical ability. (Mitchell, 1998:73, 74; Mitchell, 1994). The author concludes by stating that concepts presented by the method through multi-sensory activities seem to create the best learning environment for the student (Mitchell, 1998:77). Research done

in this article is further discussed in detail in *A qualitative study of Géza Szilvay's Colourstrings method for violin* (Mitchell, 1994).

In the article, *Colour in code, mind and sound* (2000) by Annette Boucneau, the basic foundation and primary aspects of the *Colourstrings* method are discussed with the aim to address two noted issues: "the importance of a colour code in preparation of sight reading conventional notation" and "the semantic meaning and importance of colours in stimulating the personal engagement of the young player" (Boucneau, 2000:2). This source will aid the discussion of the method's approach to notation reading skills.

The books Violin ABC *Colourstrings Book A, B, C* and *D* (Szilvay, 2005) introduce the method in the first four stages. The *Colourstrings* method published a manual (Szilvay, 2005e) for teachers and parents in which exercises and explanations of the Violin ABC books are compiled. Exercises from these books will be used as examples to support statements and explain techniques.

1.5.4. The Suzuki methodology

From a methodological and educational perspective, a weakness in the structural process of learning and mastering reading skills in the Suzuki method is noted. On the concept of notation reading skills, an atmosphere of uncertainty arises when reading sources on the Suzuki method. Authors such as Susara Snyman (2007) and Dorothea H. Kotzé (1987) explain the difficulty regarding reading skills in the Suzuki method. They support the fact that Suzuki based his method on establishing a strong aural and musical memory along with basic technical development before commencing with the reading of music (Kotzé, 1987:69, 70). However, this process could take years and the students' musical development and future reading skills are at risk (Fryer, 1985; Kotzé, 1987:70).

In Volume 1, Suzuki differentiates between different pitches and rhythms in a brief visual guide where the finger patterns of the left hand with the corresponding notation on a music staff, a notation guide, and the positions of the fingers on the fingerboard with corresponding notes on a music staff at the back of Volume 1, are given. The beginner violinist is immediately exposed to five different rhythm patterns as well as different combinations thereof. A brief introduction of the different strings and pitches according to fingering is given followed by small individual pieces and exercises to assist with technical difficulties. It can be argued that it is left to the

teacher's own discretion to assign words, fingerings and phrases to the different rhythm patterns and pitches in order to simplify it for the beginner violinist. (Suzuki, 2007:20–26, 45, 48).

The Suzuki Concept (1973) includes two chapters of great interest: *To parents concerned about music reading* and *Practical suggestions for teachers on reading*. These chapters address and discuss the difficulties concerning the teaching of notation reading skills, Suzuki's initial approach and practical suggestions for teachers when teaching reading skills. In the first chapter, the author E. Mills addresses the concerns of parents who learn that their children will not start the study of reading skills simultaneously with their violin studies. She lists several technical elements and discusses each while explaining why the development thereof may be impaired when the child is prematurely exposed to the teaching of notation reading skills. In the next chapter H. Mills and E. Mills discuss and provide practical suggestions/solutions for the teaching of notation reading skills. The suggestions range from teaching the basics of reading skills to a complete beginner, to mastering sight-reading for advanced players. This chapter is divided into three stages according to the level of experience. The aim of the chapter is to achieve the development of "superior reading skills and musicianship" (E. Mills, 1973; H. Mills & E. Mills, 1973).

A valuable source for violin pedagogues is a set of 50 exercises based on reading pitch and rhythm compiled by J. Martin. *I can read music: a note reading book for violin students* (1991) is the first of two volumes written specifically for students trained in the Suzuki method, in other words, students who are essentially trained using an aural approach. It is not exclusively limited to Suzuki trained students and can be used by any student who needs reading practise. The compiled exercises are written taking into consideration the pace at which the student needs to be taught to fully comprehend these basic and foundation forming aspects, therefore pitch and rhythm are taught separately. (Martin, 1991).

In contrast to these negative aspects, Robert H. Woody (2012) states that "aural transmission of music and ear-based performance are the norm". He acknowledges that 'ear playing', according to music pedagogues, is a necessary developmental skill that precedes the process of becoming a fluent reader of music notation (Woody, 2012:82).

1.5.5   The *Colourstrings* methodology

The main difference between the *Colourstrings* method and the Suzuki method is the use of colours with regard to reading music notation, particularly pitch. Dr Szilvay (the author of *Colourstrings*) chose to make use of colours because "of the inadequacy of the conventional notation to the mind of the pre-school child" (Boucneau, 2000:5). Boucneau states that children who do not extract meaning from the conventional code system will not relate to it and apply it to his/her own playing (Boucneau, 2000:5). Sarah Lyngra (2011) supports this in her article: *Color-coded music simplifies the challenge of reading*. She also adds that "because color is more memorable, [beginner] students are much less likely to forget the notes when they are practicing at home" (Lyngra, 2011:35). This supports the fact that the *Colourstrings* approach to notation reading skills can be regarded as successful with reference to pitch. It mainly simplifies the reading of pitch in music, where every one of four colours used in the *Colourstrings* books indicates a certain pitch, in this case each of the violin's four strings. This is further explained by visual pictures in the books, where the coloured notes are presented without "unnecessary visual information such as bar lines and meter signatures" (Mitchell, 1998:75). Immediately the child can differentiate between the pitches and timbres of the four strings while 'reading' the notes. (Szilvay, 2005a; Boucneau, 2000:1, 2).

In *Colourstrings Book B*, two lines of the music staff is introduced throughout the book, exposing the violin beginner little by little to the true visual picture of the music staff. With the addition of these two lines, the learning process of the new notes on the violin in first position (notes directly following the open strings), is kept simple by keeping the writing of the four strings 'separate'. Thus, in the first exercises or songs, two lines of the music staff represent notes/pitches of only one string. Throughout the course of the exercises/songs, one note on a different string will be added mainly to be plucked, giving the student the opportunity to 'read more than one string'. (Szilvay, 2005b).

In contrast to Suzuki Volume 1, *Book A* of *Colourstrings* introduces a number of basic rhythms, using crochets, quavers and minims, displaying only one note value (crochets) in the beginning. The rhythm learning process is well structured and systematic. (Szilvay, 2005a:8–28). Bernadette Colley (1987), in *A Comparison of Syllabic Methods for Improving Rhythm Literacy,* found that recognition skills when reading rhythm improved to a greater degree, using a syllabic system that differentiates between duple and triple subdivisions of the beat. She also

found that, when assigning specific words to rhythm patterns, reading skills and performance are improved. (Colley, 1987:221, 222). In reference to the *Colourstrings Book A*, Géza Szilvay uses a system of Kodály syllables which only includes duple subdivision, keeping it to crochets, quavers and minims for the entire *Book A*. He also gives the opportunity to assign words to every rhythmical pattern. At first, monosyllables like Ta and Ti-Ti are assigned to crochets and quavers respectively while an extra vowel is added for a minim (Ta-a). (Szilvay, 2005a:9–14, 20).

Kawori Iguchi (2008) stated in his article *Reading music/Playing music: The Musical Notations of the Kyoto Gion Festival and the Noh Flute*, that in medieval Europe the earliest musical notations "maintained a dynamic relationship with the oral performances that preceded them", namely Frankish and Gregorian chants (Iguchi, 2008:250). This reinforces the fact that the rhythmical and melodic/pitch system of Kodály goes hand in hand with oral participation in music (Szilvay, 2005e). It is initially introduced throughout the method through a simple rhythmical system and the use of the voice when teaching beginners music notation. It can thus be argued that the use of oral participation is a necessity in the acquisition of reading skills concerning rhythm and pitch. Evidence will be drawn from research to support this statement while discussing the *Colourstrings* approach to the teaching of notation reading skills. Another aspect which plays a role in the *Colourstrings* approach to notation reading skills is the processes of reading *and* writing as stated by Szilvay in the *Violin ABC: Handbook for teachers and parents*: "...good reading ability cannot be achieved unless we link the learning processes of reading and writing" (Szilvay, 2005e:70).

One can argue that beginners in the *Colourstrings* method who are exposed to colour-coded notes will have difficulty when eventually reading black notes. However, the method does introduce black notes by gradually darkening the colour of the notes and music staff throughout the first five books until it is black in colour. The teaching of notation reading skills is a complex matter and a skill which should be taught and mastered with careful consideration of all the aspects involved. (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:333). An approximate two or three-year period, depending on the student's progress, will have to pass before the average beginner is able to read traditional black music notation (Szilvay, 2005e). Even so, *"Colourstrings* pupils prove to be efficient sight-readers"* (Boucneau, 2000:1, 5). *Colourstrings* provides a successful approach and one of the method's cornerstones is the acquisition of well-developed music reading skills (Gudmundsdottir, 2010:331; Mitchell, 1998:73, 74).

A comparison between the Suzuki and Colourstrings violin and music teaching methods (Snyman, 2007) discusses the origins and method of the *Colourstrings* violin method as well as the similarities and differences of the two methods respectively.

1.6   METHODOLOGY

It is proposed that the study follows a qualitative research paradigm. This will be based on a structured (predetermined) literature study design which will be conducted based on theoretical research (Bak, 2004). The latter can be explained as research that engages "with theoretical […] arguments and the development of theoretical insights" (Bak, 2004:25). Qualitative research can be defined as "research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied" (Maree, 2007:50). Another explanation of qualitative methods is provided by Blanch, Durrheim and Painter (2006:46) where the author studies "selected issues in depth, openness and detail" while he/she attempts to identify and understand different sections of information that materialize from the data.

A constructivist approach is followed where the study will be emphasizing "the uniqueness of each particular situation" (Maree, 2007:51). This study is a structured comparison between two violin methods with critical reference to a skill taught in violin teaching where the "uniqueness of each particular situation" as well as the quality and depth of information will be studied. This supports the statement that a constructivist approach is followed (Maree , 2007:51).

Blanche et al. (2006) state that "qualitative research is more commonly used to inductively explore phenomena and to [formulate detailed] descriptions of phenomena". This study is descriptive in nature by aiming "to describe phenomena accurately" (Blanche et al., 2006:44, 45, 46). The concept of notation reading skills is described and discussed.

To successfully analyse "descriptive data" collected through research, the author will start by compiling detailed information from the material regarding notation reading skills with reference to pitch and rhythm. The approach of 'content analysis' will be used, defined by Maree as "an inductive and iterative [repetitive] process where [the researcher looks] for similarities and differences in text that would corroborate or disconfirm theory" (Maree, 2007:101). Approaches to notation reading skills from the two violin methods chosen will be

listed, keeping in mind benefits, disadvantages, similarities and differences. Recommendations based on the literature study regarding the teaching of notation reading skills will be provided.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- It is not the aim of this study to explore all applicable skills in violin playing, but to address the concept of notation reading skills with reference to pitch and rhythm.
- It is not the aim of this study to explore all methods used in beginner violin teaching, but to focus on the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* methods.
- This study will only provide information on the teaching process with critical reference to notation reading skills.
- The material in this study will not cover all the volumes or books written on the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* method but only the first four volumes or books.

1.8 VALUE OF THE STUDY

This study will not only provide an in-depth summary of the first four books on the two violin methods but will aim to focus and critically review the teaching of notation reading skills. This is an essential factor in the development and foundation of the young violinist's technique. Recommendations based on a comparison between the two methods on the teaching of notation reading skills will be made available.

CHAPTER 2: NOTATION READING SKILLS

2.1   BRIEF OVERVIEW

Read (1978:27) gives the following interpretation of "music notation":

> "Music notation is the visual manifestation of the interrelated properties of musical sound – pitch, intensity, time, timbre, and pace. Symbols indicating the choice of tones, their duration and their manner of performance form the written language we call music notation."

According to Rastall (1983), the term 'notation' can be divided into 1) Phonetic notation, or 2) Diastematic or intervallic notation. The latter graphically represents pitch and duration. This is more commonly known as music notes which, by their position on the music staff, indicates the pitch and the duration of the note(s) to be played. These notes are displayed on a vertical and horizontal plane. Rastall (1983:2) gives the following explanation of music notation: "[...]written symbols [acting as a set of instructions] by which musical ideas are represented and preserved for future performance or study". Characteristics of notation include pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation and touch. Pitch is portrayed through the position of the note or notes on the music staff and is the "location of a sound in the tonal scale" (Kennedy, 1980:495). A letter is assigned to each note and this is known as 'letter notation' (Rastall, 1983:1, 2, 8). Rhythm is determined by the specific duration of a succession of notes and "covers everything pertaining to the time aspect of music" (Kennedy, 1980:530). It is indicated by a black or white note-head as well as the shape and presence of a stem (vertical line) or flag (curved stroke attached to the end of the stem). Dynamics is the "gradation of volume in music" and is indicated by specific symbols, words or abbreviations (Kennedy, 1980:195). Articulation is influenced by duration and dynamics and is defined by its result in sound. Touch is the kinaesthetic experience and includes physical and emotional feeling. Congruency between these two aspects would ensure the ideal sound definition. Both these aspects are also indicated by specific symbols, words or abbreviations. (Read, 1978:63).

'Reading skills' is described by Gudmundsdottir (2010:331) as the "act of decoding the symbols of staff notation using a musical instrument".

2.2   NOTATION READING SKILLS IN VIOLIN PLAYING

According to Zoltan Kodály, the best way to start music education is with singing.

> […] moreover, children should learn to read music [by singing] before they
> are provided with any instrument. Without literacy today there can be no more
> a musical culture than there can be a literary one.

> − Zoltan Kodály (cited by Szőnyi, 1974:5).

Traditionally trained musicians experienced difficulty in the process of notation reading skills development, thus the teaching of notation reading skills has historically been the topic of continuous debate among many educators (S.Y. Lee, 1992:53). The difficulty in the 'beginner classical' stage is the simultaneous development process of a basic technique and notation reading skills on an instrument in this case, the violin. The duration of this beginner stage depends on each child's "establishment of the basic techniques" and the coordination thereof with the process of developing notation reading skills. It is accepted that children start violin lessons before grade school and interpret notation symbols much earlier than language symbols. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:54; McPherson & Welch, 2012:754).

2.2.1   The physical layout of the violin

To explain the technique of tone production on the violin, one needs to understand the layout of the instrument.

The violin is a member of the 'Strings' family. The violin (Figure 1) consists of a "hollow wooden body" which can be seen as a resonating sound box attached to a neck. On top of the neck lies the fingerboard. Four strings are stretched across the fingerboard and are kept taut over a bridge. The height of the bridge allows the strings to vibrate freely. The strings "are fastened around wooden pegs" which one can loosen or tighten in order to tune each string to a specific pitch. The wooden bow is strung with horsehair and creates tension when drawn over the strings, creating string vibrations. The vibrations are then transmitted through the bridge to the belly or soundboard of the violin which in turn amplifies and colours the tone. Eventually, the vibrations are carried to the ear of the performer or listener as musical sounds. To "control the dynamics and tone colour of the sound", adjustment of the bow's pressure and speed is needed. The quality of the sound also depends on "the vibrating string", the pitch and "the wood of the violin's body". 'Pizzicato' is another technique used to create sound on the violin.

Usually the player uses the right-hand's index finger to pluck a string. The left-hand can also be used. The violin has a wide range of pitches, for each string can be 'stopped' at any place between the nut and bridge with the musician's finger, resulting in a different pitch every time. (Kamien, 2011:16; Sadie, 2001:706; Sadie & Latham, 1990:34).

Figure 1, *Components of the violin* (Suzuki 2007:15)
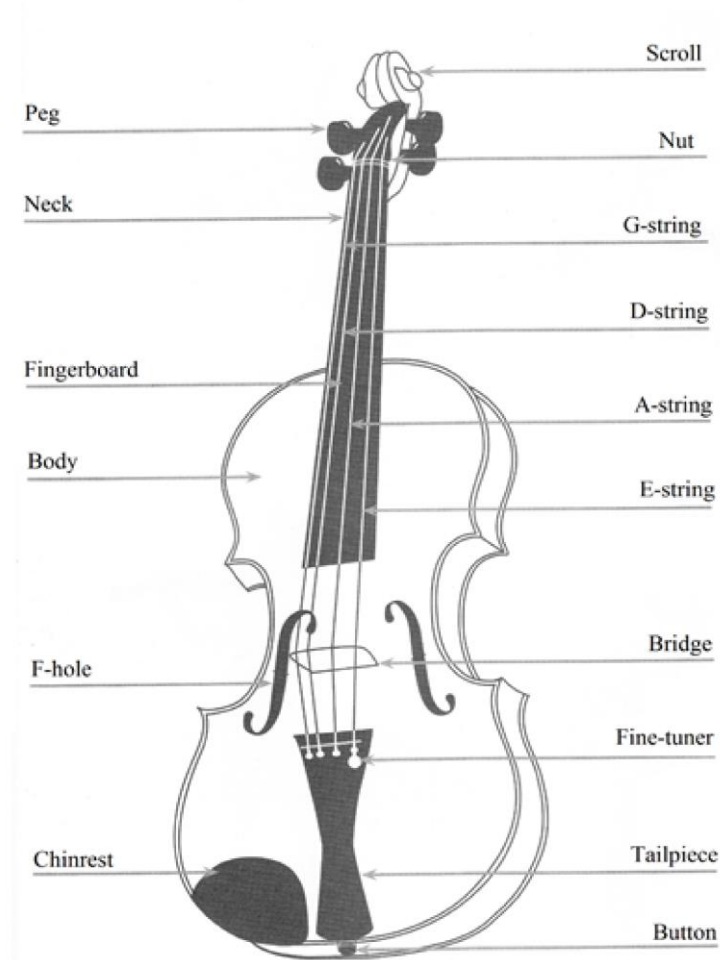
2.2.2 Producing sound on the violin

"Music is, of course, not dominated by 'steady' playing but by starting and stopping and changing notes" (Stowell, 1992:35).

The violin's strings can be tightened and loosened by turning the pegs. Tightening the string increases tension which raises the pitch. Loosening the string would increase mass, resulting in a lower pitch. Pitch can also be administered by the vibrating length of the string. This is controlled by the player's left-hand fingers lengthening and shortening the strings. With help from the bridge keeping the strings away from the fingerboard, the player is able to press the strings against the fingerboard at any point. Shortening the string causes more tension and a higher pitch; more length increases mass and produces a lower pitch. When the string is pressed against the fingerboard, it's vibrating length is shortened which in effect causes the pitch to raise. This is known as 'stopping' because vibrations of the string are stopped when a finger presses down and supports the fact that the violin has a wide range of pitches. Fingering is determined by the adjoining fingers of the left hand on the adjacent notes of the basic scale which includes whole-tone and semitone steps. This fingering is called 'finger-notation' which directs the musician on which fingers to use when reading notation. (Kamien, 2011:16; Stowell, 1992:34; Boyden, 1990:85; Rastall, 1983:8).

2.3   CONCLUSION

Technique and the reading of notation are entwined but also individual aspects in their own right. As Fryer (1985:96) insists, when "a child is instructed to read a note and play it, his concentration is divided". Gudmundsdottir's (2010:332) statement that pitch and timing "are processed separately" supports this fact. From a teacher's perspective, careful monitoring of the beginner's movements is crucial in order to establish a basic technique. Within the first year, the beginner violinist needs to master the reading of abstract symbols and interpret them in order to perform a specific movement, within a certain timeframe or rhythm, on a specific place and at a specific dynamic level. At the same time, the beginner has to focus on the correct posture and the position of the violin, hands and fingers. To interpret "the emotional and colourful" features of music and to control all these aspects consciously is barely possible for many established violinists. (Fryer, 1985:98). To expect this of a beginner, without concentrating on each aspect individually, is simply not possible. Therefore, a well-structured violin method is crucial in developing the beginner violinist's notation reading skills and establishing a basic technique.

CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCTION TO THE SUZUKI VIOLIN METHOD

3.1.   BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE FOUNDER SHINICHI SUZUKI

Suzuki was born in Japan, 1898. His father was the founder of the first violin factory to mass-produce violins in Japan and eventually, the world. At age seventeen, Suzuki began to teach himself to play the violin whilst frequently listening and imitating recordings. Suzuki graduated in 1915 at the Nagoya Commercial School while studying violin under Andö Kö who was a pupil of Joachim. In 1921 he went to Berlin to study under Karl Klinger, also a pupil of Joachim, at the Berlin Conservatory. He returned to Japan after eight years to teach and perform as the country was confronted with a string player shortage. He first taught at the Imperial School of Music and the Kunitachi Music School in Tokyo where he started to develop ideas for his violin method while working with young children. Through the events of World War II, Suzuki and his family were left in poverty when his father's workshop was bombed by planes. After the war he moved his family to Matsumoto where he began teaching at the Matsumoto Music School. At this time, he hoped to restore the country's spirit and "build hope for the future" through his teachings. He stayed at this school for the remainder of his career. (Y. Lee, 2012:2, 3; Sadie, 2001:742; Suzuki, 1983; S.Y. Lee, 1992:8).

After his arrival at Matsumoto, he established the 'Group for Child Education'. In 1948 he organized an experimental group of 40 students of the Hongo Primary School. In this experiment students were kept on the same level and received easy exercises which were reviewed the next day so all would progress at the same time, maintaining a high level of playing. Suzuki found another class, Sainö Kyöiko Kenkyü-kai, in 1950 where he taught violin to children aged three to five in the same manner but using his own method. This was done in accordance with the way in which the children would learn their mother-tongue and was accompanied by suitable violin pieces. "His main purpose was the development of character through musical education" as cited by Sadie (2001:743). Suzuki called his method 'Talent Education'. In 1952, 196 students graduated. The popularity of Suzuki's work spread through Japan which caused teachers to frequently travel to Matsumoto to study his method. In effect, Talent Education branches were established throughout the country which soon led to Suzuki's method becoming known abroad. Educators from around the world would travel to his town to observe his method. Clifford Cook and John Kendall were the first two American teachers to

visit Japan and incorporate Suzuki's method or Talent Education into their teaching in the U.S. Throughout the mid to late sixties Suzuki devoted his time to teaching workshops across many college campuses. The result was an increasing amount of qualified teachers as well as successful programs. Soon afterwards the first college, Eastman School of Music, enforced Suzuki's ideas into their preparatory division. In the 1970s, after the publication of Suzuki's *Violin School*, it became one of the leading methods for violin instruction. Suzuki died on the 26th of January, 1998. (Sadie, 2001:743; Snyman, 2007:16; Y. Lee, 2012:3, 4; S.Y. Lee, 1992:5).

3.2   BACKGROUND TO THE METHOD

3.2.1   History and development

In the past century, many books have been written on the teaching of violin to beginner students but only a few comprised of a comprehensive pedagogical system to explain their approach. The Suzuki method can be seen as an exception in that it offers systematic and detailed explanations. (Mitchell, 1994:1). The aim of the Suzuki method is not to produce expert musicians, but "to improve the [lives] of human beings" by means of music (S.Y. Lee, 1992:6).

Since the method's introduction, it had an "unfathomable effect" on many countries while being presented at school and university string programs as well as studios (Mitchell, 1994:1). It is "a highly developed and comprehensive system for teaching young children […] to play the violin" (Suzuki, 1969), as cited by Mitchell (1994:1). The Talent Education program (as personally named by Suzuki) not only proved to have a direct influence on the emerging violin talent in Japan but also a strong connection to the continuous relationship "between Asia and the West". The two parties exchanged ideas and these often included ideas from the great master Suzuki. As a result, world renowned Asian violinists like Kyung Wha Chung, Cho-Liang Lin and Midori made their appearance in the past decades. The Suzuki method became an international language which circulated in over 52 countries and made communication between many cultures possible. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:9; Snyman, 2007:12).

During the time when Suzuki studied in Berlin, he came to a sudden realization. While he himself struggled to adapt to the foreign language of the Germans, he noticed that all the children at the tender age of three had no trouble speaking their mother-tongue. This made him conscious of the possibility that young children might be capable of mastering other skills, for example playing a musical instrument, by the same means. It was a seed which developed and

formed the basis of his now-famous method. (Y. Lee, 2012:3). As a result, Suzuki came to the conclusion that every child is born with the natural ability or potential to learn. This ability will only develop as far as the child's brain capacity allows given a proper learning environment. The joint efforts of the child, parent and teacher are vital to the nurturing of the child's ability. (Stowell, 1992:229; S.Y. Lee, 1992:2). Suzuki realized that young children can cope with receiving high-level stimuli. 'Stimuli/stimulus' or 'to stimulate' is defined by *The Chambers Dictionary* as "an action, influence […] anything that rouses to action or increased action […] to incite; to instigate; to inspire enthusiasm in; to produce increased action in" (2014:1529). Within the concept of the Suzuki method, stimuli can be identified as actions or devices used by the teacher and parent to encourage (involve) the student to practise music. This includes revision, listening to recordings and participation in group classes. He argued that "if a child could adapt to [any] external stimuli […] regardless of any hereditary factors", it is possible for the child to "develop a high standard of [technical and musical] ability", (Snyman, 2007:13). The repetition, duration and frequency of stimuli are important factors for a beginner when learning an instrument and/or acquiring notation reading skills (Snyman, 2007:13).

The Suzuki method is primarily based on the mother-tongue technique which delivers the same result time and again: children speak their native language fluently through listening and repeating (Suzuki, 1983:1). Suzuki personally states that this is the "perfect educational method" (Suzuki, 1983:2). It led him to believe that every human being is born with great potential and that it is possible for all learning, when exposed to the mother-tongue technique, to excel similarly.

These two core elements, listening and repeating, form the foundation of the Suzuki method (S.Y. Lee, 1992:1; Y. Lee, 2012:4). If a child should hear certain sounds at an early stage, there is a probability that it could affect him/her for the remainder of his/her life. For example, a baby who frequently listens to classical music in a comfortable environment could develop sensitivity towards music. (Snyman, 2007:12). S.Y. Lee (1992:38) affirms that the act of listening is "the most fundamental and essential component" of the Suzuki method as it is aligned with the process during which children learn to speak their native language. Thus it is essential to create a positive environment when learning an instrument, similar to the one which contributes to the learning of a language/ the acquisition of speech. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:38). Suzuki perceives this as a significant teaching tool as it motivates the student to imitate "sound, rhythm and articulation" (Y. Lee, 2012:4). Constant exposure to recordings of previously played,

current and future pieces will enhance meticulous preparation and reinforce teaching to a great extent. It will also function as a suitable role model for the child. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:38; Y. Lee, 2012:5). Suzuki's pedagogy focuses on the development of musical memory which is interlinked with listening. Regular listening to a piece of music could accelerate the memorization process before commencing with its actual study. S.Y. Lee (1992) insists that children can benefit from memorizing music in order to focus on the technical and expressive aspects of music. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:13).

Repetition is also essential in mastering a successful playing technique. Instead of playing a piece repeatedly from beginning to end, the teacher directs the student to divide the piece into smaller fractions and repeat them, allowing the teacher to address certain issues such as technique and interpretation. This will ensure a step-by-step mastering of the entire piece before commencing with new repertoire and techniques. This approach will prove effective in combination with different forms of listening. Suzuki finds it helpful to review old pieces while introducing new techniques. Students are comfortable with familiar material while exploring new skills. This process enables students to focus on one aspect at a time. It can be seen as a "preparation period" (Y. Lee, 2012:5). Another important feature of the method, and closely linked to repetition, is the "rote teaching" of a calculated succession of physical movements. This applies to the first rhythmic patterns taught for bowing technique in Volume 1. (Mitchell, 1994:1).

Because the development of the child's ability mostly depends on the triangle relationship (or the Suzuki triangle) between the child, teacher and parent, Suzuki continuously stresses the importance of the parent's role in the beginner's development process (Y. Lee, 2012:5; Snyman, 2007:17). It is the parent's responsibility to acknowledge the arduous task of studying any instrument, to create a proper musical environment for the child and to support him/her. This will ensure a natural and relaxed learning experience. The parent has to be present at the child's violin lessons and practise sessions at home. Discipline, time spent on practise and meticulous revision are of utmost importance. This will result in a more flexible technique and coordination. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:6).

Another important aspect of the method is group classes. Students of all ages and levels will partake as a group in these classes. During the group class, they will start with Suzuki Volume 1 and conclude with the most advanced volume a part of the group can perform (students whose

level is surpassed will sit down to listen to the remainder of the players). The following is achieved: motivation to play more advanced pieces, revision of present and exposure to future repertoire, development of social communication and reflection on one's own performance while in the presence of others. (Snyman, 2007:18, 19). Y. Lee (2012:6) adds that "group lessons are pedagogically as important as the individual lesson".

3.2.2 Philosophy

The Chambers Dictionary (2014:1163) defines philosophy as "the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge; investigation or contemplation of the nature of being; knowledge of the causes and laws of all things; and the principles underlying any sphere of knowledge".

The philosophy of the Suzuki method is based on the mother-tongue method (S.Y. Lee, 1992:i).

One underlying principle of the Suzuki method is that children are born with the natural ability to learn (Suzuki, 1983:ix). Based on the mother-tongue technique, if a child can learn to fluently speak his/her native language, surely he/she can learn to play an instrument as well as they speak (S.Y. Lee, 1992:i). Certainly this can be applied to beginner violinists learning notation reading skills. Suzuki believes the ability needs to be nurtured and developed with the correct conditions or stimulants such as daily training, duration thereof, patience, perseverance and preparation, in the required environment. Again the aspect of listening surfaces in that successful appliance of these conditions or stimulants depends on the continuous interest and participation of the child who naturally acquires it from what he/she hears and sees. An example is given by Snyman (2007) of a baby who attended one of Suzuki's group classes with her mother and older sister (a student of Suzuki's). The baby was introduced to a piece of music repetitively at home by her older sister: Vivaldi's Violin Concerto in A minor. During the class Suzuki played an unknown piece on the violin, and the baby listened to him intently with no significant expression (only recognizing the sound of the violin). Afterwards he deliberately played the Vivaldi concerto at which the baby's face lit up in recognition causing her she to sway to the music. (Snyman, 2007:13, 14).

Suzuki strongly believed that musical talent is not inherited or inborn but acquired through many factors. He names an example of a baby nightingale which was taught to sing and of two young girls who was found to be raised in the wild. The nightingale develops the ability to sing from the example set by the adult nightingale. The quality of the adult nightingale's song will

determine the quality of the fledgling's. The same can be applied to human infants who will absorb everything they encounter through their senses, including pitch through listening. It is not possible for infants to identify correct and incorrect pitches thus they will save the information in their memory to be used later in life. As a result, the infant will adjust its behaviour to fit in its environment. This statement is supported by a recorded incident where two Indian children (age two and seven) were raised by a wolf. The two girls' physical build (appearance), body and limb movements, eyesight and smell were developed to suit that of a wolf's. The girls were equipped with a survival instinct so profound, their habits were animal-like and they lived to adapt to their environment. It stands to reason that a child's earliest stages of development are crucial. This statement supports the necessity of the early development of notation reading skills. The best environment will ensure the desired behaviour and ability. (Snyman, 2007:14).

3.3   METHODOLOGY

The Suzuki method is based on ten books or volumes known as Suzuki's Violin School which guides the student through a series of pieces, technical exercises and instructions given with each individual piece or technical study (Y. Lee, 2012:6; Fryer, 1985:88). Fryer (1985) identifies the entire set of volumes as a "complete course" in violin study. The set of pieces, exercises and instructions extends from Volume 1's *Twinkle, twinkle little star* (Suzuki's own arrangement) to the advanced Violin Concerto in D Major, K.218 of Mozart (Y. Lee, 2012:6). After Book 10, the student will have reached a level of performance necessary to further his/her studies at a college of music or conservatorium. According to the teachings of the method, a student "may reach this level at the age of twelve" (Fryer, 1985:88).

The method is divided into three main components which serve as the basis for the child's development through the course: "[...] listening, for musical sensitivity; tonalization; [and] playing (repeating), for technical and artistic development" (Stowell, 1992:229). The outcome would be the development/nurturing of artistic appreciation in young children. Unlike other traditional violin methods, for example the Flesch method, Suzuki creates the opportunity for students to cultivate appreciation together with technical skills. (Stowell, 1992:229). In addition, Suzuki further expanded his method in the books *Nurtured by love* and *The Suzuki concept* which discuss the most important elements of Suzuki's Violin School from a teacher's perspective (Y. Lee, 2012:7).

Because the method is based on the mother-tongue technique, the first variation (i.e. the first six notes) of Volume 1's first piece *Twinkle, twinkle little star* (which henceforth will be referred to as the 'Twinkles'), can be compared to a child's first six words on which other words/phrases are built. These six notes are continuously used and adapted when introducing new notes and/or phrases, resulting in the student expanding his/her 'vocabulary'. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:2).

Figure 2, *Variation A* (Suzuki 2007a:21)

This is made possible by the following methods: in each volume, pieces are carefully arranged in succession with step-by-step (technical and musical) development in mind (Y. Lee, 2012:6). Each piece introduces new technical and/or musical aspects which comprise of the following: finger placement (pitch), rhythm patterns, bowings, coordination, interpretation and music styles, each a building block of the previous aspect and organized in such a way as to prepare the student for the next song (Y. Lee, 2012:7; S.Y. Lee, 1992:42). This will create a valuable foundation the child can build on when studying more advanced pieces/techniques (Snyman, 2007:12). To name two examples, the piece *Long, long ago* is written in the key of A major, where the student would play a few notes on the D-string which prepares him/her for the following pieces which are written in the key of D major. The second example is the tonalization exercise in G major on page 36 of Volume 1 which prepares the student for the first G major pieces, Nr.12 *Etude* and Nr.13 *Minuet No.1*. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:42).

S.Y. Lee (1992:42) claims that Volume 1's pieces are written in such a way that no supplemental material is needed.

The interpretation of music in all its facets is taught from the first piece of Volume 1 and includes the character of the piece, its dynamics and phrasing. This will be introduced to the student while studying the notes and rhythm of the piece. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:35). Students are also taught to recognise and distinguish different time signatures throughout the pieces of Volume 1 and 2. Every piece has its own meter and distinctive rhythmic characteristics whereby the student is guided to 'feel the strong beats' of each piece. *Allegro* in Volume 1 is a march with distinctive strong beats on the first and third beat which is known as common time.

On the other hand, the dances *Minuet 1-3* at the end of Volume 1 are written as waltzes which are played in ¾ time. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:34). Other dances from the Baroque period in Volume 1 include the *Gavotte, Bourree* and *Gigue* (S.Y. Lee, 1992:35) (The 6/8 meter is introduced in Volume 2.). In the two pieces *Allegretto* and *Adantino* (Volume 1), accents portray similar rhythmical shapes. Both pieces appear directly after each other for efficient rhythmical practise. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:34).

Figure 3, *Accent placement* (Suzuki, 2007a:35)
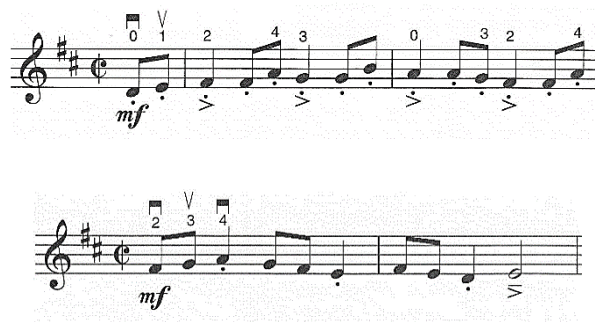
The Suzuki teaching program consists of one individual lesson and one group lesson per week. It is expected of the parents to attend the lessons and of the students to consistently listen to recordings of the Suzuki material, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. (Mitchell, 1994:14). Suzuki intends for this method to be a satisfying experience. When lessons commence, it is the parents' responsibility to buy the first two volumes of Suzuki along with recordings of the pieces. Afterwards, the parents should play the recordings daily for both the parent and child to familiarize themselves with the pieces. This will enable the child to memorise the tunes and ensure recognition when he/she has the initial lesson on these pieces, which will also simplify the teacher's task of introducing new techniques etc. An overview of Volume 1's content will shed light on what lies ahead for the child in the first year, depending on the child's progress and frequency of lessons. (Fryer, 1985:89, 90).

Fryer (1985) claims that many teachers divide Volume 1 into three levels. Level one will consist of the first five pieces which includes the Twinkles and four folk songs (Fryer, 1985:90). Then the first scale and tonalization exercises are given as well as an introduction to a new rhythm in the next piece *May Song* - tonalization was initiated by Suzuki, adopted from exercises for vocalists intended to nurture and refine their voices: 'vocalization.' With these exercises, students will be able to develop/refine their sound on the instrument. (Suzuki, 2007a:4, 30, 31). *May Song* and the succeeding pieces and technical exercises written by

Suzuki will from part of Level two. Level three consists of *Minuet 1-3* and the *Gavotte* by F.J. Gossec which is considered the more advanced beginner pieces of Volume 1. With enough effort and practise during lessons and at home, the child will be able to complete Volume 1 within the first 18 months. Gossec's *Gavotte* being considerably more difficult than any of the previous pieces can be seen as a link to the next volume of Suzuki's Violin School. (Fryer, 1985:90, 91).

Basic bow strokes, such as short and long bow strokes, staccato and legato playing, will also be taught early in the tuition process. Scales and tonalization exercises are studied in the first three volumes in first position. (Y. Lee, 2012:10).

3.3.1 Structure of the method

In week one, the child and teacher will establish respect for each other (Snyman, 2007:19). Before commencing with the first piece of Volume 1, the teacher will introduce the student to the correct posture by using a foot chart for standing posture and playing 'bow games' to establish bow posture/grip and movement. This provides a foundation for the child's future violin playing and is important in developing a good tone quality on the instrument. The teacher will continue to monitor the student's posture in the beginning stages in case he/she should acquire any bad habits. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:16; Snyman, 2007:20; Y. Lee, 2012:10). The children will also learn coordination between both hands (Snyman, 2007:19). Other preparation includes the physical experience of rhythm. As an introduction to the rhythms of *Twinkle, twinkle*'s variations, the teacher and student will sing, clap, march or shake hands on each variation's rhythmical pattern. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:14). The teacher can change the speed, type and dynamics and the children will have to imitate him/her (Snyman, 2007:19). The teacher can also reinforce these exercises by playing rhythms or pieces on either the piano or the violin. Further on, the students will be introduced to the parts of the violin as well as familiarize themselves with the four violin strings and their sounds. The student will do revision of these exercises under supervision of the teacher and parents at home in the following weeks. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:14–16). For the remainder of the session/lesson the teacher will work with the parent, explaining what and how to practise at home (Snyman, 2007:20).

After the violin has been introduced, the student will sing the first variation's rhythmical pattern of the Twinkles using syllables "to verbally pronounce the rhythms". During the second week of lessons, a fake bow and violin-like box are provided for the student to practise the rhythms

and movements without actually playing the notes. This will be the practise routine for more or less the next five weeks. By that time, when the child is given his/her real violin, he/she will have the necessary tools to start learning and playing the Twinkles. (Snyman, 2007:20). Each variation is based on a specific technical aspect. The first variation is the most detailed and serves as a foundation for the following four variations. Without complete comprehension of the first variation, the student will lack the necessary skills to study the following variations. (Snyman, 2007:20).

Figure 4, *Twinkle variations* (Suzuki, 2007a:21)
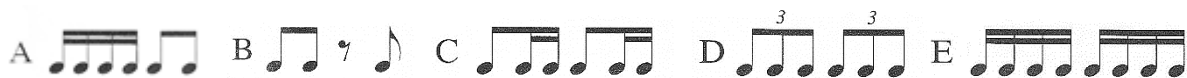
Bow technique and right-arm posture should be monitored continuously. The student will only use his/her fore-arm for bowing with primarily the lower part of the bow for easier control for the very young student. Continuous demonstrations from the teacher are crucial especially in the beginner stage to ensure complete comprehension of the different techniques. (Snyman, 2007:20).

Material to prepare the student for the variations includes the following exercise: taking the rhythmical pattern from Variation A and playing it a number of times on one string. Pauses between each set of rhythms will, over a period of time, vary from two rests to none. Thereafter the student will practise the same exercise on the A-string in the same manner. (Snyman, 2007:20; Suzuki, 2007a:21).

Figure 5, *Bowing and Rhythm exercise* (Suzuki, 2007a:21)

This applies to each of the variations.

Figure 6, *Variations B - E* (Suzuki, 2007a:21, 22)

The rhythms will be played consecutively on both strings, with a pause of two rests in between the rhythmical patterns, until the student can move the bow from one string to another, in this case from the A-string to the E-string, in one smooth movement without rests. This is called crossing a string. (Snyman, 2007:22; Suzuki, 2007a:22).

Figure 7, *Changing strings* (Suzuki, 2007a:22)
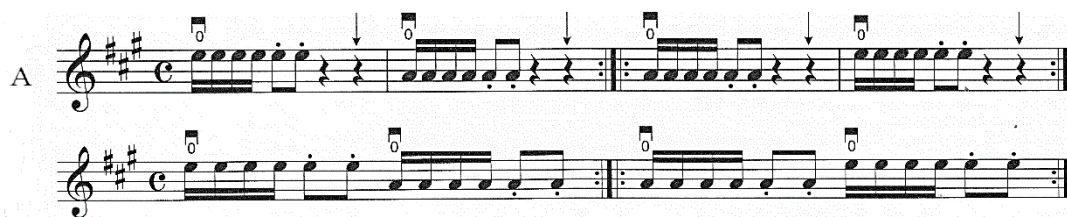
When introducing the use of the left-hand fingers, the teacher instructs the student to do "finger push-ups" or "silent fingering" (S.Y. Lee, 1992:22; Snyman, 2007:22). In this exercise the student will lift up his/her index finger, and then place it down firmly in one quick movement. Doing so repeatedly will strengthen the finger. The same applies to the middle-, ring finger and

little finger. After that, the student will physically be able to practise the notes on the violin by following the first finger pattern (Figure 8) on page 20 and the finger exercise (Figure 9) on page 23. The second finger pattern will be used later in the volume. (Suzuki, 2007a:22, 23; Snyman, 2007:22).

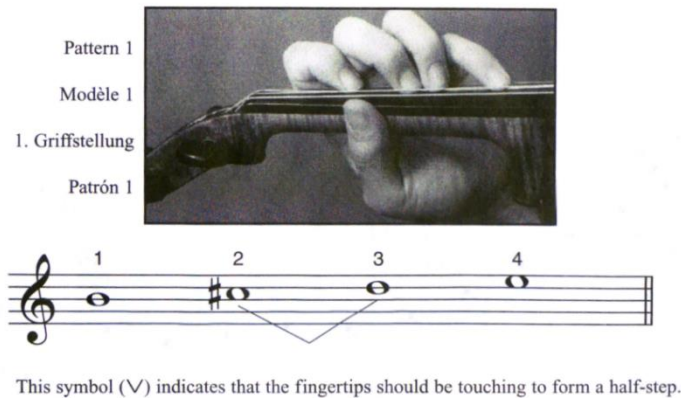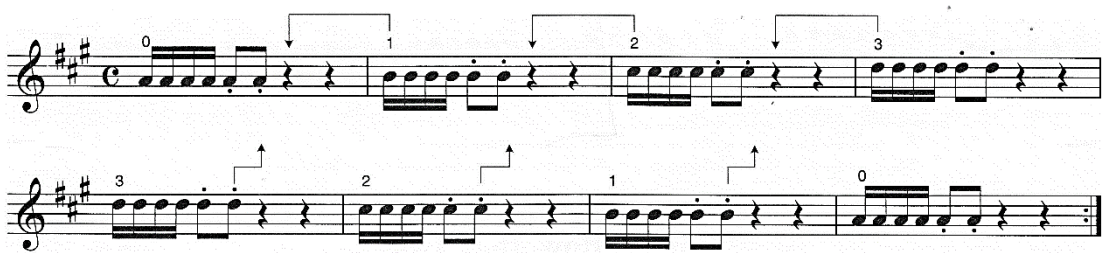Figure 8, *Finger Pattern 1* (Suzuki, 2007a:20)

This symbol (∨) indicates that the fingertips should be touching to form a half-step.

Figure 9, *Practising in first position* (Suzuki, 2007a:23)

Suzuki teachers find thin tape, cut to appropriate sizes and pasted on the fingerboard beneath the strings, useful to direct the placement of the student's fingertips. Thus tape will be used for the student's first, second, third and fourth finger (S.Y. Lee, 1992:21). Not only does the stopping of the bow in string crossings develop "clean string changes", but it also prepares the student's finger placements, be it one finger at a time or consecutively. As a result, the student will learn meticulous left-hand finger placements, and at the same time be prepared for notation reading. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:27). After pages 21 - 24, the child is prepared sufficiently to start playing and practising the first variation of the Twinkles (Snyman, 2007:23; Suzuki, 2007a). At the end of Volume 1, Suzuki provides a 'Musical Notation Guide' (which will be discussed in Chapter 4), a list of music terms and a presentation of the notes on the music staff in first

position followed by a visual representation of the position of the notes on the fingerboard (Suzuki, 2007a:45–48).

After Volume 1, more emphasis is placed on interpretation and group classes. In Volume 2 the structure of the pieces is explained. This includes phrasing which can be simplified by comparing it to phrases in speech for example, pauses, change of subject etc. (Fryer, 1985:91). Again, depending on the student's progress during the lessons and practise sessions at home, he/she should be able to complete this volume within 18 months to two years (Fryer, 1985:92). The next finger patterns are explained on page 8. Suzuki instructs the student to practise these patterns based on the application of the three patterns from Volume 1 (Suzuki, 2007b:8). Volume 3 consists of more advanced pieces and the student will have mastered a more refined performance because in this volume, the musical quality of each piece is emphasized. This is done with the intent to establish a 'confident technique' as well as a good ear. (Fryer, 1985:92). Additionally, at the beginning of the volume Suzuki identifies and lists the requirements for excelling in violin studies as well as the causes "that lead to the regression of ability" (Suzuki, 2007b:4). Techniques introduced throughout the volumes include trills in Volume 2 and double stops (consecutive double notes) at the end of Volume 3. The reading of pitch and rhythms, new bowings and the introduction to new style periods are developed progressively throughout these volumes as well as the level of difficulty of the pieces. In Volume 3 the student is exposed to complicated dotted rhythms. It is important for the student to grasp these techniques and difficulties in order to be prepared for Volume 4, seeing that these pieces are considerably more difficult. (Y. Lee, 2012:8, 10).

After the completion of Volumes 1-3 the student will be armed with the "basics of violin technique" (Y. Lee, 2012:10). In Volume 4 the student arrives at the intermediate level of his/her violin studies (Y. Lee, 2012:8). This volume introduces the student to the concerto, a solo performance work with full orchestra, studying separate movements respectively (Fryer, 1985:92). Intricate techniques such as vibrato, shifting to three higher positions, regular key changes, complex double stops and chords are introduced. It is important that the student develop these techniques to the best of his/her ability for a solid technical foundation for the remainder of his/her violin career. (Y. Lee, 2012:8, 10).

3.4   CONCLUSION

"What is man's ultimate direction in life? It is to look for love, truth, virtue, and beauty.
That goes for you, for me, for everyone". - Shinichi Suzuki (1983: x)

There is no doubt about the impact Suzuki has made on the teaching of violin as well as music education across the world (S.Y. Lee, 1992:9). For the first time, a method was composed with specific emphasis on the technical, musical, spiritual and emotional development of a young child (Mitchell, 1994:1). It was meticulously designed: the incorporation of listening and repeating, the arrangement of pieces and exercises to ensure step-by-step development and the importance of a positive learning environment with constant involvement of the parent(s) (S.Y. Lee, 1992:1, 38; Y. Lee, 2012:4, 6).

Lastly, the philosophy of Suzuki is a revelation: *any* child is born with great potential and has the ability to study and enjoy music (Suzuki, 1983:2). For Suzuki, producing professional musicians was a plus, but if the lives of children and even adults could be improved through music, his life's dream would be fulfilled (S.Y. Lee, 1992:6).

CHAPTER 4: THE SUZUKI APPROACH TO NOTATION READING SKILLS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The *Oxford handbook of music education* defines the very beginning stage of the Suzuki method as follows "aural learning is privileged over notational learning" (McPherson & Welch, 2012:754).

The Suzuki method has seen a number of musicians develop into professional performers, be it solo, chamber or orchestral. There is no doubt about the success it has achieved over the years. However, one aspect of the method discerns it from all other methods, the aspect Suzuki claims to be the success of this method: its approach to notation reading skills. According to Suzuki's teachings, notation reading skills are delayed for about one year, depending on the child's development in the basic techniques of violin playing. Thus, during this time, the student has the opportunity to first establish the necessary basic techniques before taking on the task to learn how to read music. Suzuki argues that "several different areas" in the beginner's violin tuition process need simultaneous attention, thus it seems logical to utilize rote learning to remove the added burden of reading notes. It could also cause technical problems during the tuition process if concentration is divided between these two important elements: sight-reading and technique. (Fryer, 1985:95; S.Y. Lee, 1992:53).

To support this claim, Suzuki compares the time spent on "learning to speak before reading words", to the time spent playing an instrument "before reading notes". He calls this process a "natural sequence" (S.Y. Lee, 1992:54). When the time is ready for the student to start the study of notation reading skills, he/she will be guided by the method through a "process of association". The student will thus recede or go back to his/her previous pieces and play them while looking at the music. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:54). It can be argued that after a year the student would have more or less progressed to the end of Volume 1, after which he/she would play previous pieces in the volume while learning notation reading skills. Consequently, the student has the opportunity to learn the positions of the notes on the staff by playing well-known pieces. However, a void in this thinking process could be that these pieces were already memorized and a muscle memory was formed. To ensure a well-structured and reliable notation reading tuition process will prove to be very difficult.

Suzuki has made available guidelines to the teacher and students in Volume 1 and even Volume 2, with regards to the teaching of notation reading skills which will be explored in 4.3.

Fryer (1985) points out the flaws of reading music too early: "[...] concentration is divided at the expense" of retaining the correct posture (this includes the body position and manner in which the violin and bow are hold), relaxed appearance and correct application of the bow onto the strings to produce the desired sound. He admits that the student is not aware of the exact duration of notes when imitating his/her teacher or a recording. There is precision and discipline in imitating, but if the student should read from a music sheet, it will be more difficult if he has never heard it before. Fryer (1985:98) also stresses the dilemma of revealing the emotional and tone colour aspects of a piece of music that only consists of an enormous amount of black information on white paper. Some Suzuki teachers who modify the method start off by teaching notation reading skills and singing at the same time before introducing the instrument. This is similar to Kodály's approach. (Fryer, 1985:99). Other teachers employing Suzuki's methods gradually prepare their students to read notes in order to develop the mental coordination between the "eye-brain-finger" from an early stage (S.Y. Lee, 1992:54).

Starr defines two kinds of skills that involve reading: standard reading (conventional) and sight-reading. The first is explained as reading music where the student is allowed time to work out, ponder over and study what he/she is playing. The student would stop periodically in between as he/she moves along or practises, in preparation of a certain time in the future where the student would aim to play the piece through without faltering. Sight-reading is defined as reading through the entire piece of music or exercise without any stops or breaks in the regular beat. The ability to do so entirely depends on how well the student's notation reading skills is developed. Starr states that both types should be studied. (Starr, 2000:159).

It is essential that students learn the meaning of the symbols of notation before using them when the actual reading commences. Starr confirms that there are proper workbooks available aimed at beginners. It is also important to note that the student should only be exposed to one problem at a time during the study of notation reading skills. As an approach, it is sensible to separate pitch and rhythm in a piece of music. Repetition, an important aspect in the Suzuki method, also applies in this matter. Suzuki suggests this and names an example of first graders being taught maths: "Give them a little to learn and repeat it many, many times to develop their

facility". When the child is overwhelmed, they will not be able to "recognize the symbols automatically" (Starr, 2000:159).

The knowledge and experience that a student has accumulated over time simplifies the process of learning to read music. Starr calls it the "'figure-it-out' kind of reading". Students should be given the chance to test their ability, or what they have learned so far, in a practise session where they themselves could try and read pieces of music or exercises. The teacher may decide to lower the standard of the material at first and at regular intervals give the child more difficult material to read from. (Starr, 2000:159).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, teachers find it useful to paste thin tapes on the fingerboard beneath the strings to direct the placement of the student's fingertips. Each finger will be assigned to a tape, cut to a suitable size. This visual guide works in conjunction with reading notes on the music staff. If the student can connect a finger with a specific note, for example the note B with the first finger, they will know to place their index finger on the first tape on the A-string. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:21).

4.2   SUZUKI'S APPROACH

Fryer (1985) states that parents frequently ask the question: "When are pupils taught to read music?" The answer that they receive is "certainly not for the first year or so" (Fryer, 1985:95). Suzuki himself delays the teaching of notation reading "until the musical memory and the ability to handle a violin successfully has been developed". This usually occurs, depending on the child's progress, in the first year of lessons. (Fryer, 1985:96). On the other hand, it also depends on the age children start with violin lessons (S.Y. Lee, 1992:13). S.Y. Lee (1992:13) confirms parents' responsibilities as to follow the music during this time (while the child practises at home or at the lesson), to make notes and write in the correct fingerings and bowings.

Even though S.Y. Lee (1992:42) claims that no supplementary material is needed for Volume 1, some supplementary violin publications are listed on the back cover. The title is "Suzuki and supplemental violin publications". The possibility exists that Suzuki and his publisher disclosed this list for students who start to read music earlier than what Suzuki initially intended. There seem to be a number of teachers who chose to change the method to speed up the process of learning to read music. (Fryer, 1985:99; S.Y. Lee, 1992:54). The following
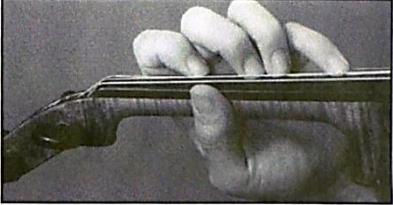
books are listed: *Adventures in Music Reading for Violin* by William Starr in three books, and, *I can read music for violin* by Joanne Martin in two volumes. The list is repeated at the back cover of Volume 2. (Suzuki, 2007a).
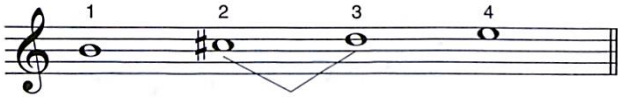
4.2.1 Volume 1 and 2

In Suzuki's *Violin School* Volume 1, photos with three different finger patterns (Figure 10) of the positions of a student's fingers on the fingerboard, as well as the position of the notes on the music staff beneath the photos, are displayed:

Figure 10, *Pattern 1, 2 and 3* (Suzuki, 2007a:20)
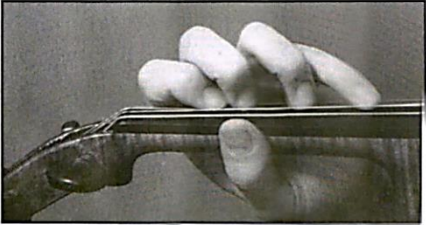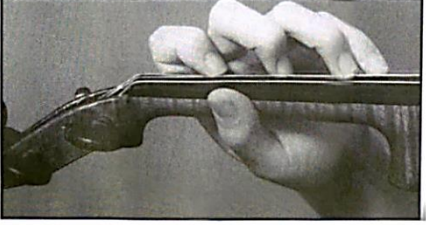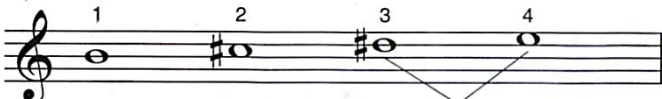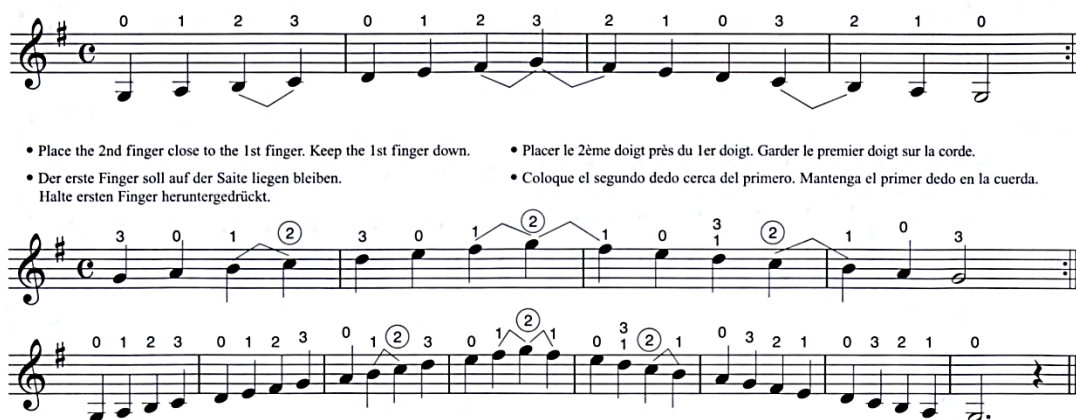
A specific set of pieces are assigned to each finger pattern, however in the images displayed, the application of the patterns on the note staff can be misleading. The position of the notes on the note staff only indicates the A-string and none of the other strings (thus, the exact finger position of the notes on the other strings is not displayed on the staff). The teacher has to make an assumption that the finger pattern also applies to the other strings. There are no instructions on the page to confirm this. To indicate a semitone step (two fingers adjacent to one another), a symbol in the shape of a 'V' is used. In the case of the patterns being applied to each string, the pieces and exercises in Volume 1 are written according to the first two finger patterns i.e. *Pattern 1* and *Pattern 2*. In the material from the start of the volume up to page 35, the student performs pieces based on *Pattern 1* and from page 36 until the last piece *Gavotte*, a combination of *Pattern 1* and *2* is performed. An introduction to *Pattern 2* can be found on page 36 in the form of the G major scale (Figure 11) as well as a finger exercise (Figure 12) on page 37. This may serve as a guide to where the student should place his/her fingers on the fingerboard, with assistance from the tapes. (Suzuki, 2007a:20).

Figure 11, *G Major scale* (Suzuki, 2007a:36)

Figure 12, *Finger exercise in G Major* (Suzuki, 2007a:37)

It is important to note that, without knowing, when changing from one finger pattern to another, the student is actually playing in different keys. It is the teacher's responsibility to assist the student with these exercises and guide the student to the correct string. Young students, who are not yet skilled at note reading, might get confused when the name of the string is not visible above the note on the music staff, considering they are reading from complete black notation. (Suzuki, 2007a:20).

Another three patterns are displayed in Volume 2 (Figure 13), based on the application of the previous three patterns in Volume 1.

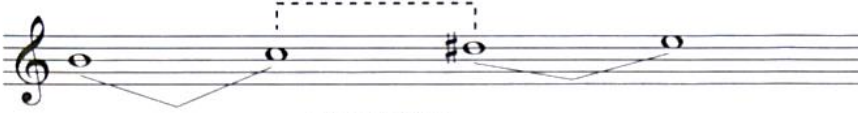Figure 13, *Pattern 4, 5 and 6* (Suzuki, 2007b:8)

Pattern 4
Motif Nº4
Griffstellung 4
Patrón n.º4

half step
demi-ton
Halbtonschritt
semitono

This symbol ∨ (half step) indicates that the fingers must be placed adjacent to one another.
Ce symbol ∨ (demi-ton) indique que les doigts doivent être placés l'un à côté de l'autre.
Dieses Symbol ∨ (Halbtonschritt) zeigt, daß die Finger eng aneinander aufgesetzt werden müssen.
Este símbolo ∨ (semitono) indica que los dedos deben ser ubicados adyacentes unos a otros.
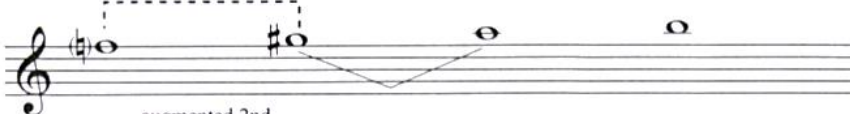

Pattern 5
Motif Nº5
Griffstellung 5
Patrón n.º5

augmented 2nd
Seconde augmentée
übermäßige Sekunde
2.ª aumentada

An augmented second indicates a particularly wide interval equivalent to three half steps.
Une seconde augmentée indique un intervalle particulièrement grand qui est equivalent à trois demi-tons.
Eine übermäßige Sekunde ist ein besonders großes Intervall, das drei Halbtonschritten entspricht.
Una segunda aumentada indica un intervalo particularmente extenso equivalente a tres semitonos.

Pattern 6
Motif Nº6
Griffstellung 6
Patrón n.º6

augmented 2nd
Seconde augmentée
übermässige Sekunde
2.ª aumentada

In Volume 2, *Pattern 1* and *2* are utilized from the first exercise of 'tonalization' until the sixth piece, *Bourrée* on page 15. At the end of the page, a preparatory exercise (Figure 14) for *Pattern 6* is given. *Pattern 6* includes the 'low first finger' which should be practised on each of the strings in this exercise.

Figure 14, *Pattern 6 exercise* (Suzuki, 2007b:15)

On the next page, a variety of note patterns are used in combination. *Patterns 4-6* are found in a D Minor scale (Figure 15) and three finger exercises (Figure 16), are given to allow the student the opportunity to acquire the necessary skill to use each of the patterns before applying them to all the pieces and exercises to follow.
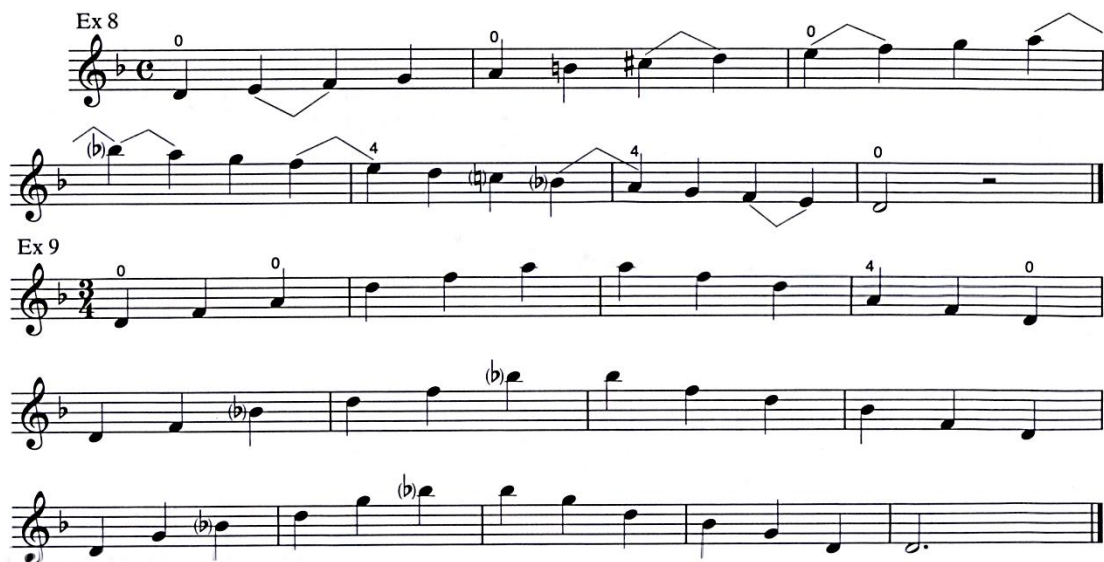
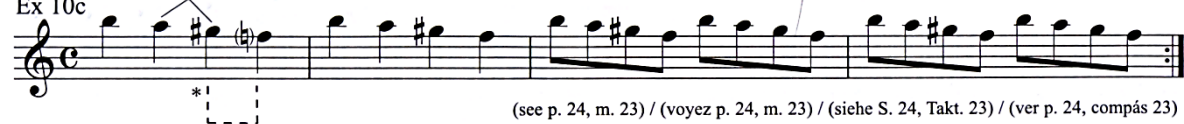Figure 15, *D minor scale and arpeggios* (Suzuki, 2007b:16)

Figure 16, *Finger exercises* (Suzuki, 2007b:16)

Finger Pattern 4 / Motif de doigt Nº4 / Griffstellung 4 / Patrón de digitación n.º4

Ex 10a

(see p. 18, m. 27) / (voyez p. 18, m. 27) / (siehe S. 18, Takt. 27) / (ver p. 18, compás 27)

Finger Pattern 5 / Motif de doigt Nº5 / Griffstellung 5 / Patrón de digitación n.º5

Ex 10b

Finger Pattern 6 / Motif de doigt Nº6 / Griffstellung 6 / Patrón de digitación n.º6

Ex 10c

(see p. 24, m. 23) / (voyez p. 24, m. 23) / (siehe S. 24, Takt. 23) / (ver p. 24, compás 23)

In Volume 1 at the end of page 26, beneath the theme of the Twinkles (Figure 17), Suzuki adds a note to the teacher to instruct the student to "sing the 'Twinkle Theme' using the names of the notes in their [the students'] own language". Through this exercise, the students are prepared for notation reading skills by learning note names. They are also exposed to the 'feel' of the different pitches when they sing. The teacher can now apply the same exercise for the following few songs, since each song is simple in structure and the student will find it fairly easy to sing the notes. (Suzuki, 2007a:26).

Figure 17, *Twinkle Theme* (Suzuki, 2007a:26)

Theme
Thème Thema Tema

Note: At this point, it is important for the children to sing the "Twinkle Theme" using the names of the notes in their own language.
Note: A ce stade il est important pour les enfants de chanter le thème d' «Ah, vous dirai-je, maman» avec les notes dans leur propre langue.
Bemerkung: Es ist wichtig für die Kinder, das Thema des „Twinkle-Liedchens" mit den Notennamen ihrer eigenen Sprache zu singen.
Nota: En esta etapa es importante que los niños canten la canción "Estrellita" utilizando los nombres de las notas en su propio idioma.

On page 45, Suzuki made available a basic notation guide (Figure 18). This guide includes the different note values, as well as other musical information like rests, bar lines, time and key signatures etc. By using this guide, the student is able to identify all the symbols present in the volume with assistance from the teacher. An illustration (Figure 19) at the end of the page explains the various note values and their relationship to each other. On pages 46, a list of the music terms and dynamics symbols used in the volume, is given. (Suzuki, 2007a:45).

Figure 18, *Notation guide* (Suzuki, 2007a:45)

Musical Notation Guide

Guide de notation musicale   Musikalisches Wörterbuch   Guía de notación musical

G clef (treble clef)
clé de Sol
Violinschlüssel
clave de sol

bar line
barre de mesure
Taktstrich
barra de compás

quarter note or crotchet
noire
Viertelnote
(nota) negra

eighth note or quaver
croche
Achtelnote
(nota) corchea

sixteenth note or semi-quaver
double croche
Sechzehntelnote
(nota) semicorchea

half note or minim
blanche
Halbe Note
(nota) blanca

whole note
ronde
Ganze Note
redonda

key signature
Armure
Tonartbezeichnung
armadura

bar or measure
mesure
Takt
compás

quarter rest
soupir
Viertelpause
silencio de negra

eighth rest
demi-soupir
Achtelpause
silencio de corchea

sixteenth rest
quart de soupir
Sechzehntelpause
silencio de semicorchea

half rest
demi-pause
Halbe Pause
silencio de blanca

whole rest
pause
Ganze Pause
silencio de redonda

time signature
indication de mesure
Taktart
compás

double bar
double barre de mesure
Doppelstrich
doble barra

$C = \frac{4}{4}$ common time
mesure à 4/4
4/4 Takt
compás de 4/4

$\mathbb{C} = \frac{2}{2}$ cut time (a la breve)
mesure à 2/2
alla breve-Takt (2/2-Takt)
compás de 2/2

repeat sign
reprise
Wiederholungszeichen
repetición

final bar
barre de mesure finale
Schlusstakt
doble barra final

Figure 19, *Note values* (Suzuki, 2007a:45)
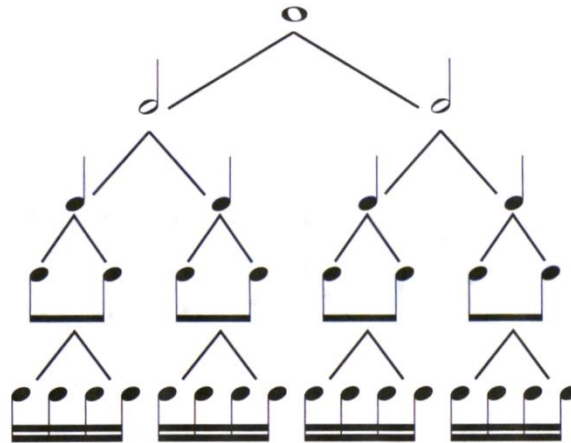
The position of fingers on the fingerboard, as well as the notes on the music staff (Figure 20) are displayed on page 48; similar to those on page 20. The difference here, is three entire scales are shown namely A Major, D Major and G major, with G Major being two octaves. The entire first position is displayed (how the fingers are placed on the fingerboard) with all the corresponding notes. Here, the student can clearly see the position of the notes on the fingerboard as well as all the semitones and whole-tone intervals between the fingers. Suzuki also indicates the notes which are matched to the equivalent string with a bracket. Semitones are indicated. (Suzuki, 2007a:48).

Figure 20, Position of fingers on the fingerboard (Suzuki, 2007a:48)

At the end of the page, all the note names (Figure 21) are given in five different languages with the matching notes/symbols on the music staff.

Figure 21, *Note names* (Suzuki, 2007a:48)

Note Names from Around the World

Le nom des notes à travers le monde   Notennamen aus aller Welt   Los nombres de las notas en todo el mundo
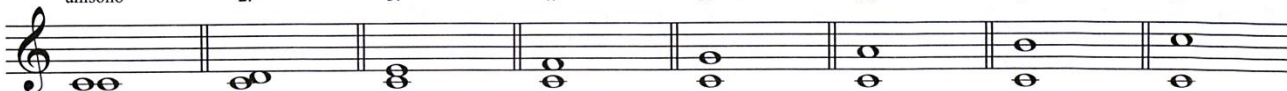
English	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
French	do	ré	mi	fa	sol	la	si	do
Deutsch	C	D	E	F	G	A	H	C
Italiano/Español	do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	si	do
Nippongo	ha	ni	ho	he	to	i	ro	ha

On page 32 of Volume 2, Suzuki presents the basic intervals (Figure 22) that exist in music with a definition thereof. Above the image he states: "The distance between two pitches is called an 'interval' and is measured in degrees" (Suzuki, 2007b:32).

Figure 22, *Intervals* (Suzuki, 2007b:32)
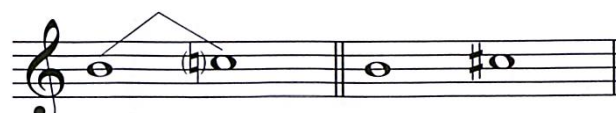
unison	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th (octave)
unisson	seconde	tierce	quatre	quinte	sixte	septième	octave
Prim	Sekunde	Terz	Quarte	Quinte	Sexte	Septime	Oktave
unísono	2.ª	3.ª	4.ª	5.ª	6.ª	7.ª	8.ª

Suzuki gives a theoretical example of a semitone and whole-tone (Figure 23), or as he calls it, a 'half-step' and 'whole-step' as well as the interval name of each.

Figure 23, *The semitone and whole-tone* (Suzuki, 2007b:32)

half step	whole step
demi-ton	ton
Halbtonschritt	Ganztonschritt
semitono	tono

minor 2nd	Major 2nd
seconde mineure	seconde majeure
kleine Sekunde	große Sekunde
2.ª menor	2.ª mayor

4.3 SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

4.3.1 Suggestions for teachers on reading – H. and E. Mills, *The Suzuki concept* (1973)

The authors make the following divisions in note reading skills: pitch, time, form, style and expression. They encourage the teaching of form and style symbols before introducing the student to pitch and rhythm so as to avoid confusion; less rather than too much information will be given to the student at first. (H. & E. Mills, 1973:161). The authors divide the development of reading into three stages (1973:162):

- First stage – The teacher will prepare the student through a process called 'pre-reading preparation' in the first stage of instrument study. The teacher will make the student aware of musical terms and expressions which will be replaced by symbols. The assumption is that the student will respond with recognition when reading the symbols and terms on a sheet of music.
- Second stage – The introduction to notation. Here the student will revise previously studied pieces while studying the notation or the teacher may use other aids such as charts and cards.
- Third stage – The skill of reading is developed and practised. This can also be seen as the development of sight-reading.

The first stage is the foundation for learning to read notation. The teacher should compile a list of all the music terms and symbols used in Volume 1 and apply them frequently in the lessons which in time will "evoke a musical response" from the student when used by the teacher. A similar response will occur when the student reads the terms on the music. To prepare the student for keeping track of rhythm when reading notes, the teacher firstly teaches the student to count out loud while using kinaesthetic movements, as is done when introducing the rhythm patterns at each of the Twinkle variations. Then they are asked to count as the teacher plays a succession of notes. It is also possible to introduce the names of the various note values at this stage, such as 'quarter note' or 'half note'. Conducting is also encouraged to be used together with counting. (H. & E. Mills, 1973:163, 164, 167, 168).

The approach to finger placement is introduced through name-calling: the teacher will call the finger number at which the student must place the correct finger on the correct string in response. H. and E. Mills (1973) state that pitch association will not be impaired at a later stage,

if the teacher follows a natural step-by-step process and doesn't delay the introduction to pitch names. Games can also be played; the child can be blindfolded while trying to place the correct finger on the correct spot when asked to. After the response to fingering is developed, introduction to letter names can be initiated. This can be done by singing the familiar pieces on their note names. After a few weeks of constantly singing or playing the pieces while reciting their note names the student may become bored, thus a new technique is introduced to stimulate his/her attention: the student will call the first note of the piece after which he/she will silently follow the music while the teacher plays it on the violin/piano. When the teacher stops on a particular note, the student has to call out its name. (H. & E. Mills, 1973:177–181).

H. and E. Mills (1973) state that "teaching through discovery is of [utmost] importance in music-reading work" (H. & E. Mills, 1973:182). In the second stage, all games and directions which were verbally conveyed can now be transformed "to written ones, by showing the corresponding symbol or words on" flashcards (H. & E. Mills, 1973:183). Students should be exposed to a few phrases at a time instead of the whole book. Notes can be introduced by one staff line at first. Any set of notes can be added and named. H. and E. Mills (1973) propose the next graph (Figure 24) as preparation for reading notation and training the eye movement (up and down motions). An example of the first four measures of the theme of Twinkle is given (H. & E. Mills, 1973:182, 183, 185):

Figure 24, *Introduction to note reading* (H. & E. Mills, 1973:185)

```
E  _____ 0 0 | 1 1 0 – |         |         _____
A     0 0          |           | 3 3 2 2 | 1 1 0 –
```

The writing of notes (theory) to reinforce what the student has learned is also recommended. Games to be played includes searching for notes or rhythms that look alike, following the music as a recording plays, finding specific notes or rhythms in the piece that the teacher asks for and identifying mistakes from a copy of the music made by the teacher in which certain notes or rhythms are missing. (H. & E. Mills 1973:188, 189).

4.3.2   The Suzuki way to create talent – J. Fryer (1985)

A sign that usually indicates when the student is ready to learn reading skills, is when he/she shows interest in the symbols on the page and their meaning. Fryer (1985) states that in the long run, students teach themselves "with a little help from the teacher". He also adds that it might take two to three years before a student will be able to read effectively from a piece of unknown music without any mistakes. (Fryer, 1985:99, 100).

Techniques teachers use to introduce notation reading skills include the following (Fryer, 1985:100, 101):

- The teacher presents a previous (and familiar) piece known to the student.
- The meaning and names of notes or group of notes with their correct finger placement on the fingerboard are given (such as A flat, A natural or A sharp).
- The student will play the familiar piece while looking at the music. This makes the matching of the note with the sound it produces, easier.
- While the student plays and observes, the teacher will point out information such as music terms, dynamics and articulations.
- Teacher and student(s) play games including the following:
  - The teacher draws three notes on a blackboard (note staff) or a card and asks the student to name the words which are suggested by the notes.
  - A large music staff is drawn on the floor. Students will act as notes while the teacher calls out note names or play them on the piano. Accordingly, the students need to stand on the correct position for the note being called/played.
  - The popular children game of 'Simon says' can be added to the game above where the teacher, as Simon, calls out to which note each child must move. Students making mistakes falls out and the winner might receive a prize.

Through games, the teaching of notation is entertaining and enjoyable and children are able to learn notes and their positions as quickly as they would learn to read letters and words. Hopefully, at this stage the curiosity and interest of the student will ensure memorization of what is taught by the teacher. Additionally, the teacher will test the student by presenting him/her with an unknown piece of music to read. The entire process should be slow enough to match the learning tempo of the student. With no pressure on the student, the teacher will

naturally incorporate reading lessons into the student's normal violin lessons. (Fryer, 1985:100).

4.3.3   *I can read music* **by Joanne Martin (1991)**

This is a "beginning note-reading book for violin students who have learned to play using an aural approach such as the Suzuki method" (Martin, 1991:4). In this book, Martin (1991) introduces pitch and rhythm separately and the focus is on one aspect at a time. She states that when both "aspects of reading, [pitch and rhythm], are established, they can be combined" at a later stage. (Martin, 1991:4).

However, Martin (1991) points out that before the student commences with the exercises, he/she will need to have previous knowledge of notation. For example, the student needs to know the association between the note names and the specific positions on the fingerboard. Also, notes need to be called by name and not their position on the fingerboard. Martin (1991) recommends teaching the student the alphabet, thereafter using flashcards displaying the first position's notes for each string. Students should also sing the notes to establish the pitch. In this way they will relate the written note to what they hear internally. The same can be done with rhythm. Martin (1991) refers back to the Twinkles in Volume 1, using each variation's rhythm pattern on flashcards. Because the student has played the rhythms before, it is further 'internalized'. To encourage the reading of notes and not the number of the finger to be played, Martin (1991) has not applied fingering in the book except when a new pitch is presented. For beginner readers, she proposes that the parent guides the student while playing by pointing out the notes one by one. (Martin, 1991:4).

There are a total of 50 lessons in the book. A number of five pitch and rhythm exercises are displayed, each on their own page opposite one another. In this way the student can move directly from pitch to rhythm exercises. Before the first lesson, Martin (1991) gives a chart of pitches (Figure 25) as well as rhythms (Figure 26) used in the book.
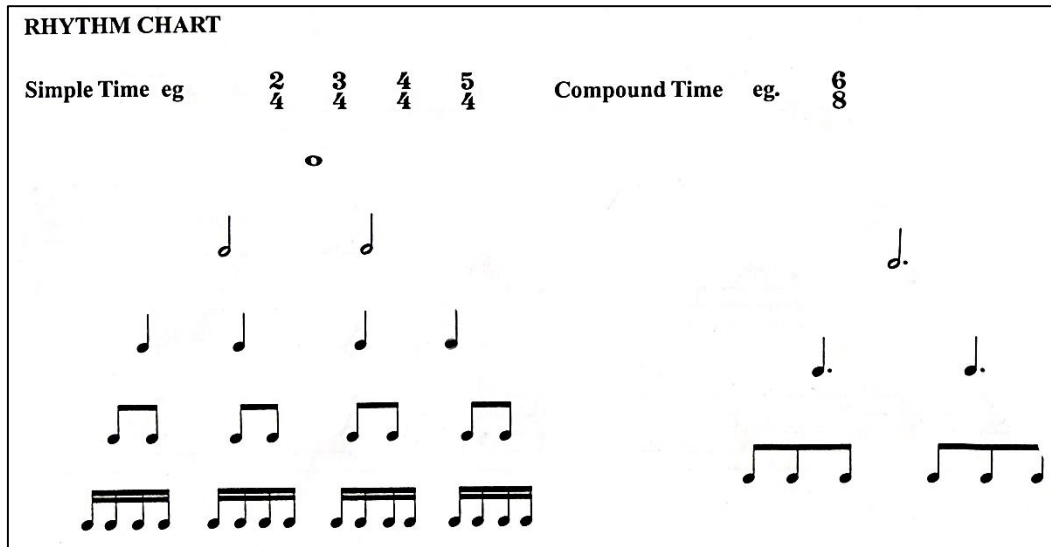
Figure 25, *Pitches used in* I can read music (Martin, 1991:5)

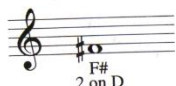Figure 26, *Rhythm chart* (Martin, 1991:5)

Every time a new pitch or rhythm is introduced, an explanation will be given at the top corner of the lesson (Figure 27 & 28).
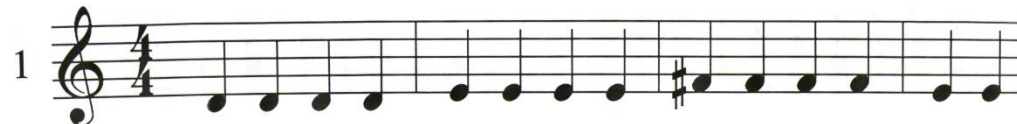
Figure 27, *Pitch* (Martin, 1991:52)

Figure 28, *Rhythm* (Martin, 1991:53)

4.4   BENEFITS OF SUZUKI'S APPROACH

Suzuki "believes that by postponing the reading process, children can better establish the basic techniques of posture, intonation and tone" (S.Y. Lee, 1992:53). The student will have more technical control when acquiring reading skills a bit later. His (the student's) ability to control pitch and tempo will be further developed. (Mills, 1973:142, 143).

Mills (1973) believes that a child who initially "learned to hear and play musically", will presumably become a "complete reader" in the sense that he/she, when commencing with reading skills, will not only 'read' the notes but internalize the sound while emphasizing expression and the stylistic aspects of the music. She also believes that the best results will be achieved when the teaching of notation is separated from the teaching of technique. Thus, certain obstacles will be avoided. Reciting note names and experiencing the frustration of identifying the various types of black notes from a music staff, will deprive the student of the joy of playing a musical instrument. Music will be experienced as a mechanical and not emotional process. Thus Suzuki avoids this by awakening the child's interest through exposing him/her to recordings and by motivating him/her to perform rhythm patterns and melodies without notation. (Mills, 1973:139).

Through imitation and repetition, musical memory is developed. This process makes it very difficult to determine if the student is reading music or is playing from memory. As many students or professional musicians experience, reading the facts in notation clarifies what they have heard. Suzuki refers to many professional musicians who recite entire works of music from memory on a stage. He believes this ability should be nurtured and developed from the beginning. (Mills, 1973:142, 145).

4.5   DISADVANTAGES OF SUZUKI'S APPROACH

S.Y. Lee (1992:i, 57) states that the method's lack of creativity and lack of early instruction of reading skills, is a weakness. It is her opinion that the implementation of notation reading skills should occur simultaneously once the student commences with violin studies (Lee, 1992:58).

Fryer (1985) admits that if one should gaze upon the contents of *Violin School* Volume 1 for the first time, the illiterate reader, parent or student would find it confusing and overwhelming. The reader needs to study the contents of the book very carefully to comprehend what will be

learnt in the first year (always dependant on the individual's progress). One should also read the instructions with utmost care and precision. (Fryer, 1985:90).

Historically, Western musicians claimed that the "physical and mental coordination of the eye, brain and fingers involved in [notation] reading will not develop properly unless it is taught early" (S.Y. Lee, 1992:53). This is based on the fact that if adequate time is spent on reading, the desired ability will be developed. Students studying the Suzuki method, start their first year by learning their pieces aurally which can be considered as imitation. Western critics condemn this type of learning for it instigates a "lack of creativity in performance" and it delays "the child's musical independence" (S.Y. Lee, 1992:53).

This form of imitation can be defined as 'rote teaching' which is an important element of the Suzuki method in that it supports the repetition of "carefully sequenced physical motions and musical material" (Mitchell, 1994:1). *The Chambers Dictionary* (2014:1355) defines 'Rote' as "mechanical memory, repetition or performance without regard to the meaning". Based on this definition, it can be considered a disadvantage in acquiring skill through repetition without understanding the meaning thereof. As Suzuki himself claims, what a child learns in the very early years of life will have an effect on education for the remainder of his/her life. (Suzuki, 1983:9).

4.6   CONCLUSION

In spite of the negative criticism Suzuki has received from Western educators, he believes that people should not be too quick to judge his method. His response is that imitation is a "natural part of many training processes" in the arts such as music, dancing and painting. Furthermore, it is reinforced by providing good models as examples to students in the first and most important stage of their development. The Suzuki method disclosed quality recordings of all the pieces from each volume in CD form which accompanies each book purchased. This serves as models for students who wish to study the pieces in these volumes. As soon as reading skills are implemented, the students will depend less on the recordings as they learn to appreciate the 'written' pieces in the book. Suzuki claims that the development of independence and individuality in music can be compared to the same day-to-day development in a child's life, for example the development of language. The pace is gradually increased as the child matures. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:54, 55).

CHAPTER 5: INTRODUCTION TO THE *COLOURSTRINGS* VIOLIN METHOD

5.1   BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE FOUNDER GÈZA SZILVAY

Gèza Szilvay was born in Hungary 1943 to a musical family and grew up during the communist era. It was the norm during this troubled time to study music scores or play an instrument to safely express emotion. (Snyman, 2007:5; Mitchell, 1994:99). Szilvay started playing the violin at the age of five. His father was a professor at the university as well as an amateur cellist. His sister was a pianist, his brother, Csaba, a cellist and their younger brother a violinist. Szilvay and his siblings made music together on a daily basis and eventually formed the Szilvay Family Quartet. His music education started at a Hungarian music school which was naturally Kodály orientated. After that he enrolled at the Béla Bartok Conservatory. In 1961, the family quartet won a national competition on Hungarian television and as a result Szilvay received an invitation to study at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. (Mitchell, 1994:99; Björkman, 2011:10).

He studied violin pedagogy at the Budapest Music Academy under the guidance of Maria Zipernovszky and I. Bodonyi, graduating in 1966. After playing in a professional orchestra for one year, he entered the ELTE University in Budapest from which he graduated in 1970 receiving the degree of Doctor of Law and Political Science. While doing his doctorate in law, he taught violin, directed and conducted orchestras for the Hungarian Television and Radio Children's Choir. Additionally, he established small chamber orchestras to perform alongside this choir. It was at this time that his passion of educating children and conducting orchestras was awakened. In 1971 he commenced with teaching at the East Helsinki Music Institute. After a few successful years, Szilvay was appointed Rector of the East Helsinki Music Institute in 1984. Szilvay gave many lectures, workshops and courses in the *Colourstrings Method* at various institutions which includes amongst others ISME International Conferences, International String Teachers Association workshops, the International Kodály Conference, Goldsmiths' College and the University of London. (Mitchell, 1994:99, 100).

5.2   HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY AND FOUNDATIONS

The debate on "new and improved teaching methods" for the violin has been under close scrutiny in the Hungarian and Finnish community at the time Szilvay decided to develop his own violin method. His aim was to establish a method that would cover the essential techniques needed for beginner violinists, but also a holistic approach towards the education and development of the child as a human being. (Voima, 2009:2, 3; Snyman, 2007:5).

The *Colourstrings* method was developed in the 1970s at the East Helsinki Music Institute in Finland, at the time Szilvay was appointed as violin teacher. The title of his books is *Violin ABC*. (Mitchell, 1994:iii, 2). Voima (2009:2) defines *Colourstrings* as an "elementary music educational system". There are a few elements which kindled Szilvay's desire to create his own violin method. One example is Szilvay's teaching experience at the East Helsinki Music Institute in Finland. When he first arrived in Finland, he couldn't speak Finnish, yet he had to teach violin to 68 beginner students. Left with no choice but to draw from his music education in Hungary, he applied what he learned from Kodály's methodology communicating through visual pictures and aural exercises (singing), encouraging them to use as many senses as possible. He argued that, if the students should simply imitate what he demonstrated, their learning process would be 'superficial', thus he concluded that an improved method was essential for him to interact with his students. (Homfray, 2006:78; Colourstrings Australia, 2010; Voima, 2009:2). Another more personal motive for the method is Szilvay's intention to provide "the child [with] all the technical, musical and intellectual means to reach a high level, but with a smile". This included his own daughter, for whom he created this method. (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay).

Szilvay developed his method in accordance with the principles of Zoltan Kodály's "approach to music education", who's approach plays a crucial part in Szilvay's method (Mitchell, 1994: iii, 2). Szilvay stated that he was trained in Kodály's method and that he finds Kodály's principles to be the best in meeting the "needs of children [wanting] to become good musicians" (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay). Many aspects of Kodály's methodology are embodied in the *Colourstrings* method which will be discussed in section 5.3. Another pedagogical approach which contributed to the method was Paul Rolland's method. His technical approach to the left hand and bow arm influenced Szilvay and in his method he verbalized it as follows: efficient practise with the least amount of effort. Other important elements of the method

include the "incorporation of multi-sensory learning experiences", ear training and singing, rhythmic training and early reading skills for young or beginner violinists. (Mitchell, 1994: iii, 5, 28).

The only aspect separating Szilvay's method from the traditional Hungarian method (Kodály) is not only the simultaneous introduction to music reading and the violin as instrument, but also the age of beginners starting tuition in the method. Mitchell (1994: iii) states that beginners' age in the *Colourstrings* method ranges between five and eight. Szilvay expressed his opinion on the matter, saying he would start teaching violin at six years of age. Even seven or eight years is acceptable. His reason is the predicament of posture in violin playing which is very unnatural for children, especially those in kindergarten. He doesn't recommend starting their violin education before the age of five. Another reason could be the simultaneous use of the senses. (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay; Mitchell, 1994:3). "These entail the development of the inner-ear and the complicated coordination of both the violin and bow hand" (Snyman, 2007:8).

For most of the songs/pieces which appear in the *ABC* books, Szilvay wrote preparatory exercises. He demonstrates his musical ideas visually. It was Szilvay's father who made him aware of the scientifically proved link between "colour and tone" which became a crucial part of the *Colourstrings* method. (Voima, 2009:2). Szilvay was the first teacher to use colour corresponding to each of the violin's four strings. He left no stone unturned in the process of writing this method, not excluding even the slowest progressing student. This gave other teachers the chance to reflect on their own teachings. (Snyman, 2007:6).

The students who were acknowledged as the first generation *Colourstrings* pupils became well known across Finland as they started performing in concert halls. Gradually, as the students progressed and new students arrived, four separate groups of specific ages materialized: The International Minifiddlers Orchestra (from age 7 to 10), the Helsinki Children Strings (age 10 to 15), the Helsinki Junior Strings (age 15 to 18) and the Helsinki Strings (age 19 to 22). What revolutionized music education and teaching in Finland was a TV series programme during which Szilvay would teach individual lessons as well as a chamber group and orchestra. (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay; Snyman, 2007:7). It was known as *Minifiddlers in Musicland* (1979) and was originally intended as educational programmes for kindergarten children. Instead it captured the attention of children of all ages, even teachers, and incited such interest

in instrumental teaching that the whole of Finland was practically sold out of violins (Homfray, 2006:78). An explosion of instrumental teaching commenced which changed the attitude of student, parent and teacher alike (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay; Snyman, 2007:7).

Szilvay's brother, Csaba Szilvay, joined him in 1976 in Helsinki and wrote a *Colourstrings* cello book. The two brothers contributed immensely to the growing awareness of music education in Finland by establishing the 'Helsinki Strings' which performs regularly as one of the foremost music groups in Finland, and who revived Finnish folk music. The Helsinki Junior Strings and Helsinki Strings made at least 30 professional recordings and did more than 30 world tours in Europe, Japan, China and America where they gave professional concerts and demonstrated the *Colourstrings* method. (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay; Homfray, 2006:78; Snyman, 2007:7). In 1981, both the Szilvay brothers were "awarded the 'Knight Order of the Finnish Lion' [by] the president of the Republic of Finland". They also received the "Culture Prize of the Republic of Finland in 1983 in recognition of their contribution to the youth of Finland" (Snyman, 2007:7).

Dr Mitchell stated that it was not the primary goal of the *Colourstrings* method to produce professional musicians in Finland. Szilvay states in the interview between him and Mitchell (1994) that the child *might* be a musician and he may later choose to become a professional musician. Forcing instruction which demands excessive progress upon children may eventually damage the child, for it hampers their development as human beings. Szilvay claims that the format of *Book A* and *Book B* is "a unique aspect of the" method and serves as an inspiration for children and motivation to practise. He adds that *Colourstrings* is inviting and children will not experience it as a burden to learn from the method. (Mitchell, 1994:38, 39).

To conclude, Voima (2009:2, 3) states the following which claims to be the aim of the *Colourstrings* method and addresses the holistic development of the child: "Musical activity develops logic, memory, concentration, improves inner discipline, physical co-ordination, social skills and - most important of all - enriches one's emotional life".

5.3 KODÁLY ORIGINS

"I would say that Kódaly's principles best meet the needs of children to become good musicians" - Géza Szilvay (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay). Boucneau (2000:1) confirms this by stating that the *Colourstrings* method is an extension of the Kodály methodology.

Zoltán Kodály was "a Hungarian music educator, composer and ethnomusicologist who radically transformed Hungarian music education" (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015:15). He found through his teachings that the music education in Hungary was insufficient (Mark & Madura, 2014:106). He thus decided to establish a system which developed the sight-singing abilities of children and which included music of high quality such as folk music or originally composed songs. As a result of his system, Kodály found that students' notation reading skills, which included pitch and rhythm, notably improved when it was "internalized" before being executed on an instrument. It was Kodály's intention with his approach that children should receive more or less two years of sight-singing tuition/sol-fa training as foundation for their instrumental training. (Mitchell, 1998:73; Mark & Madura, 2014:109; Björkman, 2011:11).

Many questioned Kodály's approach to music education as a method or methodology. Foreigners named his approach the 'Kodály method'. Mitchell calls it a methodology for this approach includes techniques, methods and curricula, and its efficiency was examined and proven reliable by many researchers. Not only Kodály was involved in the method's development, but a group of musicians, teachers and ethnomusicologists was and still is involved in this on-going process. Elements that form part of the Kodály methodology include singing, quality music material consisting of folk and composed songs, and moveable *do*. Movable *do* (relative solmization or tonic sol-fa), the use of rhythmic syllables and the Curwen hand signs are identified as tools of his methodology and were also incorporated as tools into the *Colourstrings* method. (Mitchell, 1994:5, 7, 8; Voima, 2009:13).

John Spencer Curwen's system had a profound influence on Kodály's methodology. It is a "music-reading system" which includes the moveable *do* or 'tonic sol-fa', as well as "hand signs for each of the solfège syllables". Curwen's objective was to enable "music reading for the masses, [through] a series of note stems without note heads" instead of traditional notation. This was the origin of Kodály's, and finally Szilvay's approach to notation reading skills. (Mitchell, 1994:8).

Kodály's system of rhythm syllables originated from the music reading system of Galin-Paris-Chevé which had the same intention; to facilitate music reading for the masses. The system was composed of numbered diatonic pitches and syllables used for different note values. Kodály recognized the value of this system and adapted it to enhance the music education of his country by assigning movements which included walking, tapping, clapping and hand

gestures to each of the rhythm syllables respectively while combining it with "singing activities". Accordingly, this gave students the opportunity to efficiently develop their rhythmic capabilities as well as their sight-singing abilities. Kodály supported the use of folk music in conjunction with the appropriate use of the pentatonic scale which was also more accessible to young children. Szilvay followed in Kodály footsteps when developing the *Colourstrings* method. (Mitchell, 1994:9, 10).

Szilvay, interviewed by Mitchell (1994:29), stated that his method is a "pure Kodály method" with one exception; reading skills and instrumental tuition started simultaneously. Szilvay highlighted relative solmization in conjunction with solfège, the Curwen hand signs and use of rhythmic syllables as important elements of his method. Holistic music education was another area which was influenced by Kodály: to develop the child emotionally, spiritually and mentally. Szilvay recognized the prominent presence of Kodály's principles in the *Colourstrings* method. (Mitchell, 1994:28, 29; Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay).

Similar to the Kodály methodology, *Colourstrings* advocates the writing of notation during early music reading skills tuition. Consequently, students are exposed to music reading from the very beginning by means of symbols. The one-line staff that appears in the first 27 pages of *Violin ABC*'s *Book B* on which the pitches *do*, *re*, and *mi* are presented is in accordance with Kodály's approach to notation reading skills. This approach to music reading also inspired the appealing colourful pictures in *Book A*. (Mitchell, 1994:31; Snyman, 2007:8; Szilvay, 2005b). The pictures representing the rhythmic syllables in *Colourstrings* closely resemble the pictures which Kodály uses in his methodology. Both methods use "proportionally-sized" pictures that represent rhythmic syllables; a large picture for a crochet, or a small picture for a quaver note. Szilvay strongly recommends the use of all senses which includes sight, hearing, voice and movement. He especially stresses sight or vision for it incorporates the other senses. This "multi-sensory approach to learning" is also derived from Kodály. (Mitchell, 1998:74; Mitchell, 1994:31).

Another correlation that both methodologies advocate throughout a student's "musical training", is the following essential features; Kodály describes these features as "a well-trained ear, a well-trained intelligence, a well-trained heart and a well-trained hand" as cited in Mitchell (1994:29). He also states that all four should develop together in "constant equilibrium". If one of the features should be neglected or prioritized, the development would be hindered. The

student would have attained the same results quicker if all the features were trained equally, says Kodály. (Voima, 2009:5). Szilvay described the *Colourstrings* method by listing the following features: considering that this is an instrumental method, it "trains at the same time the fingers (technique), the ear (that is solfeggio), trains the intellect (music theory) and trains the emotions through chamber music" (Mitchell, 1994:29, 30).

Even though both approaches consist of numerous similarities, Szilvay supports the introduction of notation reading skills as soon as the child's instrumental study commences. On the contrary, Kodály believes children should first acquire reading skills through singing before they start learning to play an instrument. (Mitchell, 1994:32). Mitchell (1994:32) quotes Szilvay:

> I teach at the same time the violin and reading. And this 'reading' is between quotation marks, because the children are not really reading in the first half year, they are just looking at pictures, and these pictures will change later on into normal notation.

Szilvay also studied the Suzuki and Rolland method after he attended pedagogical courses in Finland in 1971. He went to Japan to witness the Suzuki tuition method. Although he respected Suzuki as an educator and teacher who views the child as a developing human being who needs to be nurtured, emotionally and mentally, he doesn't include any new concepts of Suzuki's method into his own. In conclusion, Szilvay, after being exposed to many approaches and methods, said the following: "[…] there was not one that really takes into consideration all the necessities which a child needs". He sees his method as a journey which encompasses the "life of the child." (Mitchell, 1994:35).

5.4   METHODOLOGY

5.4.1   Introduction

"By means of colour and visual perception, all skills and knowledge necessary for basic instrumental education are portrayed" – G. Szilvay (Voima, 2009:9).

The following elements used in the *Colourstrings* method will be discussed: "Melodic or vocal instruction, rhythmic instruction and the use of [colour] in conjunction with musical notation" (Mitchell, 1994:14).

At first, Szilvay considered the ages of beginners to range between four and six, since his method accommodates that age group. But since the 1970s, as he developed his method further, he believed children should not be rushed into taking up an instrument and be exposed to pressure too early. He claims that if a child starts instrumental study at the age of six, which he believes to be a good age, the child could still improve greatly. (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay; Mitchell, 1994:13).

In *Colourstrings,* one of the tools used to develop refined intonation is melodic instruction or "sight"- singing which is guided by the solfège system. Students will apply solfège syllables to their pieces or exercises while simultaneously using the Curwen hand signals, derived from Kodály's methodology. This is applied to every new piece or exercise learned before it is performed on the violin. Movable *do* enables the student to transpose and not be restricted to one position on the fingerboard. For this reason, "absolute pitch" is only introduced after *Book D*. (Mitchell, 1994:29; Voima, 2009:10). 'Absolute pitch' is defined as "the pitch of a note as determined by the number of vibrations per second" (i.e. note names) (*The Chambers Dictionary*, 2014:6).

Kodály's system of rhythmic syllables is also used as portrayed in *Violin ABC, Book A*: *Ta* for a crochet or quarter note, *Ti* for quavers or eighth notes, and *Ta-a* for a minim or half note (Figure 29).

Figure 29, *Ta, Ti-ti, Ta-a* (Szilvay, 2005a:9, 13, 14, 24)
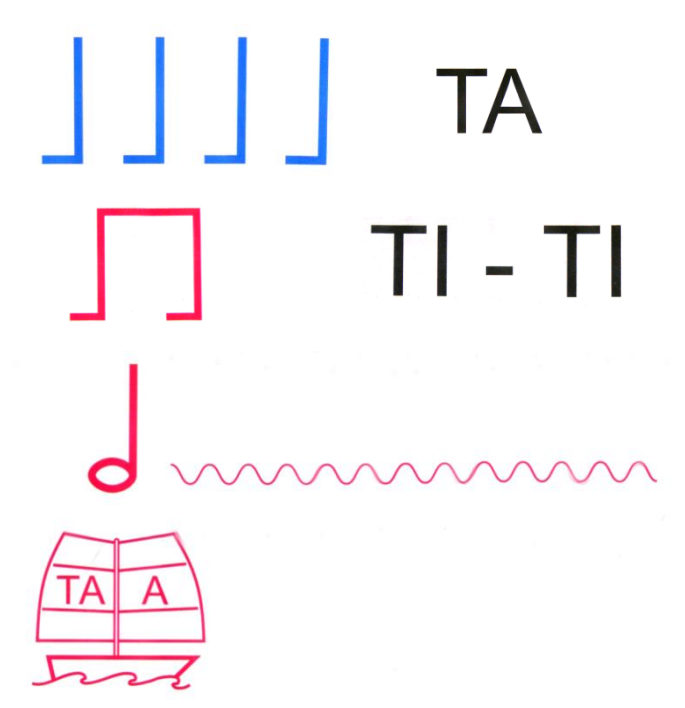
Kinaesthetic movement is also involved in introducing the rhythm syllables in the following manner: for *Ta* the child will pound both fists onto each other for each note while saying *Ta* respectively, for *Ti,* which mostly appears in pairs, the child will tap one forefinger against the other while saying *Ti-ti ti-ti* respectively, and lastly for *Ta-a,* the child will clap his/her hands together at the sound of the 't' then make a forward balloon-like motion that keeps the duration of two beats. Students will practise these movements before playing them on their instrument. Through this, the 'inner timing' and the 'feeling' of the beat/rhythm are developed and comprehended by the student. (Voima, 2009:14; Mitchell, 1994:29).

New rhythms as well as rests are introduced as picture symbols, similar to the representation of the four violin strings. A crotchet note (*Ta*) is portrayed as a car and each quaver note (*Ti*) is a train cart (Szilvay, 2005a:15). A minim (*Ta-a*) is displayed as a boat (Szilvay, 2005a:24), and a whole note or semibreve (*Ta-a-a-a*) as a snail (Szilvay, 2005d:36). Other rhythms which are introduced throughout *Book C* and *Book D* are the dotted minim (*Ta-a-a*) (Szilvay, 2005c:28), syncopated rhythms (*Ti-Ta-Ti*) (Szilvay, 2005c:14), a dotted crochet note and quaver note (*Tai-ti*) (Szilvay, 2005c:36), a group of sixteenth notes or semiquavers (*tiri-tiri*) (Szilvay, 2005d:54) as well as a group of one quaver note and two semiquaver notes (*ti-tiri*) (Szilvay, 2005d:69). A rest is portrayed as the absence of a certain part of a picture, for example if a sun is represented as a crotchet note, a cloud in front of the sun indicates a rest, because the sun is blocked out or 'absent' (Szilvay, 2005a:20; Voima, 2009:9).

Considering the use of colours in *Colourstrings*, Szilvay stated that one reason why he has chosen to assign a colour to each of the violin's strings is to "feel the difference between the strings" (Mitchell, 1994:46). He also maintains that colours stimulate creative thinking as well as "awaken and maintain interest and make the learning process easier, more enjoyable, deep and long-lasting" (Szilvay, 2005e:1; Voima, 2009:9). The idea for using a colour system originates from the Hungarian researcher, Farkas Kerekes who used a system where pitches are associated with specific colours. It is no surprise that Szilvay's colour system matches that of Kerekes'. Szilvay uses the colours green, red, blue and yellow, each assigned to the strings G, D, A and E respectively. Accordingly, the notes and staff lines that are associated with the respective string would be assigned the same colour. (Mitchell, 1994:46). As the visual aspect works in conjunction with the aural aspect (in *Colourstrings)*, once again the use of two senses in combination is noted. With the introduction of a new teaching aspect, Szilvay will apply this joint functioning of senses. (Szilvay, 2005e:2).

It was not originally Szilvay's idea to name his method *Colourstrings* but that of his publisher. Szilvay confirms that the use of colours at the very beginning is important and that the connection between notes and colours might assist children in the process of acquiring reading skills. He adds that in his experience, the children who study with him including his own children, prefers the colours to traditional black notation. (Mitchell, 1994:47).

It is accepted that children learn more efficiently and effortlessly when exposed to short pieces/exercises of music which include not only the study of pitches and rhythm but structure and phrasing as well. One must also keep in mind the attention span and patience of small children and that Szilvay did intend his method to be used for young beginners. Thus, the repertoire used in *Colourstrings Book A* and *B* consists of fairly short pieces or songs, usually no longer than ten measures. A few selections, for example many of the teaching techniques used, "are written by Kodály". Szilvay stated that he views these little pieces as masterpieces. Most if not all of the pieces are folksongs from many different countries, edited to fit within the teaching spectrum of the method. (Mitchell, 1994:58, 59).

Apart from the individual lessons, students will also receive group classes a few weeks after their first lesson and only after they have acquired the most basic skills to be able to produce sound on the violin. This will introduce them to, and give them the opportunity to play and develop with other children, as well as prepare them for chamber music. As mentioned earlier, chamber music benefits the student's emotional growth as a musician and develops communication through music. (Mitchell, 1994:59, 60).

Szilvay intended for children to receive, through *Colourstrings Kindergarten,* an early introduction to music education in order to prepare them emotionally for the journey that lies ahead. There will be a short period of time before they go to grade school (pre-school children). (Voima, 2009:14). It was determined that they would be trained in aural (pitch and rhythm) and kinaesthetic (physical) exercises which involved "singing, clapping and moving to the beat". The repertoire includes melodies, rhythms, folksongs and children songs which are accompanied by exercise books and recordings. (Voima, 2009:14; Snyman, 2007:8, 9). Teachers are encouraged to notate their own region, culture or country's folk music. The same is done with children as Szilvay leaves open blank pages for the students to write their own compositions based on the previous work they've studied. In this way, their "creativity is developed through improvisation". Many melodies and rhythms are notated in the *Rascals*

songbooks which are written by Szilvay. The same repertoire, especially the folksongs and children's songs, appear in the *Violin ABC* books as well as the chamber and orchestral music. (Snyman, 2007:8, 9).

As the child reaches the age of six, he or she should already have a rich musical background before commencing with the study of the violin. Snyman (2007:8) describes the *Colourstrings* method as a "step-by-step approach…building a deep foundation in a child friendly, stimulating and enjoyable way".

5.4.2 Application of methodology

"[…] the execution of a movement is perfect only when the desired effect is achieved with the least possible application of force." – G. Szilvay (Mitchell, 1994:50)

When Mitchell (1994) visited Finland, and eventually the East Helsinki Music Institute, she recorded the manner in which they applied the *Colourstrings* curriculum into the following components: study of technique, aural training, "music theory, chamber music and youth orchestra". These components are introduced to the child at the earliest possible opportunity. (Mitchell, 1994:49). The four books of *Violin ABC* can be divided into three/four sections, where each introduces a new aspect while revising previous learnt concepts. The end of each chapter is indicated by two blank pages where Szilvay creates the opportunity for the teacher (or the student) to compose or write folk music from their own country or region. (Voima, 2009:16, 18; Szilvay, 2005a:30, 31).

5.4.2.1 <u>First lesson – *Book A*</u>

The violin is immediately introduced in the first lesson. The teacher will start by establishing the correct standing posture. Additionally, the teacher works on the position of the child's head before resting it on the chinrest of the violin. The head must have a 'natural weight' when resting on the violin. (Mitchell, 1994:50).

On the first page of *Violin ABC Book A*, the child is introduced to the four strings' represented by characters, which originates from *Colourstrings Kindergarten* known as '*Musicland* characters': 'big bear' or 'teddy bear' (green), 'father' (red), 'mother' or 'mommy' (blue) and 'birdie' (yellow).

Figure 30, *Musicland characters* (Szilvay, 2005a:1)
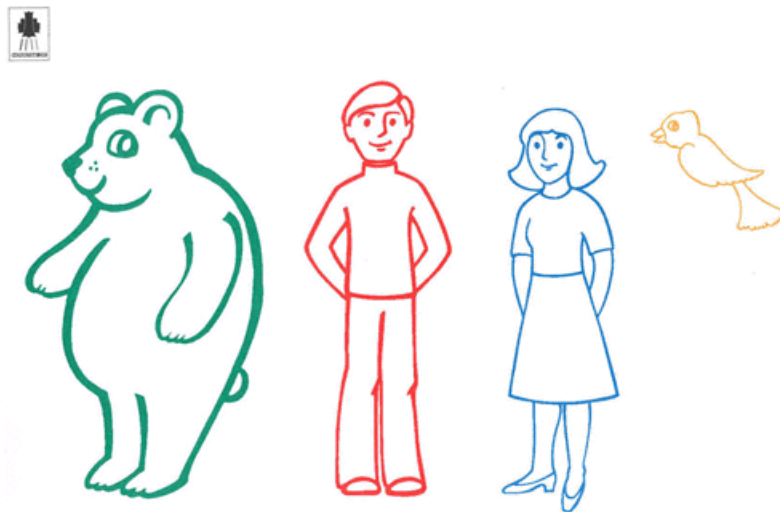
On page two, each colour is assigned to a string represented by four lines: G-string (green), D-string (red), A-string (blue) and E-string (yellow) (Szilvay, 2005a:2). It is easy for children to comprehend this picture-like code because they can immediately relate each picture to the sound of each string. These appealing pictures "gradually become regular notation" (Boucneau, 2000:1; Mitchell, 1998:73). No staff or bar lines are visible. These colours are presented throughout *Book A*, *Book B* and *Book C*. At the end of *Book C*, some exercises are written in traditional black notation, and throughout *Book D* only black notation is visible with fingerings, accidentals (sharps and flats) and the key indicating the tonic in colour. (Szilvay 2005a–d).

The teacher can use his/her own discretion whether to place a tape on the violin next to the bridge (clearly visible to the child while playing), with each of the colours drawn below each corresponding string, in order to accommodate the child. Next the teacher would hold the child's left hand in "playing position" and let the child pluck the strings as they together recite the four strings, thus giving the child the opportunity to learn not only the location of each string but the corresponding sound as well. The child would learn to pluck with all fingers of the left hand (except the thumb) as well as with the right hand index finger while the teacher points to the individual pictures. This, in effect, will strengthen each finger and serves as preparation for left-hand pizzicato, or plucking. (Mitchell, 1994:51).

Additionally, the teacher would guide the student while he/she bows across the strings, usually in specific basic rhythmic patterns. The child will also, while plucking with their left hand, bow simultaneously with their right hand just above the strings while the teacher guides the bow, letting the child 'practise bowing' "on the string" he/she is plucking. This serves as an "early

introduction to bowing" and will carry on for more or less six months until the students has developed a certain amount of control with their bowing technique. (Mitchell, 1994:51).

Approximately ten minutes is needed for the first lesson. Through using occasional physical contact by the teacher, the student will feel at ease in a safe environment with calm guidance in bowing, feeling the weight of the head and right arm, and moulding the left hand etc. Thus there will be no confusion as the teacher clearly demonstrates to the child what he/she wants. Left hand plucking is encouraged but only with the student's little finger at first as this is the weakest finger. At the end of the lesson the child has to use all of the fingers to pluck each string. For the teacher to work in accordance with the approach of the method and to keep the child's interest, he/she needs to use creative images and games. One such example: the child is supposed to play softly on the E-string, or 'birdie string', thus the teacher will hint that the child should attempt to whisper like a bird. (Snyman, 2007:10, 11).

In the beginner stage of *Colourstrings*, students will be utilizing relative sol-fa (or solfège syllables) instead of letter names for pitches. Szilvay states that students will be using these until a 'later stage' in his *Handbook*. When new songs or pitches are introduced, the sol-fa syllables ("ex. *do, re, mi*") are printed at the top of the page. (Mitchell, 1994:55; Szilvay, 2005e:2).

Book A revolves around "the use of open strings and harmonics". To incorporate folk songs, pentatonic melodies are composed with a combination of open strings and harmonics. Left- and right-hand pizzicato as well as guided bowing will occur throughout the book, however independent bowing is encouraged from the second division or chapter of the book. Preparation for shifting also appears in the second chapter by way of octave harmonics. In the last chapter, natural harmonics in first position prepares the student for *Book B* where the student will play 'stopped notes' for the first time. At the end of the book, traditional notes appear, but still in colour on one staff line. (Voima, 2009:17, 18).

5.4.2.2 *Book B*

Up to this point, the student will have developed "secure intonation, strong [independent] left hand fingers and a free bow arm". As a result of the many "repetitions [and] reinforcements", notation reading skills will come effortlessly to the student. (Snyman, 2007:9). Staff lines are introduced one by one until two lines are visible at the end of *Book B* (Szilvay, 2005b).

Melodies in this book are not only composed using open string notes and harmonics, but follow a more intricate melodic line than those in *Book A* by way of 'stopping notes': the first five sol-fa syllables are introduced throughout the book in succession and as a result, first position is established (*do, re, mi, fa, so*). This new aspect is then practised with familiar techniques from *Book A*; 'stopping notes' are combined with octave harmonics which not only encourages the student to keep light fingers on the string in order to shift, but to be attentive to their pitch/intonation when doing so. Szilvay introduces the new pitches and fingering in such a way that it "emphasizes independent finger action". Sharps are introduced in this book with a symbol of a ladder in front of a note. The second staff line is added when the third finger (ring finger) is used. It is explained to the student in a creative way and includes the presentation of measures and bar lines; all the notes live in a house (music staff), each staff line is an apartment and each bar line a wall that separates them and divides them into measures. Additional exercises are included at the end of the book that combines techniques used in *Book A* and new elements learnt in *Book B*. (Voima, 2009:19, 20).

5.4.2.2　　　*Book C*

The five-line staff is complete at the beginning of *Book C* and the appearance of notation in this book is perceived as more traditional than before. Note stems are now written downwards and upwards instead of only upwards as in *Book A* and *Book B*. (Szilvay, 2005c:1-3). Staff lines will gradually 'turn black' except the middle line which remains blue, and notes will remain coloured. Relationships between note groups are explained through a seesaw where for example a crotchet note will be placed at one end while two quaver notes will appear on the other. These notes will be explained to the student as having equal value. (Szilvay, 2005c:12; Voima, 2009:21). Dynamics are introduced as well as different tempo markings. All songs and exercises are built on the notes of the 'pentachord' (*do-re-mi-fa-so*) while later on the note *La* is added to form the pentatonic scale. Bow technique is emphasized in this book: slurred bowings are added in the beginning, bowing retakes are practised and the student is made aware of bow division. Double stops are presented at the end of the book. (Voima, 2009:22, 23).

5.4.2.2　　　*Book D*

In this book, colours fade away so that in the end, the material is comprised of traditional black notation (Szilvay, 2005d). Left-hand technique is expanded through the use of the low second finger which introduces the minor pentachord: *La-ti-do-re-mi*. Eventually, both high and low

second fingers are combined using both "major and minor hexachord melodies". Scales and arpeggios are presented in chapter 14 and 15 for the first time. Like *Book C*, this book contains many new varieties of bow techniques which the student will study including further development of bow division as well as new forms of bowing such as *spiccato*. (Voima, 2009:23, 25; Szilvay 2005d:64, 65).

5.4.3   Technique

Not only does Szilvay give recognition to Paul Rolland for the use of left hand pizzicato, but also the use of harmonics or flageolettes which appears early in the *Violin ABC books*. Szilvay describes the sound as "flutelike tones". He does not encourage markers on the violin fingerboard as Suzuki does but would rather like the student to depend on 'hearing' the intonation, not seeing it. He does admit a young child might need some visual assistance for the harmonics thus at the teacher's discretion a "small dot" may be used between the "D and the A-string to indicate the position of the harmonic" on the fingerboard - another idea from Rolland. (Mitchell, 1994:37, 51).

Another technical facet of the *Colourstrings* method is the use of long and relaxed bow strokes from the start. In Szilvay's experience, as opposed to the Suzuki method, shorter bow strokes for beginners will eventually lead to stiffness in the left arm. This was the notion of the method during the 70s. In the 80s however, Szilvay began to follow Suzuki's example but for a different reason. He began to encourage beginners to use shorter bow strokes for the sake of checking intonation. From page one up until page 35 in *Book A*, all of the songs and exercises are written on one string as a means of avoiding playing and practising on out-of-tune violins at home. String crossings are only introduced from page 36. It can also be seen as a way of simplifying the teaching of reading skills to beginners. (Mitchell, 1994:52; Szilvay, 2005a).

As mentioned previously, one of the most important aspects of the *Colourstrings* method "is the use of movable *do*". This can be applied by using the left hand to play in 1st position as well as shifting to many higher positions on the fingerboard for a bigger sound range. This is a "unique contribution" in that *Colourstrings* is the first to use this technique, although both Kodály and Rolland can take credit for their influence. Any available song can be transposed on the violin, choosing a new tonic or *do* each time, by shifting to a new position and placing the fingers accordingly. Thus, Szilvay states that the student is not restricted to one or two keys in music, but can use all the strings and positions available on the violin which he describes as

a "great, great advantage". For example, the student might be asked to start a familiar melody with a different finger on any point on the fingerboard. In effect, the student will need to depend on his/her 'inner ear' for guidance. Additionally, new finger patterns are unconsciously acquired. (Voima, 2009:10, 11; Mitchell, 1994:53).

In *Book B*, "movable *do* is [formally] introduced" for the first time. Pieces from *Book A* are incorporated, reflecting on what the student already knows. Instead of playing the *do-re* pieces with open strings and harmonics (as in *Book A*), the student is able to explore many possibilities in playing these pieces and becoming acquainted with the entire fingerboard. A basic example is by playing open string and first finger, the child can play the same *do-re* piece on four different strings. Another possibility is using 1st and 2nd finger instead of open string and 1st finger anywhere on the fingerboard. (Mitchell, 1994:53). Szilvay states that it is in the best interest of the student "to play [these] pieces from memory" in order for them not to confuse these transpositions with what they visually already know; they "avoid confusion [by not] associating a different location on the fingerboard [with a] specific colour" (Mitchell, 1994:53).

Another feature of the method which promotes freedom of playing is the child's use of 'soft fingers' throughout the entire *Book A* as well as relaxed long bows. One can only execute the harmonics through lightly touching the string with a left hand finger, experiencing some "sense of freedom". Pressing with a finger will cause tension and this is one of the reasons Szilvay deemed it necessary to first establish this technique in *Book A* before introducing notes to be pressed down in *Book B*. This is in contrast to Suzuki's method which teaches the student to initially establish all necessary techniques starting from 1st position, then moving up to the next position (postponement of shifting). This may create a reluctance to shifting by the student. Although Szilvay encourages using all of the left hand fingers, he leaves no room for insecurities that may surface in the future. (Harmonics need sufficient arm-weight on the bow for a "clear, strong sound") (Snyman, 2007:9).

Students are introduced to the use of their 4th finger, or little finger, from the beginning of *Book A*, unlike the Suzuki method which only introduces exercises for the fourth finger before the student starts with the piece *Perpetual motion* on page 33 (Mitchell, 1994:54; Suzuki, 2007a:24, 33).

As previously stated, the student should sing with the teacher as instrument study commences. These singing exercises include songs and rhythm exercises and are done regularly. Szilvay

believes when this is done, "violin playing will seem quite natural", and reading skills will be simplified. Rhythmic exercises should also be introduced during the first lesson which will coincide with kinaesthetic movements as previously mentioned: clapping, walking and counting the beats using the respective hand movements from Kodály for the syllables *Ta*, *ti-ti*, and *Ta-a*. (Mitchell, 1994:54).

Comparing the visual appearance of the *Colourstrings* books to other beginner-stage methods, it proves to be a book that keeps young children captivated with its *Musicland* characters, symbols and other enchanting quality "artworks". The pages themselves and the detail on it are composed in a very simple manner, simplifying the reading thereof and reinforcing the young child's focus. In contrast to the Suzuki method, there is no writing, except for a few instructions, throughout the whole *Book A, B, C* and *D*. Instead of excessive writing in his method books, Szilvay has made available the *Handbook* or manual for teachers and parents. (Mitchell, 1994:55).

With permission from Szilvay, teachers can at their discretion use, change and adapt his method as they see fit within their own private studio. He acknowledges that teachers will change his method in some way or another, he himself said "If it works, I use it". This can be applied to "public school string programs, preparatory programs [and] private studios." (Mitchell, 1994:iii, 48).

5.5   CONCLUSION

The Cambridge Companion to the Violin (1992:229) explains Kato Havas's *New Approach*, to violin playing as to involve

> ...not so much the imparting of knowledge, but rather the elimination of all the existing obstacles, both physical and mental, so that through a relaxed control and co-ordination the player may be able to release the full force of his musical imagination.

This accurately describes the *Colourstrings* method.

Colourstrings is an exceptional method which involves the whole family and "radiates force into the whole of society" (Homfray, 2006:78). From the early stages of *Colourstrings*, which includes *Colourstrings Kindergarten*, *Book A* and *B*, Szilvay "smuggles" into his teachings "musical ideas of pitch, length, dynamic and tempo" without the students knowing it.

(Homfray, 2006:79). In this manner, Szilvay contributes to the education of children by way of his use of colours and application of movable *do* as well as the integration of chamber and orchestra music (Mitchell, 1994:72, 79).

The fundamental message of the *Colourstrings* method prevails: to educate in music while nurturing the student (child) to become a better "human being" (Mitchell, 1994:31).

> The basic objective of music teaching, and the teaching of violin playing, is to stimulate the youngster to develop as a rounded personality. Broadly, this is not a method, but it is a musical upbringing, or, this is a normal upbringing through music. So, it is for families and for parents a help, a device: music.

<div align="right">

\- G. Szilvay (Mitchell, 1994:32)

</div>

CHAPTER 6: THE *COLOURSTRINGS* APPROACH TO NOTATION READING SKILLS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

> Indeed, written notes and internal hearing, music heard and imagined written music, must exist as a complete unity in the minds of both professional musicians and those who merely want to understand and enjoy music. Sol-fa is the one means by which this objective can be achieved.
> - (Szönyi, 1974:9)

The early reading of music notation is a crucial feature of *Colourstrings*. With it, the visual sense can develop in conjunction with the aural sense. In the absence thereof, "ear training and rhythmic training [becomes merely] aural and imitative". Utilizing this joint functioning of two senses "leaves the deepest and most lasting impression" (Szilvay, 2005e:2). Participation in chamber and orchestral music, another important facet in the method, is also made possible by developing notation reading skills (Mitchell, 1994:73).

6.2 APPROACH

"Fortunate indeed is the child who creates with his own voice the first associations linking it with the picture of the notes" – Zoltan Kódaly (Szönyi 1974:7).

When developing his method, Szilvay had to connect the first stages of learning to play the violin with note reading. His use of colours was a valuable and "unique contribution" to the teaching of notation reading skills. He defines reading as an "intellectual" activity and adds that if one should look through his books, it is visible to see that the child's intellect, movement, listening and emotions should be in harmony. (Mitchell, 1994:77; Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay).

Szilvay believes the "visual aspect of teaching… is very important" because of the fact that "many senses are involved" and that all of the senses are combined for different but holistic purposes. He thus asks the question: why should one not open his/her eyes and look at the notes or pictures in front of him/her? Dr Mitchell states that the "prevailing message of the

'Colourstrings Method' is education in music, with the end result being a better human being"
(Mitchell, 1994:30, 31).

6.2.1   Techniques

"The use of colours in conjunction" with notation is a prominent feature in the *Colourstrings*
method (Mitchell, 1994:14).

As a child is introduced to a new teaching aspect, Szilvay applies throughout his method "the
principle of reinforcement of perception through joint functioning of the senses because what
is perceived simultaneously by two or more senses leaves the deepest and most lasting
impression" (Szilvay, 2005e:2). It can thus be argued that the combination of two or more
senses will promote the notation reading skills of beginner violinists; when they apply their
visual and aural senses when reading notation. Reading notation in the first book is presented
as the reading of symbols which will be discussed in the next section. (Snyman, 2007:8).

6.2.1.1   *Book A*

As mentioned in *Colourstrings'* methodology, students are introduced to music reading by
means of the four 'Musicland' characters which each represents the violin's four strings in four
different colours: the green bear (G-string), the red father (D-string), the blue mother (A-string)
and the yellow bird (E-string) (Szilvay, 2005a:1; Mitchell, 1994:30). Accordingly, the notes
and staff lines that are associated with their corresponding string would subsequently be
assigned the same colour (Mitchell, 1994:46). At first, instead of the traditional black notes,
pipe stem notation (stems with no note heads) are used in *Book A* to simplify reading (Figure
31). Except for a small separation used in between certain grouped notes, there is no use of bar
lines until the student reaches *Book C* (Mitchell, 1994:55; Szilvay, 2005a:9).

Figure 31, *Pipe stem notation* (Szilvay, 2005a:9)

Clever drawings, pictures or symbols represent the value of notes and rests. A fast train to indicate the quavers or *ti-ti* and a slower car to indicate a crochet or *ta* (Figure 32). In this way beginners learn to use faster bowing for the short quavers and a longer bow for the crochet (which is longer in value). (Szilvay, 2005a:15; Szilvay, 2005e:13). The minim is symbolised as a boat (Figure 32). The long value of the note can be compared to the slow sailing of the boat on water and even the words 'slow boat' can be substituted for *Ta-a* (Szilvay, 2005e:15; Szilvay, 2005a:24). One should also note that the pictures of the cars, trains and boat run from left to right, the same direction in which notes are read (Mitchell, 1994:63).

Figure 32, *Ta, Ti-ti and Ta-a* (Szilvay, 2005a:15, 24)
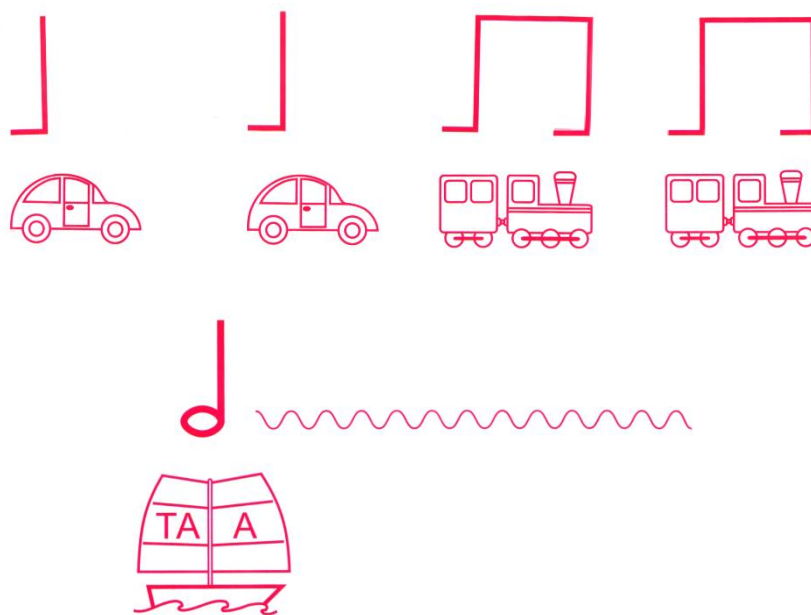
When rests are introduced, Szilvay uses the picture of a sun behind a cloud or a blown-out candle (Figure 33) to symbolise the 'silence' of a rest (Szilvay, 2005a:20). Proportionally-sized candles are used to indicate the note values of the crotchets and quavers (Mitchell, 1994:31). Students need to understand the necessity of rests and 'feel' the silence as a part of the music. Thus students are instructed to blow each time they see a rest in the music. This is easily explained through the idea of a blown-out candle. (Szilvay, 2005e:14).

Figure 33, *The rest* (Szilvay, 2005a:20)
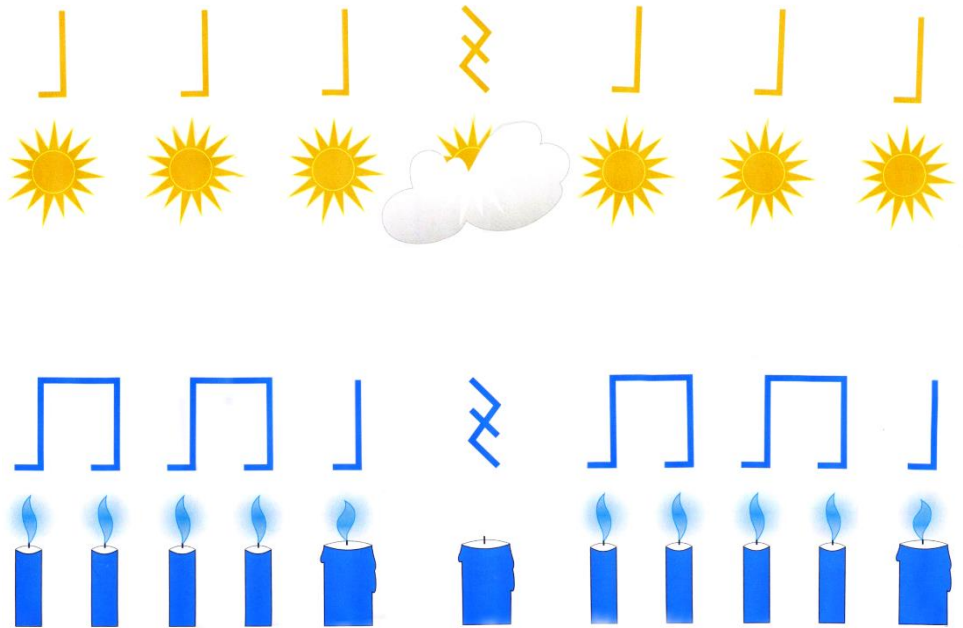
To reinforce what the students have learned, a page with the symbols printed on is provided on which the child should draw the correct notation above the pictures in the different colours (Figure 34). Szilvay instructs the student to practise the rhythms after writing it in various ways including clapping it, pizzicato playing, guided bowing and "silent recitation" (Szilvay, 2005e:16). The subsequent pages are left blank for the teacher or child to compose their own 'songs' with the notation learned thus far. (Szilvay, 2005a:29–31).

Figure 34, *Reading and writing* (Szilvay, 2005a:29)

The sign for 'up bow' and 'down bow' are indicated by a little boy who pulls or pushes the bow (Figure 35), indicating the exact movement to be used when these signs appear. The sign of a bow symbolises the term 'arco' which means to use the bow.

Figure 35, *Up- and down bow* (Szilvay, 2005a:32)
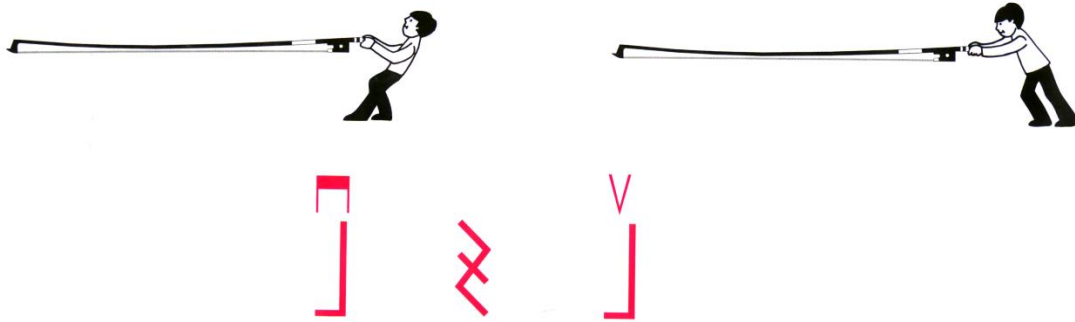
At the introduction of natural octave harmonics (Figure 36), the notes are written in a diamond shape (the traditional appearance of harmonics). Already the open string is indicated by the number 0. The position of the octave harmonics is indicated with the pictures of birds and a sun (the 'height' in terms of the fingerboard is conveyed in this manner). As mentioned in the previous chapter, visual aids may be applied by the teacher on the fingerboard to assist the beginner.

Figure 36, *Natural harmonics* (Szilvay, 2005a:34)

When string crossings are introduced (Figure 37), the different strings are displayed in such a way that the student can read it vertically as he/she would have on a traditional music staff.

Figure 37, *String crossings* (Szilvay, 2005a:37)
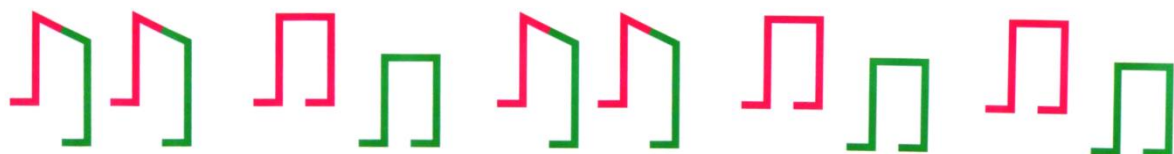
On page 43 of *Book A*, printed fingering (Figure 38) indicates which left-hand fingers are to be used for plucking. This prepares the student for the fingering which will be used when stopping the strings (Szilvay, 2005a:43). First position is introduced by natural harmonics (Figure 39)

and some fingering, which is even more closely related to the stopping of strings in first position (Szilvay, 2005a:49–69).

Figure 38, *Printed fingering* (Szilvay, 2005a:43)
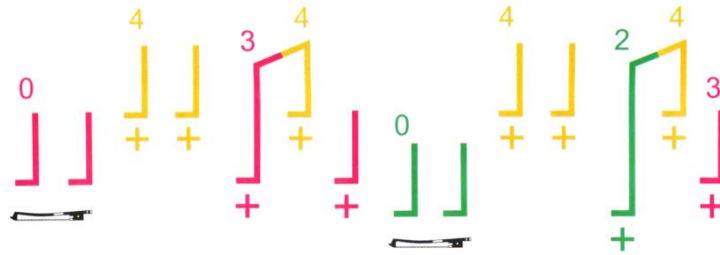
Figure 39, *Natural harmonics in first position* (Szilvay, 2005a:60)
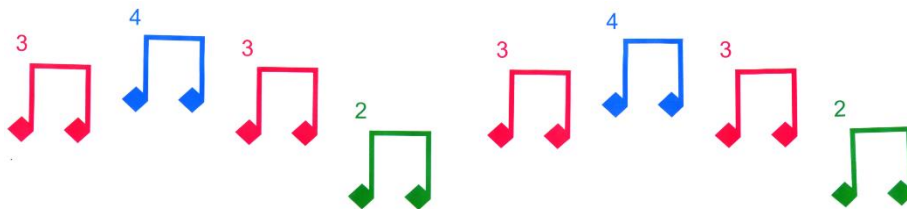
On the last few pages, pipe notation is replaced with traditional notes. One staff line is introduced and Szilvay explains the music staff as well as *Do* through "engaging" stories. All notes live in a house with a roof (the staff and staff lines) and the placement of *do* on the staff is indicated by the position of the key symbol. The key belongs to the janitor whose name is *do* and who can move up and down the levels in the house (movable *do* and different key signatures) (Figure 40). (Mitchell, 1994:56; Szilvay, 2005a:72, 73).

Figure 40, *The do key* (Szilvay, 2005a:60)
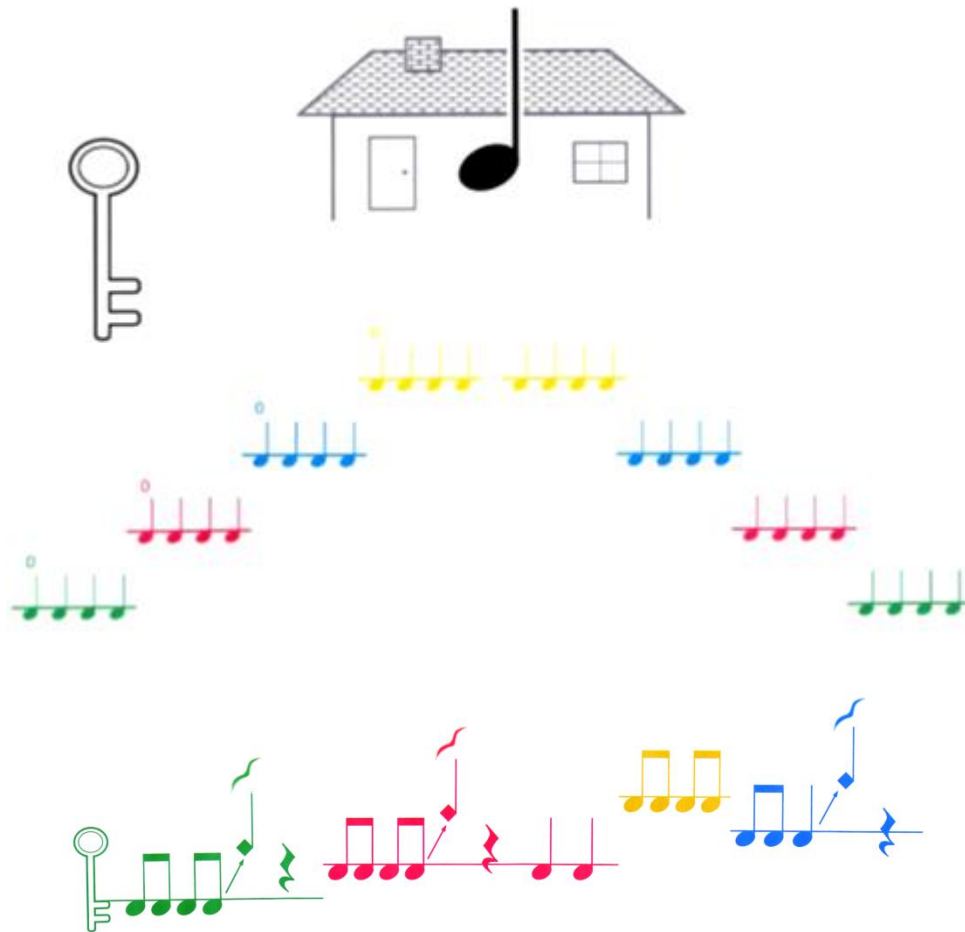
6.2.1.2 **_Book B_**

In this book, the first position is established through the introduction of the first five sol-fa syllables (*do, re, mi, fa, so*). At first *do* and *re* are displayed (Figure 41) and accompanied by pictures indicating the finger placement. The new pitch is practiced using three steps: the student sings the note, listens to it and then plays it. (Voima, 2009:19; Szilvay, 2005b:4).

Figure 41, *Do and re* (Szilvay, 2005b:4)
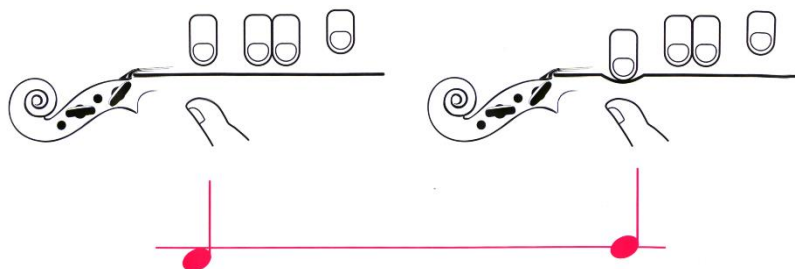
Sharps are introduced with the symbol of a ladder below a note (Figure 42) and explained through the dilemma of the little bird that cannot reach the next note and needs a ladder. In *Book C* the ladder will be in front of the note and will gradually change into the normal sign of the sharp. Again, on page 10 opportunity is given to the student to practise writing the notation (Figure 43). Sol-fa syllables are given as well as the car and train pictures to indicate note value. (Szilvay, 2005b:6, 10; Szilvay, 2005e:36).

Figure 42, *The sharp* (Szilvay, 2005b:6)
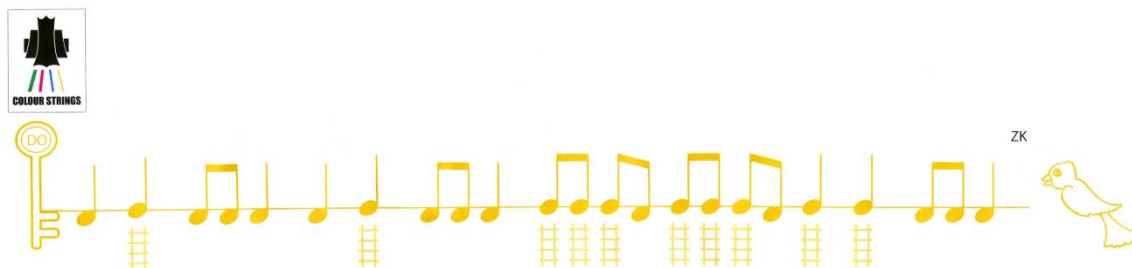
Figure 43, *Reading and writing* (Szilvay, 2005b:10)

When the student starts to use the second finger, it is noted that Szilvay introduces the 'first finger pattern' (similar to Suzuki) which is "generally adopted by violin schools". Second finger is placed a whole tone from first finger, with an adjacent third finger. This is the most 'natural' position for the violinist ("natural anatomical functioning"). The following pages consists of three-note melodies which is depicted by small pictures instead of notes, placed higher or lower to indicate a different pitch. The ladder (sharp) is now added to the A and D-string's second finger (Figure 44). (Szilvay, 2005b:14–18; Szilvay, 2005e:39).

Figure 44, *First and second finger* (Szilvay, 2005b:14, 16)

With the introduction of the third finger, another staff line is added and explained to the child as the second level in the house (Figure 45). Up to now, all the exercises and songs were displayed on one string at a time.

Figure 45, *The second and third finger* (Szilvay, 2005b:29)

On page 38 and 39, the child is briefly introduced to the combination of more than one string on the two-line staff (Szilvay, 2005b:38, 39).

Figure 46, *String crossings* (Szilvay, 2005b:38)
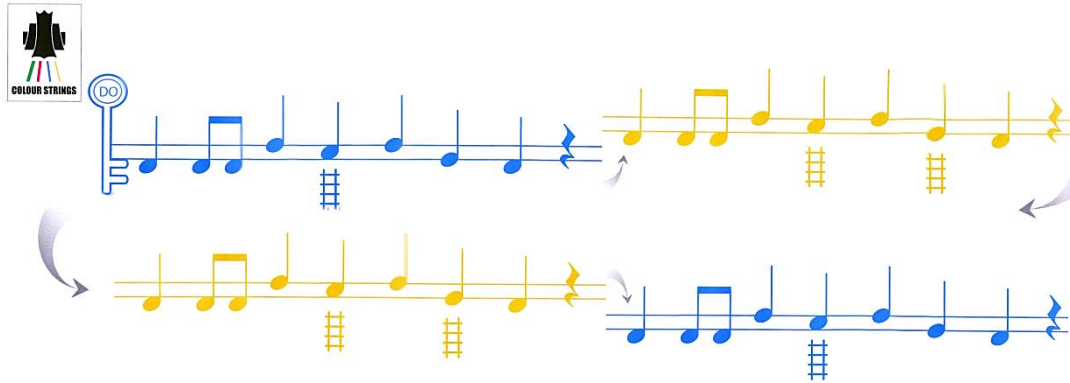
Lastly, the fourth finger is added and the pentachord of the *do-re-mi-fa-so* syllables is complete.

Figure 47, *The fourth finger* (Szilvay, 2005b:45)

Bar lines, the double bar line and introduction to the time signature is taught on page 49 (Figure 48). Within the context of the story about the staff, a group of notes live in separate houses which is separated by walls (bar lines). A number next to the *do* key indicates how many notes (*Ta* notes) live in each house. The 'double-thick wall' represents the end of the piece. (Szilvay, 2005e:48).

Figure 48, *The staff* (Szilvay, 2005b:49)
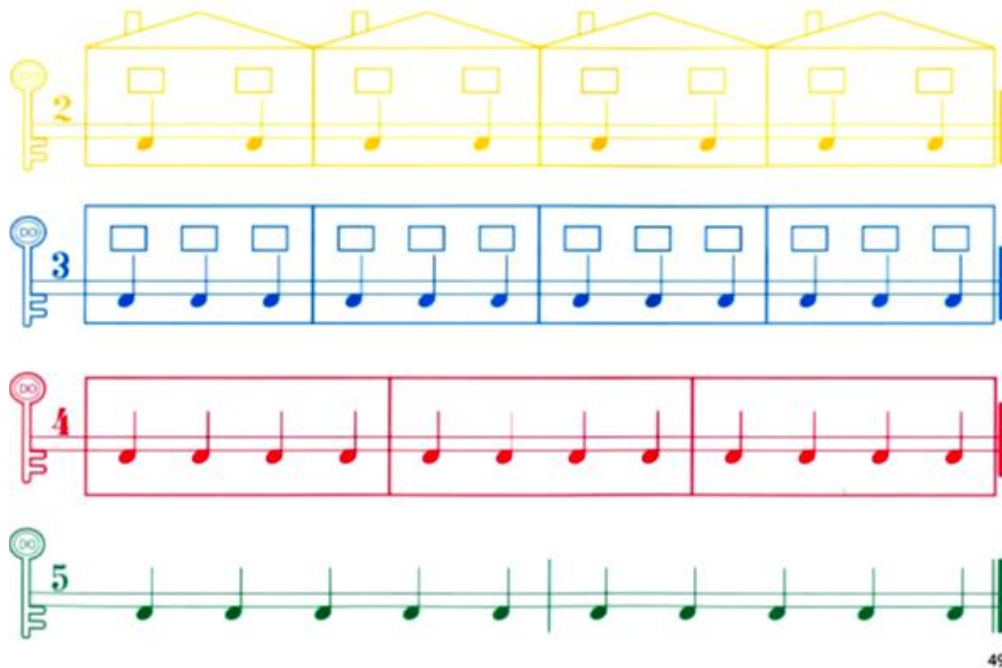
Repetition signs are symbolized by a smiling face that looks back at the beginning (Figure 49). Students are taught that careful writers do not write the same melody or phrase repeatedly but instead writes a repeat sign. On page 51, the note on which the strong beat falls is coloured darker; the student can visually see the meter. *Da Capo al Fine* is also introduced in this context (Figure 50) as students learn the structure of the songs as well as similarities in the melody. (Szilvay, 2005b:51, 52, 61; Szilvay, 2005e:51, 52).

Figure 49, *The repetition sign* (Szilvay, 2005b:52)
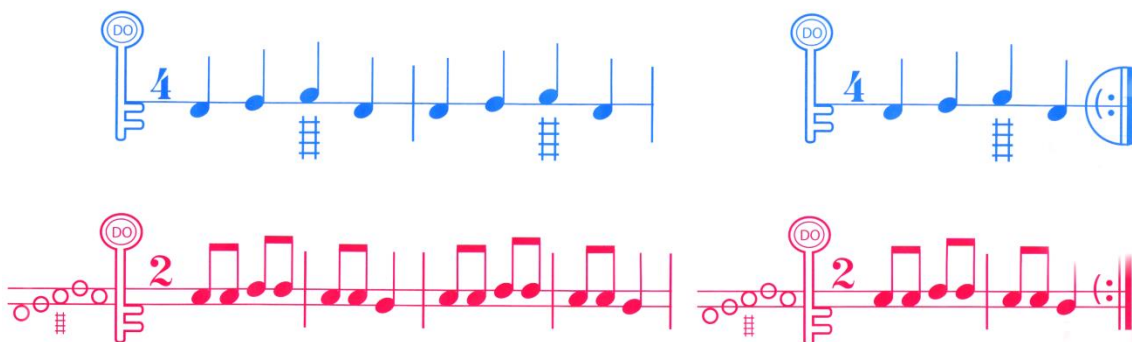
Figure 50, *Da Capo al Fine* (Szilvay, 2005b:61)

Fine   *Da Capo al Fine*
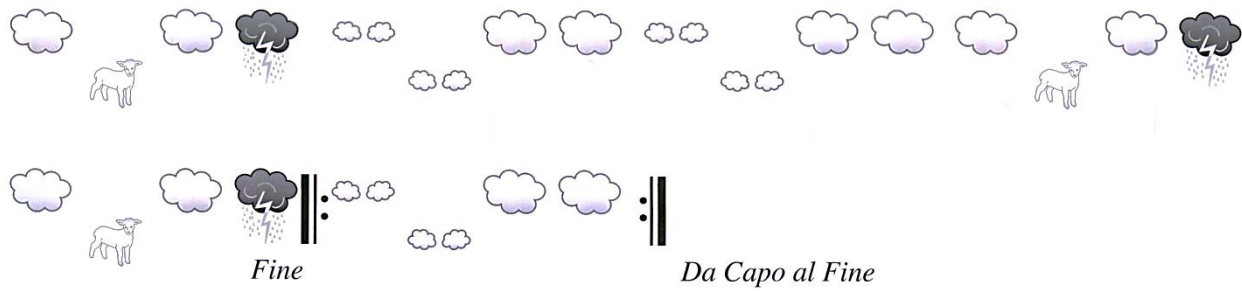
6.2.1.3   *Book C*

From page one onwards, the entire five-line staff is displayed (Figure 51). The familiar story is continued with the notes of 'Daddy' string (D) and 'Mommy' string (A) which occupy the five-storey building. The only space left is the cellar for the 'Bear' string (G) and the attic for 'Birdie' string (E). Ledger lines are needed for both because the Bear lives so low and Birdie so high. (Szilvay, 2005c:1; Szilvay, 2005e:55; Voima, 2009:21).

Figure 51, *The five-line staff* (Szilvay, 2005c:1)
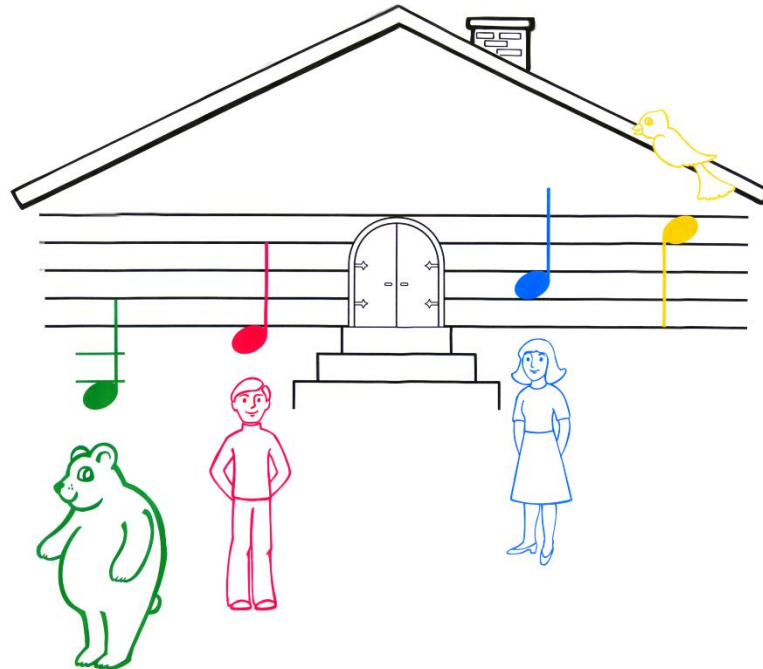
In the previous two books, notation was simplified as all the note stems were written upwards. In this book, traditional notation is used while the staff "is introduced step by step". The familiar two-line staff from the previous book stays coloured and is thickened in the five-line staff to minimise reading mistakes. (Szilvay, 2005c:3; Szilvay, 2005e:55; Voima, 2009:21).

Figure 52, *Conventional note stems* (Szilvay, 2005c:3)
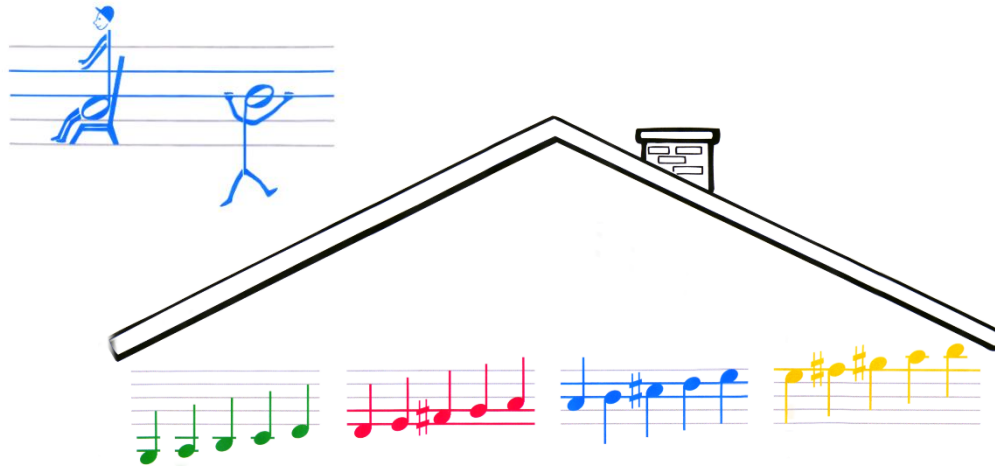
Full awareness of tempi is gained as an example is given on page 4 (Figure 53). At a faster tempo, the notes are written closer to each other while at a slower tempo the notes are spaced further apart. The picture of an elf also assists students to grasp the concept of speed. At the beginning of the staff, a small *Ta* note is added to indicate the value of the beats in each bar, completing the time signature symbol. (Szilvay, 2005c:4; Szilvay, 2005e:55).

Figure 53, *Various tempi* (Szilvay, 2005c:4)
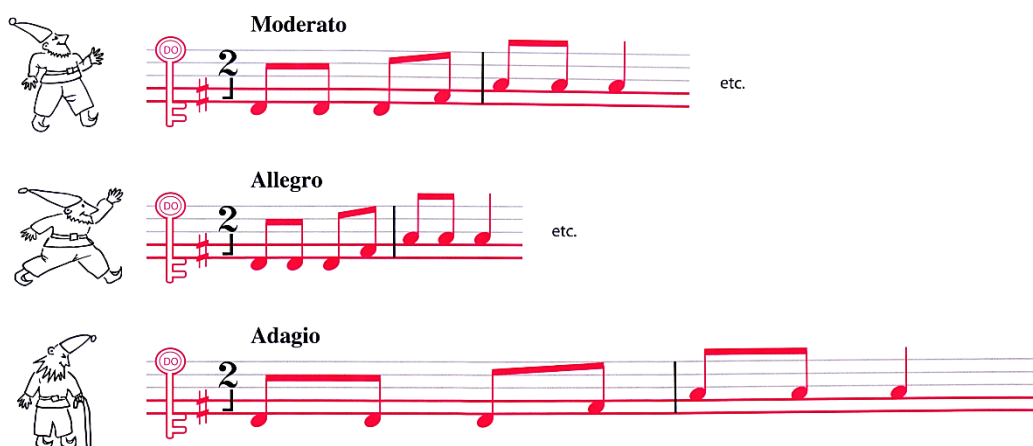
Slurred bowing is indicated with the image of a motor boat. It is noted that this exercise is written in black notation which indicates that it can be played on any string.

Figure 54, *Various tempi* (Szilvay, 2005c:6)
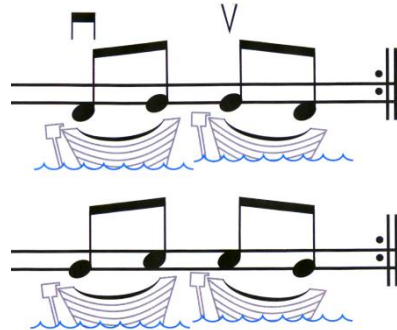
The relationship between note values is explained through the picture of a seesaw in which the concept of balance is emphasized. "It also represents the notion of 'equal to'" (Szilvay, 2005e:57).

Figure 55, Relationship between note values (Szilvay, 2005c:12)
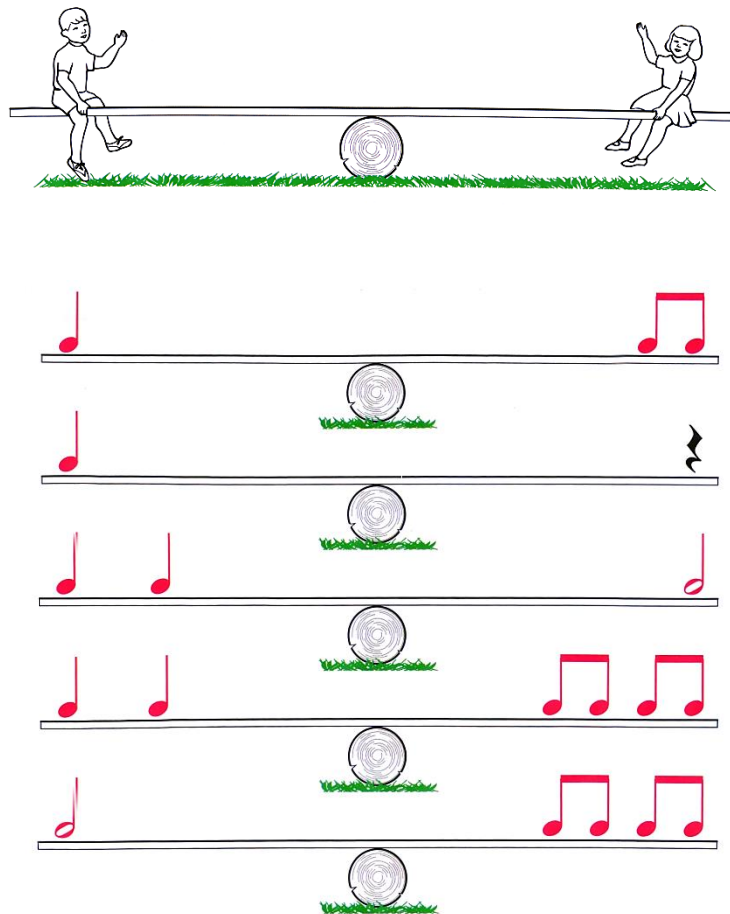
To prepare the student for syncopated rhythm, the pairing of quavers is separated through means of pictures and the seesaw (Figure 56). Two friends holding hands are separated or the two train carts are printed apart. The syncopated rhythm is visually introduced by a sea monster (Figure 57). On the next page the crotchet is explained as equal to two tied quavers and thus the syncopated rhythm is better understood. The student will recite the rhythm using the syllables *Ti Ta Ti*. In this case proportionally sized pictures of the bow are shown (Figure 58). (Szilvay, 2005c:13, 15, 18).

Figure 56, *Separation of quavers* (Szilvay, 2005c:13)
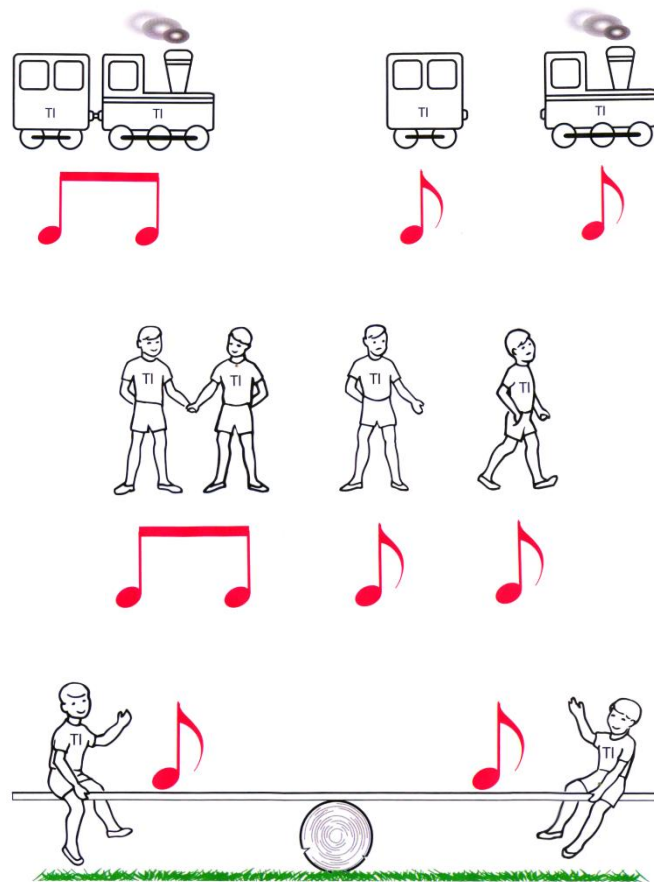
Figure 57, *Syncopated rhythm* (Szilvay, 2005c:14)
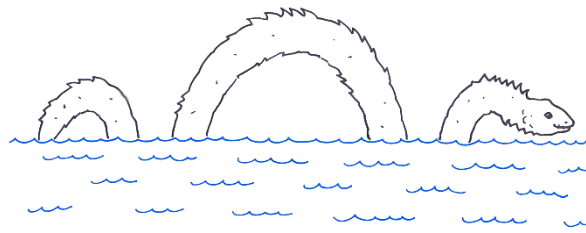
Figure 58, *Ti-ta-ti* (Szilvay, 2005c:15, 18)

Teacher's ostinato

TI   TA   TI

TI   TA   TI

The dotted minim (*Ta-a-a*) is introduced as three children in a boat. Again it is shown on the seesaw as being equal to three crochets (Figure 59). On the next page, all rhythms learnt thus far are displayed (Figure 60).
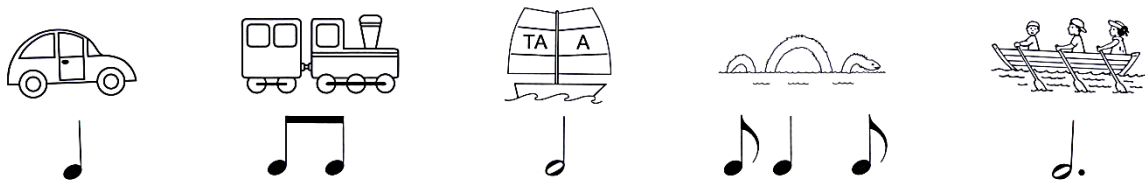
Figure 59, *Ta-a-a* (Szilvay, 2005c:28)
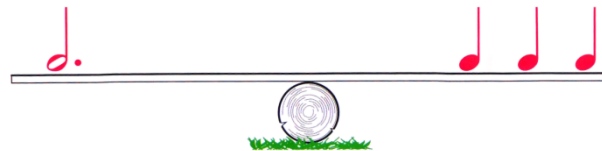
Figure 60, *Review of note values* (Szilvay, 2005c:29)

Next, the dotted crotchet and quaver are seen as a kangaroo with a baby (Figure 61). The rhythm is shown as three slurred quavers with a separate quaver and is also explained through the seesaw concept (Figure 62).

Figure 61, *The dotted crochet* (Szilvay, 2005c:36)
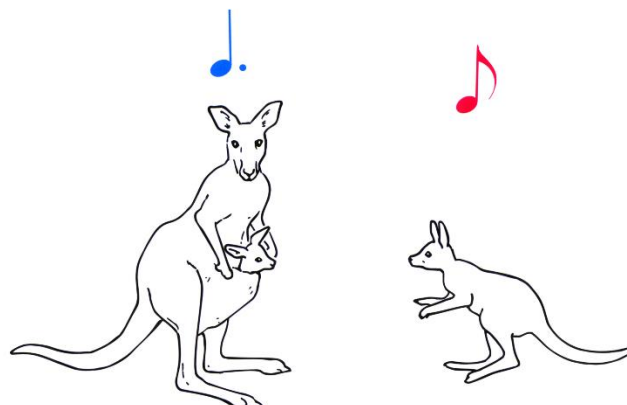
Figure 62, *The dotted crochet* (Szilvay 2005c:37)

Pages 44-46 give the student the chance to write down and practise the notation thus far learnt with guidance by pictures (Figure 63). The pitches are already printed but with no stems. Page 49 displays a scale exercise with the sol-fa syllables as well as the harmonics (Figure 64). The semitone between *Mi* and *Fa* is linked (as is done with Suzuki).

Figure 63, *Reading and writing* (Szilvay, 2005c:44)

Figure 64, *Scale exercise* (Szilvay, 2005c:49)

Double stops are indicated as traditionally written with two notes (in this case the open strings) on top of each other (Figure 65). This is represented by the 'Musicland' characters holding hands. From page 55 onwards, it is noted that the staff lines appear darker than before and only one line remains coloured. (Szilvay, 2005c:50, 55).

Figure 65, *Double stops* (Szilvay, 2005c:50)
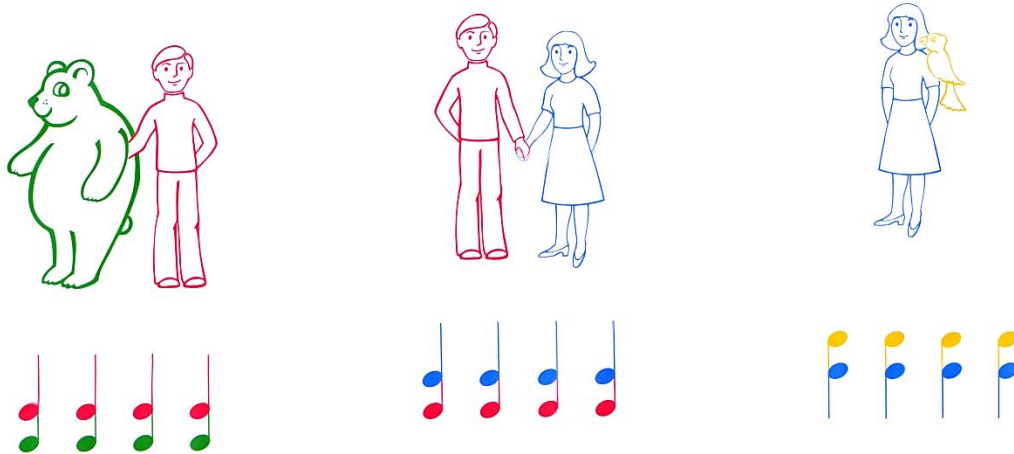
The pitch of the open string is linked to that of the fourth finger of the previous string. This is explained to the student as 'twins' (Figure 66). It is left to the teacher's discretion to point out the interval relationship of a fifth between the strings to the student (Szilvay, 2005c:59; Szilvay, 2005e:67). Now the note *La* is formally introduced as the note after the open string which is *So* (as explained through the twins) (Figure 67).
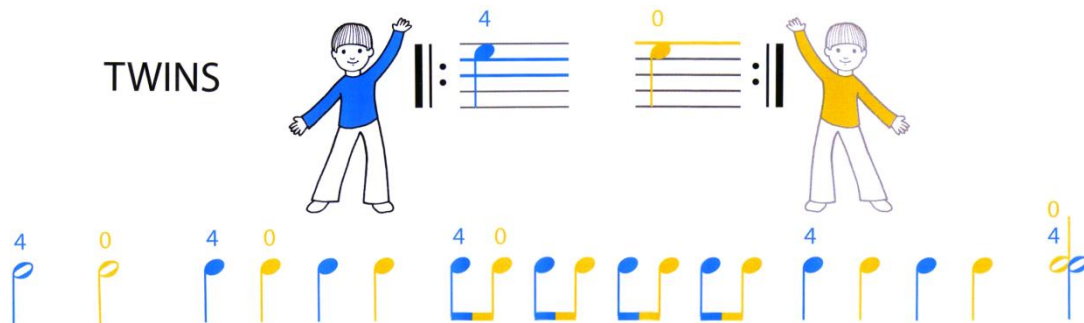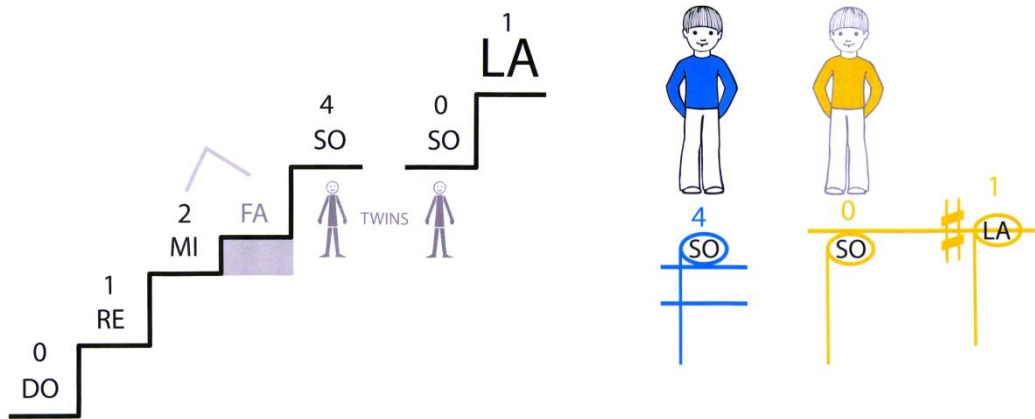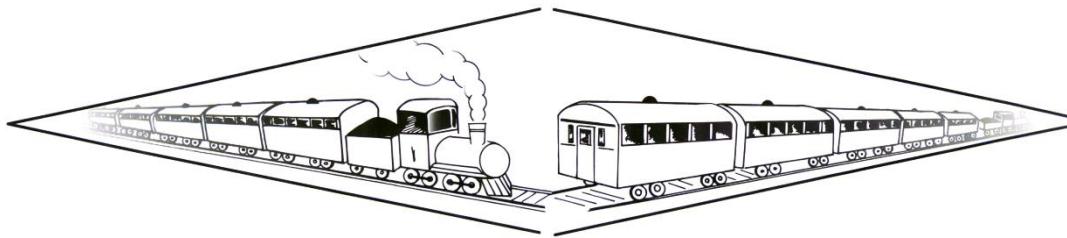
Figure 66, *Twins* (Szilvay, 2005c:59)

Figure 67, *Introduction to La* (Szilvay, 2005c:60)

Dynamic terms are introduced to the child in the form of 'road signs'. The crescendo and decrescendo sign is displayed as a train coming closer or moving further away.

Figure 68, *Dynamics* (Szilvay, 2005c:62)

6.2.1.4 *Book D*

From the first page, accidentals are presented to the student. The changing second finger is explained through wavy lines moving from a sharp to a natural and back again (Figure 69). The same is done on the G-string with a natural to a flat. Thus, a new finger position is established. (Szilvay, 2005d:1, 2; Szilvay, 2005e:74).

Figure 69, *The sharp, flat and natural* (Szilvay, 2005d:1)
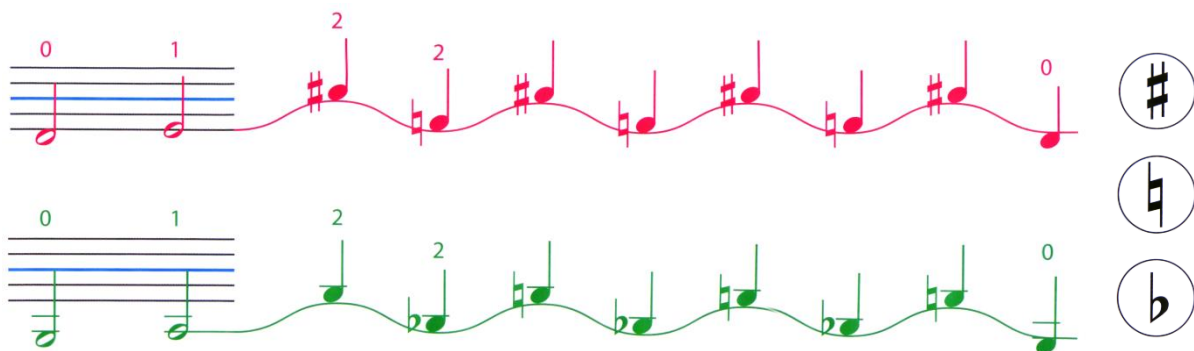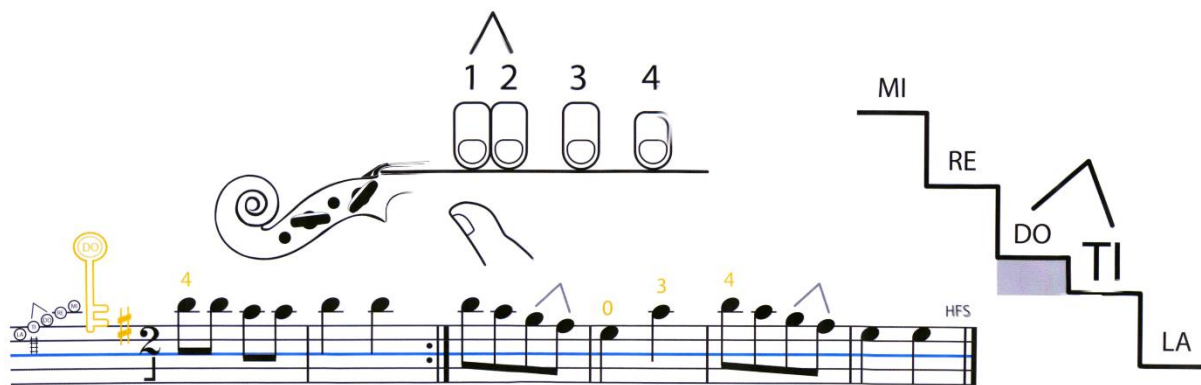
Standard staff notation is more prominent in this book. Notes are mainly black but coloured fingerings are still provided to avoid confusion. The middle line is still printed in colour. (Szilvay, 2005e:74).

Figure 70, *Black notation* (Szilvay, 2005d:3)

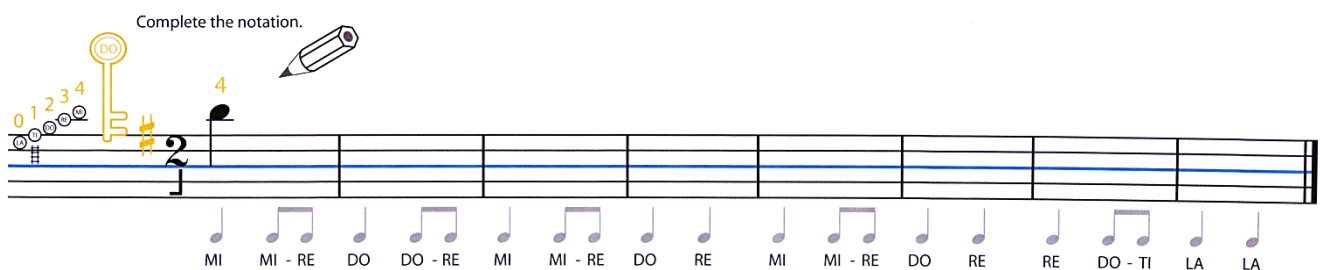The minor pentachord is displayed through pictures.

Figure 71, *The minor pentachord* (Szilvay, 2005d:6)

For a written theory exercise, the rhythm and sol-fa syllables are given and the student should write the correct notes at the appropriate positions on the staff. The *Do* key indicates the tonic in each exercise.

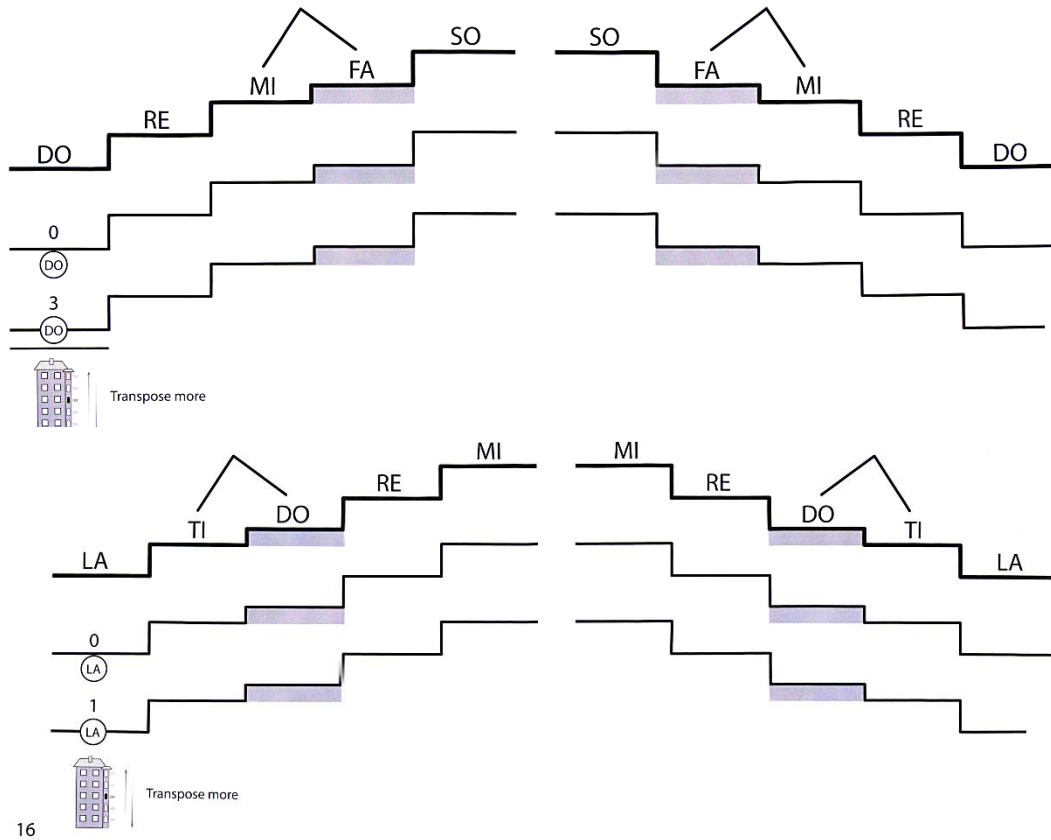Figure 72, *Reading and writing* (Szilvay, 2005d:13)

The major and minor pentachord scales are displayed in steps. Additional steps are printed beneath where the *Do* and *La* are assigned to a new finger. In this way it will be easy for the student to transpose each scale.

Figure 73, *Major and Minor scales* (Szilvay, 2005d:16)

From page 19 onwards, the middle line is not coloured anymore but a thick black line. *Portato*, an important bowing technique, is demonstrated by using the 'stop sign' (Figure 74). The students are shown that two or three notes should be played in one bow, but with a stopping motion in between. (Szilvay, 2005d:19, 20).

Figure 74, *Portato* (Szilvay, 2005d:20)
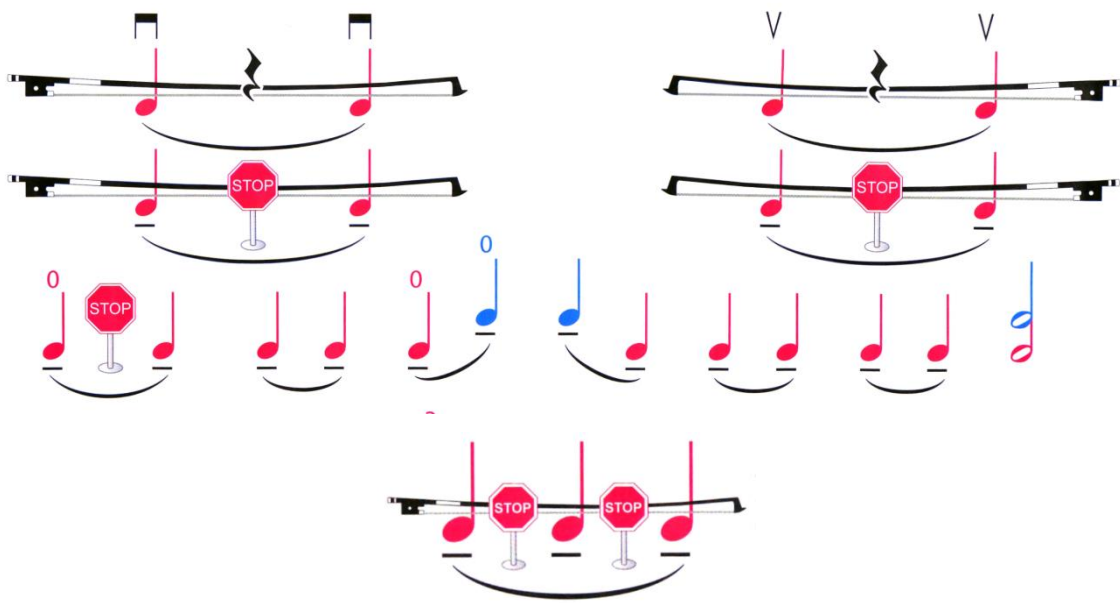
As soon as the student performs extended melodies, ranging over one octave, two *Do* keys are displayed to indicate both tonics in the song as well as sharps.

Figure 75, *Two do keys* (Szilvay, 2005d:25)
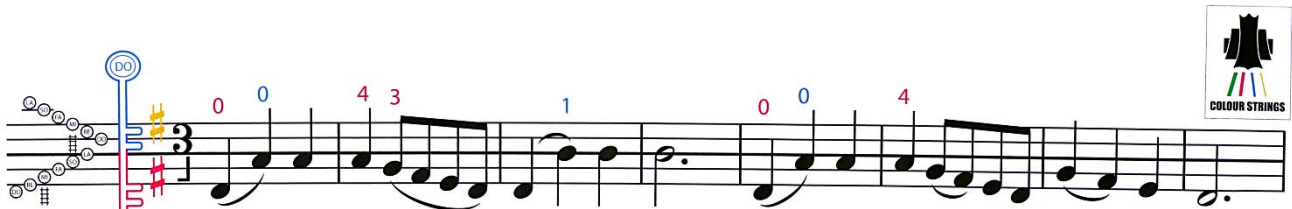
The next rhythm to be introduced is the reversed dotted crotchet and quaver (*Ti Tai*). The familiar image of the kangaroo with the baby and the seesaw is used.

Figure 76, *Ti Tai* (Szilvay, 2005d:33)
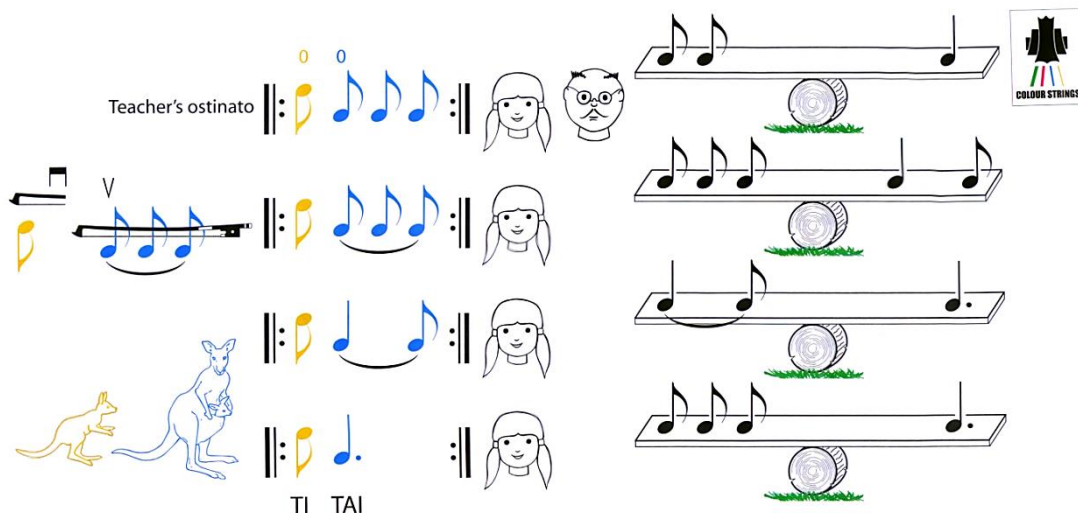
The semibreve (*Ta-a-a-a*) is explained through the 'speed' symbol of a snail (Figure 77) while semiquavers (*Tiri tiri* or *Ri-ri-ri-ri*) are compared to an aeroplane (Figure 78). The relationship between the notes is now shown on the wings of the aeroplane instead of a seesaw. (Szilvay, 2005e:84).

Figure 77, *Ta-a-a-a* (Szilvay, 2005d:49)
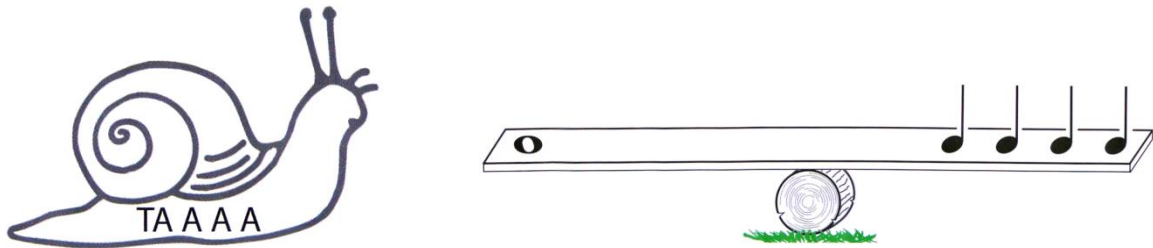
Figure 78, *Tiri tiri* (Szilvay, 2005d:54)
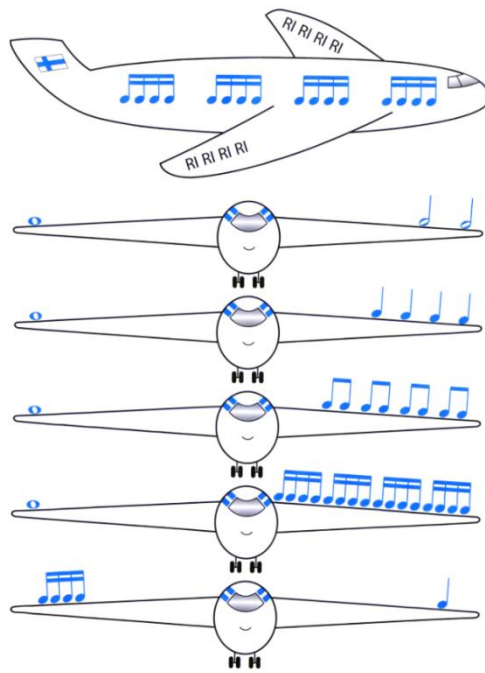
The signs for rests are compared to similar pictures of a man resting. The student can clearly distinguish between the minim and semibreve rest which is very similar in appearance.

Figure 79, *Rests* (Szilvay, 2005d:60)
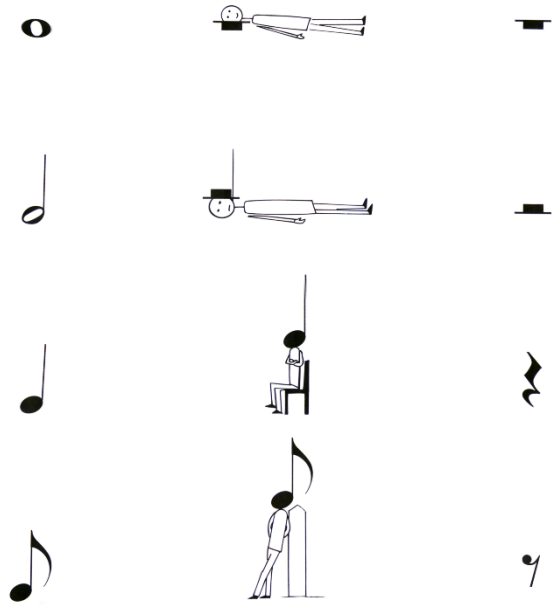
For the final rhythm, a quaver and two semiquavers (*Ti Tiri*) are compared to a camel with two humps (Figure 80). The seesaw again explains two semiquavers are equal to one quaver. A few pages thereafter, the rhythm is reversed (Figure 81).

Figure 80, *Ti Tiri* (Szilvay, 2005d:69)
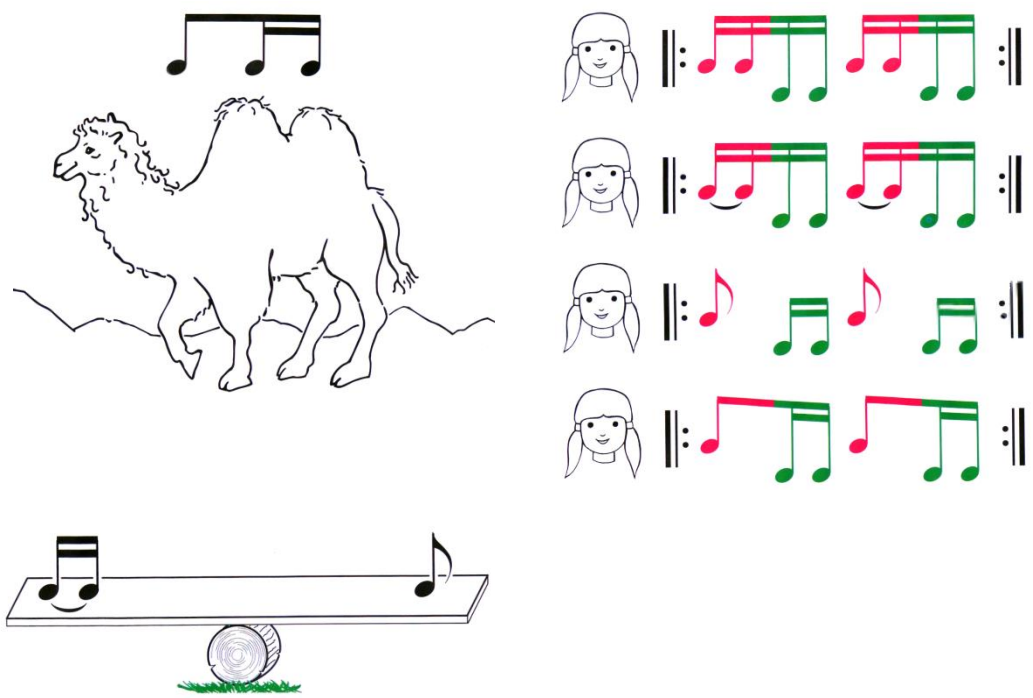
Figure 81, *Tiri Ti* (Szilvay, 2005d:73)
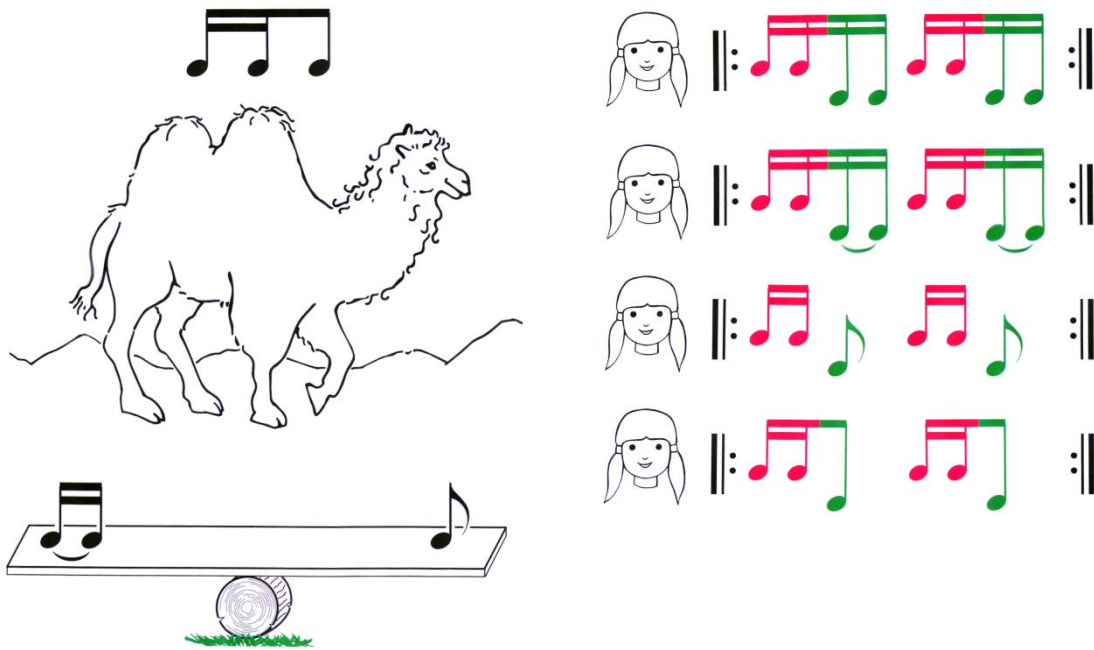
The entire major and natural minor scales are displayed. Semitones are indicated. Transposing is again encouraged by starting the scale on a different finger.

Figure 82, *The major scale* (Szilvay, 2005d:80)
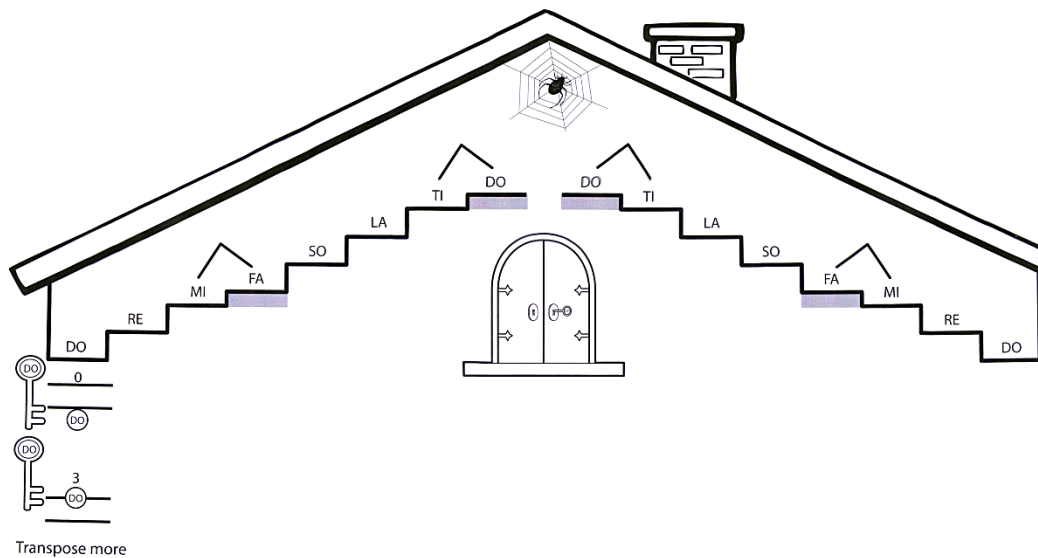
Figure 83, *The minor scale* (Szilvay, 2005d:81)
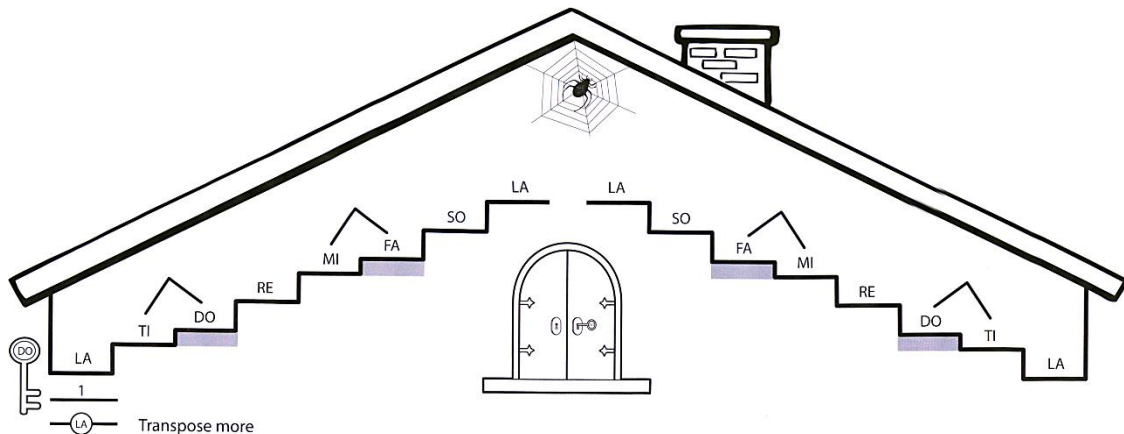
6.2.2 Supplementary material to assist with notation

Szilvay distributed two scale books for students with the main purpose of teaching note names, and to create the possibility "to write and to recognize them as well on the staff as on the fingerboard of the instrument" (Szilvay, 2008:4).

The integration of movable *do* provides "enormous" aid for the student in his/her study of the letter naming system. Gradually throughout the books, the student will identify the relation between the "relative and absolute letter" name systems. All note names are not introduced initially, but rather one at a time starting with the scale of A (Figure 84). Each page displays a new scale and note name. The key signature, time signature and bar lines were omitted to simplify reading. While the remainder of the notes are displayed in terms of a diagram, the first note or tonic/*do* is printed as standard notation on the staff. Two separate octaves of the scale are printed on two staves with a third staff underneath where the student practises to write the tonic in all its octaves, present on the staff. Szilvay introduces the pitches according to the alphabet. On the adjacent page, the natural minor is illustrated in a similar manner. (Szilvay, 2008:4).

Figure 84, *Violin scales for children* (Szilvay, 2008:6)

Except for the pitch being studied, other pitches will still be referred to by sol-fa syllables and are indicated as horizontal lines placed at their suitable positions on the staff. This is similar to the scales illustrated in the *Violin ABC* books. Again, semitones are indicated at each scale and instead of sharps, the symbol of a ladder is yet again used. The teacher may however, at his/her discretion, use a sharp sign. The ladder is explained as to "lift the finger higher". (Mitchell, 1994:66, 67; Szilvay, 2008:6).

6.3 BENEFITS OF THE APPROACH

The most acclaimed feature of *Colourstrings* is the development of intonation. Szilvay explains it through the process of internal hearing when observing notation from sheet music. Thereafter, the student's finger will naturally find the correct spot on the fingerboard. This process is made possible by the sight-singing exercises and developed inner hearing of the Kodály approach in which children were trained over a long period of time. Szilvay frequently stresses the "vital importance" of inner hearing for a musician. Another aspect that Szilvay singles out is "the students' sense of rhythm". Similar to pitch, the students will 'feel' and 'hear' the rhythm internally before playing it. This reinforces the development of an intellectual

mind. By using the Kodály methodology, students studying *Colourstrings* will master music literacy: reading rhythm and pitch, with ease. (Mitchell, 1994:70; Mark & Madura, 2014:110).

With regard to notation reading skills, Suzuki labels it as a burden on the children, especially at an early stage. Szilvay on the other hand announces that he has taken away the burden and found a way to make "reading exciting" and enjoyable whilst stimulating creative thinking and "maintain interest". He broke the traditional staff notation down to a "one-line system with colours" and made it possible for children to "feel" the different strings while playing. Children certainly prefer colours to black notation. He says his method enables the child to read which instigated a breakthrough in violin pedagogy; the child's intellect can efficiently 'keep up' with his/her technical progress. (Ortiz, n.d.: Interview with Szilvay; Szilvay, 2005e:1; Mitchell, 1994:46, 47).

6.4 DISADVANTAGES OF THE APPROACH

It would be beneficial for students and teachers to first familiarize themselves with elements from the Kodály methodology before studying the *Colourstrings* method. An example of a teacher from France is given, who was trained in fixed sol-fa, thus making it very difficult for him to receive instruction in the *Colourstrings* method. Consistent security in movable *do* is essential. Similarly, changing over from a previous method or approach is challenging when the student is not acquainted with the elements of *Colourstrings* such as movable *do*, or solfège and the reading of colour notation with no staff lines most of the time. Additionally, without training in Kodály and understanding the tools used in the *Colourstrings* method, using this approach for teaching is not possible. Direct study with Szilvay or attending *Colourstrings* workshops is essential, although they are not always widely available and many teachers don't have access to the locations. (Mitchell, 1994:71, 72; Voima, 2009:28). At present, only two *Colourstrings* workshops or courses were presented in South Africa by Yvonne Frey, a co-lecturer at the Helsinki Institute, and colleague of Szilvay.

As stated by Voima (2009), students may experience a "slow progression" in their study of *Book A*. Because much emphasis is placed on the development of posture, movement, rhythm and tone, the student will not have a chance to play more difficult repertoire like the composed pieces in the first volume of the Suzuki method but only play open strings and harmonics. It is important to remember that a good foundation for violin playing is essential, but this may cause

children and parents "to become impatient". It is a possibility to combine *Book A* and *Book B*, however it is not recommended. (Voima, 2009:29).

Avoiding the traditional teaching of absolute note names which usually results in a stiff, inflexible left hand because of one continuous finger pattern in one position, is an invaluable trait of movable *do*. It requires frequent shifting up and down the fingerboard, resulting in a relaxed and free "hand movement". However, the teaching of absolute pitch and note names is delayed until after or during the teachings of *Book D*. Thus it will be a long time before students will be taught note names. (Voima, 2009:10).

6.5 CONCLUSION

"He who cannot hear what he sees and cannot see what he hears is not a musician."

- Zoltan Kodály (Szönyi, 1974:9).

Because the early exposure to reading notation is implemented early in the *Colourstrings* method, it is possible for students to develop all their senses simultaneously so musical growth can be stimulated to a point at which their education/experience will become everlasting. As Kodály implied, this is the only possible means one can become a true musician. Szilvay undoubtedly reached his goal in creating a method for beginners where the very first stages of learning the violin could be connected to notation reading skills. His use of colours, pictures and symbols, movement, listening and imagination contributed immensely to the music student's violin tuition. (Voima, 2009:11; Ortiz, n.d: Interview with Szilvay; Szilvay, 2005e:2).

As Kodály sums it up: "What I see as a note, I hear as a tone; and what I hear as a tone, I see in my mind's eye as a note" - Zoltan Kodály (Suorsa-Rannanmäki, 1986:3) as cited by Voima (2009:10).

CHAPTER 7: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE APPROACH OF THE TWO METHODS RESPECTIVELY WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

The Suzuki- and the *Colourstrings* methods show various similarities and differences in their respective approaches which, after in depth research, will be discussed in this chapter. A comparison between the methods as well as recommendations for future notation reading skills tuition, will be given.

7.1   SIMILARITIES

7.1.1   Holistic approach

It is evident that the aim of both violin methods points in the same direction: the holistic development of the child as a human being through the enrichment of music (S.Y. Lee, 1992:6). Technical capability is not the only element in both methods, but also "musical activity" which includes the involvement of all the senses in *Colourstrings* and the nurturing of a child's innate ability to achieve great potential in the Suzuki method (mother-tongue technique). (Suzuki, 1983:2; Voima, 2009:2, 3; Mitchell, 1994:30). Both methods strive to create the best atmosphere and environment for technical and personal growth. Stimulation is of utmost importance because it is essential for both methods to build the foundation of the child's music education. (Mitchell, 1994:32; Snyman, 2007:25). Suzuki incorporates the aural sense through rote teaching while *Colourstrings* combines the use of visual and aural senses through colours, pictures, storytelling and singing.

7.1.2   Aural approach

The training of the inner-ear is of vital importance to each method (Snyman, 2007:25).

7.1.2.1   <u>Pitch</u>

Suzuki stresses the establishment of a strong aural and musical memory in conjunction with technical development (Kotzé, 1987:70). With a sufficient aural ability, the student will be able to enhance practise by rote (imitation), which is one of the cornerstones of the Suzuki method. "Music material" will thus be internalized (aurally) and "sequenced" kinaesthetic movements will assist in developing a musical memory. (Mitchell, 1994:1; S.Y. Lee, 1992:13). It also includes verbal repetition of the pitches (note names) and rhythms of the first few pieces in

Volume 1. This is utilized to lift the burden of reading music and give the student the chance to establish technical progress. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:53; Snyman, 2007:20). Suzuki uses recordings as the ideal example or model which accompanies each volume but consist of only one performer (S.Y. Lee, 1992:55).

Szilvay follows Kodály's example by incorporating melodic instruction or sight-singing exercises in the violin tuition process. Every time the student learns a new exercise or song, he/she will first sing it on sol-fa before playing the piece on the violin. This prepares reading skills and at the same time develops internal hearing as the student observes notation from a sheet. (Mitchell, 1994:54, 70). Apart from training the inner ear and reading notation, *Colourstrings* also cultivates repetition for it "deepens the experience intensely" (Snyman, 2007:26).

7.1.2.2   **Rhythm**

Both methods implement techniques with a similar approach towards the introduction of rhythm to the students. Suzuki and *Colourstrings* teachers encourage students to "verbally pronounce" or sing rhythmic syllables, use specifically assigned hand gestures (or clapping), and march to the various rhythmic patterns. Accordingly, both methods aim to internalise rhythm through hearing and movement. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:14; Snyman, 2007:20).

7.1.3   A 'step-by-step' approach

When studying the Suzuki- and *Colourstrings* method, one finds that both methods apply a "step-by-step" approach throughout the volumes and books. Suzuki and Szilvay both structured their pieces and exercises meticulously and each new technique and/or musical aspect builds on the previous aspect while simultaneously preparing the student for the next. This is especially evident in the *Colourstrings* method regarding the study of notation reading skills in conjunction with technical ability (Y. Lee, 2012:6, 7; S.Y. Lee, 1992:42). Thus, it is clear that each method's aim to build a sound foundation for the student is met through this approach.

7.1.4   Finger patterns

When establishing finger patterns, both methods include guidelines and/or pictures with the corresponding notation on the music staff to assist the teacher and student with finger

placement. Finger patterns are also introduced utilizing the 'step-by-step' approach. After each pattern is displayed, exercises and pieces based on that finger pattern will follow. The same symbol is used to indicate semitones. Another similar approach to reading is the implementation of the one-line staff. In *The Suzuki Concept, Suggestions for teachers on reading* by H. and E. Mills suggest that after reciting the note names of various pieces, students may be introduced to the one-line staff for reading purposes and for training eye movement. (H. & E. Mills, 1973:185). This coincides with *Colourstrings Book B*, where the first finger pattern is introduced by means of the one-line system. (Szilvay, 2005b:1–27).

7.1.5   Silent reading and revision

As part of a practise method, 'silent reading' appears in both methods where the student will silently read the music without playing in order to practise reading music mentally and hearing it internally. In the supplementary material, Suzuki students would call out the first note names after which they will read the music up to a certain point. (H. & E. Mills, 1973:181). *Colourstrings* students start by playing a short section, then silently reading another section until the teachers call out for them to carry on playing again. (Szilvay, 2005e:16). It all depends on the students keeping a steady beat while reading the music. This method specifically emphasizes the internal counting of the music. Another practise method that both approaches implement in the reading of music is the revision of previously learnt music. In both methods, the student would learn notation reading skills through prior knowledge (music which is integrated through previous practise, listening and singing). At the end of Volume 1 the Suzuki student goes back to observe the notation while playing, guided by a "process of association." (S.Y. Lee, 1992:54). Szilvay encourages "continuous" revision when tuition starts with a "concomitant expectation of improvement" (Szilvay, 2005e:3). In the process of writing Szilvay also leaves pages open for the student to practise the writing of notation based on the previous work they have learned (Szilvay, 2005a:19, 29–31).

7.1.6   Inclusion of games, imagination and the pupil-teacher-parent triangle

Another teaching technique that corresponds with both methods' philosophy and assists in the learning of notation reading skills is the implementation of imagination (stories) and games. Suzuki teachers especially make use of interactive games when introducing notation reading skills, for example the incorporation of children's games like 'Simon says'. Other games also include identifying pitches and rhythm patterns as well as other musical aspects in the pieces.

(Fryer, 1985:100, 101). Szilvay continuously involves the child's imagination in his books through colourful images and interactive storytelling, especially when introducing them to notation and the music staff. This will retain the student's attention and provide an enjoyable experience in the teachings of both methods. (Fryer, 1985:100; Snyman, 2007:10, 11).

The development of the student's playing technique depends on the "pupil-teacher-parent triangle". Suzuki and Szilvay encourage "parental involvement" in lessons and group classes as the student needs constant support and guidance from the parent especially when practising at home. (Y. Lee, 2012:5; Mitchell, 1994:36.).

7.2   DIFFERENCES

7.2.1   Introduction of notation reading skills

One of the most noticeable differences between the methods is the introduction of notation reading skills. Each method commences with notation reading at a different stage in the student's violin tuition.

7.2.1.1   <u>Suzuki</u>

In the beginner's first stage, Suzuki emphasizes the memorization of music (development of musical memory) and development of the student's technique before commencing with reading skills. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:13). Only after pitch, rhythm and musical expression are internalized, will Suzuki 'match' it with the notes and symbols on the sheet music or on flashcards. (Fryer, 1985:100).

7.2.1.2   <u>*Colourstrings*</u>

Szilvay implements reading skills as the violin is introduced to the beginner, and stresses the collective use of all the senses in order to integrate what was learnt. A fundamental "premise" for the *Colourstrings* method is the development of "intelligent musicians" which includes "music literacy." It can be argued that technique is not the "end goal of study" but only just a "means" to make music. (Mitchell, 1998:74). As Szilvay himself states, "Reading is more intellectual, and music is an intellectual activity […] That is my approach" (Mitchell, 1994:36). Thus, Suzuki advocates the initial development of musical memory whereas Szilvay focuses initially on the reading of notation.

Szilvay goes a step further when introducing the student to all the facets of notation. This includes the teaching of dynamics, expressions, symbols, meter (time signatures) and key signatures. (Voima, 2009:22). He also follows step-by-step guidelines whereas Suzuki leaves the teaching thereof to the teacher's own discretion. Every new aspect in the *Colourstrings* books is taught separately with accompanying pictures and exercises to insure that the teacher covers everything necessary for the student's complete understanding.

7.2.2   Conventional notation versus colour notation

The second most evident difference between the two methods is the use of traditional black notation in the Suzuki method and the use of colour notation in the *Colourstrings* method.

7.2.2.1   <u>Suzuki</u>

Even though Suzuki postpones the reading of notation until only after the first year of tuition, Suzuki students are the first to read from traditional notation, as black notation is only evident in the Appendix at the end of *Book C* and at the start of *Book D* of *Colourstrings* while note names or as Vioma (2009) calls it, 'absolute pitch', is only taught during or after the study of *Book D*. (Voima, 2009:10).

7.2.2.2   <u>*Colourstrings*</u>

In the case of *Colourstrings,* the difference of each string can be illustrated without the added confusion of the music staff whereas the Suzuki student only has a vertical guide to indicate the pitches of the notes. Before exposing the student to the amount of information given by the traditional staff, Szilvay first introduces a very basic staff and notation to the beginner which includes 'pipe notation' and no visible staff lines until page 72 in *Book A*. The only indication of pitch is the colour and position of the notes: the colour indicates the specific string while the vertical placement of a note reveals its exact pitch, not only the string on which it appears. (Szilvay, 2005a:9; Szilvay, 2005a:37; Mitchell, 1998:75).

7.2.3   **Visual aids**

7.2.3.1   <u>Suzuki</u>

In the Suzuki method, the use of visual aids such as tapes are prominent in order to assist the students with finger placement and to connect each tape (or finger) to notes on the staff.

7.2.3.2 *Colourstrings*

Szilvay doesn't believe in the use of visual guides with the exception of natural harmonics in the middle of the fingerboard where he suggests the teacher uses a small dot to indicate the harmonic's position. In his opinion, intonation should not be seen, but heard, hence his support of sol-fa and the development of the students' inner hearing which will enable the students to place their fingers precisely led by the notes/sol-fa syllables they 'hear'. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:21; Mitchell, 1994:51).

7.2.4   Establishment of finger patterns and shifting

Herein lies another difference in the two methods: the establishment of finger patterns.

7.2.4.1   Suzuki

Suzuki utilizes the combination of rote teaching, tapes and fingering. Suzuki students have the advantage of executing 'stopped notes' and establishing the set finger patterns required, at an earlier stage than *Colourstrings* students. This enables them to perform standard sets of beginner pieces from the baroque period, of which almost the entire Suzuki repertoire is made up of. (S.Y. Lee, 1992:46, 47).

Considering that Suzuki only implements the first position in the first year of violin tuition, it can be argued that students may develop a fear of moving their left hand to a different position on the fingerboard (after establishing the finger patterns in first position for a considerable period of time) as well as stiffness when finally being introduced to a higher position (shifting). (Snyman, 2007:9).

7.2.4.2 *Colourstrings*

Colourstrings students rely on their singing (sol-fa) or inner hearing while reading the notes with no visual aids on the fingerboard, and the use of movable *do*. (Suzuki, 2007a:20; Voima, 2009:10, 11). Through movable *do*, Szilvay encourages the unconscious use of different finger patterns before it is formally introduced. In this way, *Colourstrings* students depend on their inner hearing instead of the continuous use of fingering like Suzuki students. (H. & E. Mills, 1973:178). Additionally, as standard notation reading requires, students also depend on the position of the notes on the staff and the colours in the case of *Colourstrings*. Only after *Book*

B at the start of the Appendix (additional exercises which are left to the discretion of the teacher) and in *Book C* when the student is exposed to more than one string on the staff, numbered fingering is applied. (Szilvay, 2005b:XI; Szilvay, 2005c:55). As Stowell (1992:101) sums it up: "Finally, on no account take the shortcut of playing fingerings without full knowledge of the individual pitch and context of each note; this is the main contributor to inferior literacy".

While Suzuki students have an early introduction to finger patterns in Volume 1, students in the *Colourstrings* method only start utilizing finger patterns (and first position) at the start of *Book B*.

Shifting is a natural occurrence in the *Colourstrings* method and is used in conjunction with movable *do* at a later stage in *Book B*. Since the start of *Book A*, the student is unconsciously introduced to shifting by means of natural harmonics while in *Book B* he/she is 'stopping notes' at any point on the fingerboard by means of movable *do*, with an already developed left-arm/hand technique from *Book A*. There is no reluctance in playing in different positions or transposing to a new key. Thus, freedom of movement is implemented and awareness of the full range of pitches on the violin is triggered. (Mitchell, 1994:53; Voima, 2009:17, 18).

7.2.5   Aural approach

Although both methods advocate the vital development of a child's hearing, there is a difference in the approach of each method.

7.2.5.1   <u>Suzuki</u>

Suzuki encourages *listening* to recordings or musical selections a number of times.

7.2.5.2   <u>*Colourstrings*</u>

Szilvay supports the primary activity of *singing* where students can personally participate in internalizing the song or exercise and at the same time associate the pitch with the printed notes in the book. (Mitchell, 1994:42).

7.2.6 **Theory and creativity**

7.2.6.1 **<u>Suzuki</u>**

The Suzuki method doesn't accommodate theory; it is left to the teacher's discretion to use supplementary material for the student to practise notation writing. However, as Suzuki students start the study of their first songs, it is indicated in Volume 1 that they need to recite the note names while singing the piece before playing it on the violin. According to *The Suzuki Concept* (1973) note values are taught before commencing with reading as well as familiarizing students with note names by means of interactive games. It is left to the Suzuki teacher's own discretion to provide supplemental material to stimulate the student's creativity.

7.2.6.2 ***<u>Colourstrings</u>***

From early on in *Book A,* Szilvay encourages the writing of rhythm by means of pipe notation and includes the writing of pitch at the start of *Book B*. (Szilvay, 2005a:19, 29; Szilvay, 2005b:10, 25, 41). At first, Szilvay introduces sol-fa and rhythmic syllables throughout *Book A–D*. Only after completion of *Book D* does he utilize note names in his scale book as an extension to the sol-fa syllables. Similarly, the students have the chance to write down the notes in the scale book. (Szilvay, 2008).

Szilvay encourages students to be creative in the *ABC Books*. Frequently there are pages left open in each of the books for the teacher and student to notate their own songs based on the previous work learnt which reinforces reading skills. (Boucneau, 2000:1; Snyman, 2007:29). In accordance with the principle of creativity by means of writing and learning of notation, Szilvay promotes the introduction to theory as the student commences with notation reading skills. As Svilvay states: "Musical reading and writing should be developed in tandem with each other" (Szilvay, 2005e:16).

7.2.7 **Visual presentation of the books**

The whole appearance (visual presentation and construction) of the two methods is in great contrast.

7.2.7.1 <u>Suzuki</u>

Suzuki's volumes do not contain any colour, only instructions written on top of and beneath each piece or exercise. Only at the beginning of Volume 1 and 2 pictures of the finger pattern would accompany an explanation of what will follow in the remainder of the volume.

7.2.7.2 *<u>Colourstrings</u>*

Visually Szilvay's method is very appealing to the child: throughout *Book A–D* each page contains pictures and symbols in many colours to illustrate and explain each technical aspect and is used (Mitchell, 1998:74, 75; Snyman, 2007:8) in support of the teaching of notation reading skills.

7.2.8 Introduction to pitch

The introduction to different finger patterns and associating pitches with fingerings, is another distinct difference in the approach between the two methods.

7.2.8.1 <u>Suzuki</u>

Suzuki students will at first associate pitch with their finger placement on the fingerboard by means of rote learning and memorizing each finger's position with no association made between the pitches and written notation. (H. & E. Mills, 1973:177). The sound (pitch) and physical position of the pitch on the fingerboard is internalized but not its position on the note staff.

7.2.8.2 *<u>Colourstrings</u>*

Szilvay teaches the association of pitch to a sound by singing it on sol-fa, and reading it from printed colour notation and guiding pictures. Each colour is associated with a string while each finger on the separate strings is introduced stepwise through the use of one staff line at a time. Assisted by guiding pictures and sol-fa, the sound and position of the pitches on the 'half-completed' staff are internalized. (Mitchell, 1994:46; Szilvay, 2005b:4).

7.2.9 Introduction to rhythm

7.2.9.1 <u>Suzuki</u>

Similar to the introduction of pitch, Suzuki students experience rhythm aurally and physically through rote teaching, reciting the rhythmic syllables and using assigned hand gestures (clapping), and/or marching to the various rhythmic patterns (Mitchell, 1994:1). Only after the rhythms have been internalized will the student be able to associate the patterns to notation on sheet music or flashcards. On the other hand, Suzuki only incorporated a basic diagram on the last page of Volume 1 (Suzuki, 2007a:45). It can be argued that it is up to the teacher to fill in the gaps and provide explanations to the student in terms of note values, whereas in the *Colourstrings* books it is already explained through the symbol of the 'balanced seesaw'.

7.2.9.2 *Colourstrings*

Colourstrings students experience rhythm visually, aurally and physically, the same as pitch. The first rhythm patterns taught in the Suzuki method are seemingly more complicated than those in the *Colourstrings* method. Szilvay chooses to present the beginner with very basic note values, written separately before being combined into rhythmic patterns whereas the Suzuki student has to cope with a combination of two groups of rhythmic patterns. Furthermore, the student can only rely on the rhythmic syllables to indicate the speed of the note value while the *Colourstrings* student has reinforcement from 'speed symbols' (pictures) in the books as well as rhythmic syllables. Another feature of the *Colourstrings* books is the explanation of the relationship between different note values by means of pictures and clever diagrams which occurs after every new note value or rhythm pattern is taught. To better grasp the meaning and 'feeling' of the various note values, Szilvay gives the student the chance to practise two rhythmic patterns appearing on two lines together with the teacher or a fellow student. This is performed as a duet. (Szilvay, 2005a:16–27; Szilvay, 2005c:12).

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

S.Y. Lee (1992:58) states that "flexibility is an important factor in all teaching".

The Suzuki teacher isn't subjected to a specific "set of rules" and is advised by S.Y. Lee to use other materials "when it becomes necessary" (S.Y. Lee, 1992:58). Niles (2012) reports that Suzuki teachers have "changed a great deal" and that many accomplished Suzuki teachers

implement notation reading skills earlier than what was originally intended. Nicolette Solomon, the "director of the Suzuki Music Institute of Dallas," confirms the importance of reading notation and states that supplementary/additional "violin traditions" should be integrated into the Suzuki method. (Niles, 2012:40). Szilvay accepts that teachers may at some point change or adapt his method in order to suit the specific needs of the student and that it will be in the teacher's favour to be aware of other approaches. (Mitchell, 1994:iii, 78). This supports the possibility that each method can be changed and used to favour the other method, and provide solutions to its shortcomings.

7.3.1   The Suzuki method

7.3.1.1   <u>Immediate exposure to reading skills (pitch/rhythm)</u>

Teaching by 'rote', is defined as "mechanical memory" or "repetition […] without regard to the meaning" (*The Chambers Dictionary*, 2014:1355). It also leaves room for debate on whether Suzuki's statement that, what a child learns in the very early years of life will have an effect on education for the remainder of his/her life, should not be applied to the early teaching of notation reading skills. In light of this statement, should it not be introduced earlier instead of postponed? For a beginner violinist to acquire reading skills while simultaneously diverting his/her attention to many other areas in the development of his/her technique is considered a burden according to Suzuki. It would prove problematic to divide the student's concentration while reading from a 'cold, white and black music sheet'. Szilvay however states that through his method, the burden is taken away and reading will become enjoyable, exciting and stimulating.

Therefore, it is my recommendation that students acquire knowledge of the *Colourstrings* method, i.e. *Book A*. In this way, they will be able to immediately acquire reading skills when violin tuition commences, (their) creative thinking will be enhanced and they will be exposed to the basics of theory. It will also give them the chance to develop sight-singing (on sol-fa), secure the basic foundation of violin playing as well as develop 'advanced techniques' (such as harmonics, early shifting, composing).

After the completion of *Book A*, the student will have established the following:

- Proper posture
- Reading basic (pipe) notation

- Counting (rhythm) with kinaesthetic movements (integration of inner rhythm)

- Writing of notation (theory)

- Composition

- Left- and right-hand pizzicato (numbered pizzicato)

- Harmonics – any position on the fingerboard

- Harmonic finger numbering in first position

- String crossings

- Combination of normal bowing, harmonics, left-hand pizzicato and string crossings in different rhythmic patterns

Throughout *Book A*, the student will acquire knowledge of the following notation: the crotchet, the quaver, the minim, the crotchet rest and different rhythmic combinations thereof. With the help of colours, the student can associate and read this notation on any string. This also includes each string's natural octave harmonic. From page 43, the student reads fingered notation (fingered pizzicato) and from page 49 onwards, the first position and first finger pattern are introduced. Conventional note-heads as well as the one-line staff are introduced at the end of *Book A* page 72. Additionally, the student will read notation without the complex traditional staff, utilizing only a basic staff with pipe notation which includes no lines, key- and time signatures.

The student will also have the opportunity to learn all the aspects of notation (which includes the introduction to dynamics, expressions, symbols, time signatures and key signatures) in a meticulous step-by-step approach with pictures and exercises in the books that follows. In terms of creativity in *Book A*, the student will have the opportunity to compose and notate their own songs based on previously learnt work.

7.3.1.2 <u>**Visual aids: tapes and numbered notation**</u>

The next important aspect is the placement of the fingers on the fingerboard (in first position). Suzuki recommends tapes across the entire breadth of the fingerboard while Szilvay proposes the use of finger placement according to their hearing/sol-fa training with no visual aids. I would recommend a combination of both suggestions. After studying *Book A*, the student will be able to sing an entire scale on sol-fa. In my opinion, the student should be able to sing the

first exercises in the Suzuki books on sol-fa, and then place the finger accordingly (starting with the exercises in Volume 1 page 23).

For tapes, I would recommend using small brightly-coloured dots (Figure 85) and not tapes that 'spread' across the entire breadth of the fingerboard. My prediction is that the student will not be fully dependent on the dot as it will not be visible underneath *all* the strings (from the student's angle). Still, the dot will be visible for guidance especially in the case of very young children.

Figure 85, *Dots for finger placement on the fingerboard* (Jansen van Vuuren, 2016)
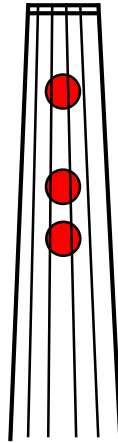
The use of the dots should be kept to a minimum and if possible, only one or two dots should be used in order to prevent complete dependence on the dots (or tapes). Accordingly, with the combined use of sol-fa and dots for finger placement, the student should establish the first finger pattern used in the first stage of Volume 1 within a short period of time.

It is my recommendation that the Suzuki students use sol-fa in a similar way in Volume 1 (the first five pieces) as students do in *Book A* of *Colourstrings* where they subconsciously depend on their hearing instead of the continuous use of fingering (numbered notation).

7.3.1.3 Establishment of finger patterns and shifting

Instead of teaching finger patterns by rote, intervals can be internalized aurally by Suzuki students, through singing the intervals on sol-fa. The use of movable *do* can extend the possibilities of finger patterns as used in the *Colourstrings* books.

To avoid developing a fear of shifting into higher positions as well as stiffness in the left hand, Suzuki students can implement shifting by means of natural harmonics as seen in *Colourstrings Book A*. Additionally with the use of movable *do*, the student can apply 'stopped notes' at any point on the fingerboard in conjunction with shifting. Simultaneously, different positions and transposition to new keys are introduced.

7.3.1.4   Writing of theory

Except for reciting the note names while singing the first pieces in Volume 1, the Suzuki volumes do not introduce the writing of notation. However, in the *Colourstrings* books students are able to practise the writing of notation in conjunction with the reading of notation while playing.

It is recommended that students study the writing of notation as portrayed in all four of the *Colourstrings* books:

- *Book A*: Writing of pipe notation, open strings, rhythmic patterns including the use of the crochet, quaver, minim and crochet rest as well as composing their own songs.
- *Book B*: Writing of the five-note pentachord (*do, re, mi, fa, so*), two staff lines, bar lines, with a partly completed time signature as well as composing their own songs.
- *Book C*: Writing of coloured notation on the full conventional staff with a completed time signature and key signature, fingering, new rhythms such as the syncopated rhythm and dotted rhythm as well as composing their own songs.
- *Book D*: Writing of conventional notation with coloured fingering, the minor pentachord, new rhythms such as the quaver rest and semiquavers as well as composing their own songs.

7.3.1.5   Visual presentation of the books

The Suzuki books are not visually as appealing to the child as the *Colourstrings* books. There is an absence of picture/symbol guidance. It is also important to stimulate the student's imagination and more assistance is needed when changing strings. The inclusion of the *Musicland* characters when Suzuki introduces one or two strings can be useful and the students' creativity can be stimulated when they draw their own pictures in the book. Other

pictures/symbols which explains elements of technique such as rhythm, for example speed symbols, may also be implemented.

7.3.1.6 <u>Aural approach when introducing pitch</u>

Although H. and E. Mills (1973:177) state in *The Suzuki concept* that "pitch association" at a later stage will not be impaired if the teacher follows suitable guidelines, this cannot be guaranteed. Suzuki encourages listening to recordings and singing note names when studying the first pieces in Volume 1. The Suzuki students will only associate pitch with the aural experience of memorizing music through listening and rote teaching. When practising finger placements, no conscious association is made with the written notation. It is recommended that students follow Szilvay's example of teaching pitch by singing it on sol-fa while reading from printed coloured notation and guiding pictures. Note names may also be used (while singing and reading). In this way the association between pitch and printed notation can be strengthened.

7.3.1.7 <u>Aural approach when introducing rhythm</u>

As with pitch, Suzuki students only experience rhythm aurally through reciting the rhythm syllables, and physically through rote learning and using hand gestures or marching to the beat. No association is made with the notation on the sheet music. *Colourstrings* students learn very basic note values, written separately at first and then in a combination of rhythm patterns, instead of immediately being exposed to a combination of different note values as in Suzuki Volume 1. The student will also have the visual guide of the speed symbols to indicate the duration of each note value. Thus students can associate rhythm aurally and physically (Szilvay's rhythm syllables) with printed notation.

7.3.2 The *Colourstrings* method
7.3.2.1 <u>Duration of period before students are introduced to conventional notation and finger patterns</u>

While Suzuki students are the first to read conventional or black notation, *Colourstrings* students only read this notation at the end of *Book C* and from *Book D* onwards. I would recommend the introduction of Suzuki Volume 1 and *Colourstrings Book B* simultaneously after the student has established his/her technique in *Book A*. Because the student will start to

play in first position in *Book B*, it seems logical to implement Suzuki's Volume 1 at this stage and introduce the student to conventional notation.

- The student can start studying the Suzuki method on page 21 where the different rhythmic patterns are displayed. Here the teacher can introduce the student to the group of semi-quavers by means of the rhythmic syllables and the hand gestures of *Colourstrings*:
    - Rhythm A – *tiri-tiri ti-ti*
    - Rhythm B – *ti-ti (rest) ti*
    - Rhythm C – *ti-tiri ti-tiri*
    - Rhythm E – *tiri-tiri-tiri-tiri*

    It is suggested that Rhythm D should be omitted for a later stage. In the case of pairing a hand gesture with the semi-quavers, I suggest tapping two fingers (index and middle finger) against the left hand palm for each semi-quaver. (Szilvay initially suggested this for the *ti-ti* rhythm – Mitchell, 1994:54).

- After the establishment of the various rhythm patterns, page 23 from Suzuki Volume 1 and the start of *Book B* can be introduced to the student, i.e. the 'stopping of notes' in first position and the first finger pattern can be introduced.
- I would suggest teaching the stopping of notes or first position on Suzuki page 23 in conjunction with the sol-fa syllables of *Colourstrings Book B*. In this way, the development of two senses can be reinforced as suggested by Szilvay in *Colourstrings*.

7.3.2.2 <u>From coloured to conventional notation</u>

To address the issue of students converting from coloured notation to conventional notation, I recommend the following:

- As an introduction to conventional notation, the Colourstrings teacher explains the meaning of the music staff, bars and bar lines in more detail to the student in the last pages of Book A (pages 72–77). This includes the story (explanation) of the notes staying in a house (music staff), with walls separating a group of notes in different apartments (bar lines and bars), and the discontinuation of pipe notation.
- To address the issue of converting to black notation, I propose the continuous use of 'coloured fingering':

Figure 86, *Twinkle Theme with coloured fingering* (Suzuki, 2007a:26)

It can be left to the teacher's discretion to use 'coloured fingering' and/or draw coloured circles around specific notes so the student has a guiding system he/she can draw from when reading black notation. As seen in Figure 86, the coloured fingering is not consistent and should be kept to a minimum, as with the use of visual aids on the fingerboard in 7.3.1.2. With the help of 'coloured fingering' and sol-fa, the student should be able to grasp the step-wise movement of the notes and place his/her fingers accordingly. I would also suggest the use of a coloured number every time the student changes strings. 'Coloured fingering' can be used until the end of Volume 1, or depending on the student's development, can be omitted at the teacher's discretion.

7.3.2.3   <u>Teaching of note names or 'absolute pitch' delayed until after Book D</u>

With their first songs, Suzuki students are already reciting note names while singing. I recommend that *Colourstrings* students follow the same example when they study not only Suzuki pieces and exercises (according to 7.3.2.1 and 7.3.2.2) but *Colourstrings*' songs as well. It is also recommended that *Colourstrings* students write the note names while doing theory exercises in *Book B*.

7.3.3   Further study

I suggest the simultaneous use of the *Colourstrings* and Suzuki books. During the process, the student will be exposed to conventional notation and short pieces rich in melody in the Suzuki

method while developing not only his/her technique through both methods but also notation reading skills.

7.4   SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

After (determining) both methods' approach to notation reading skills, the author suggests an in-depth study: which approach to notation reading skills proves to be the most sufficient or successful by means of a case study? This entails the postponement of notation reading skills while technique is first mastered as opposed to the incorporation of notation reading skills in conjunction with the developments of techniques by means of coloured notation.

CONCLUSION

There is a distinct difference in the approach of the two methods regarding finger-brain-eye coordination while reading music. Suzuki believes technique must first be internalized before reading skills commences while Szilvay encourages use of all the senses while learning the violin from the very start. After in-depth research, a conclusion was reached that both methods offer an invaluable approach to violin tuition in general: Suzuki with the development of musical memory and tone production, and *Colourstrings* with the holistic development of the child at heart. Additionally, these two methods complement each other in many ways. The similarities in their history, foundations and philosophy are evident. A combination of the methodology and more specifically, their approach to the teaching of notation reading skills can only be an advantage to the beginner violinists. It is of vital importance to comprehend the methodology of each approach in order to provide a well-structured combination of these two methods for successful tuition to violin students. I conclude that the aim of the study was met and a deeper understanding of the teaching of the Suzuki and *Colourstrings* violin methods' approach towards notation reading skills will assist me and other violin teachers in future.

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