

## Comparative Study on the Violin Method Books for Beginners

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### ABSTRACT

Finding an appropriate violin introductory method for beginners can be challenging for teachers. A comparative study was conducted on three different books that are known as beginner technique books. The books are Shinichi Suzuki's Suzuki Violin School Volume 1 (1970), Auer's Maia Bang's Violin Method (1991), and C. Paul Herfurth's A Tune A Day (1991). The objectives of the study were 1) to identify the similarities and differences between each technique book, as well as 2) to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of each technique book. Reviewing and addressing the objectives was accomplished through the utilization of the qualitative content analysis, which is a comparison technique. The finding of this study has discovered that these three method books have a lot in common with one another in terms of core ideas, teaching patterns, procedures, and theories. Despite this, their approaches are the most dissimilar. Although, these three method books are appealing to a wide range of students, depending on their talents and levels of aptitude, because each book employs a different instructional approach and has different learning objectives. The strategies that were selected were able to accommodate a variety of students according to their capabilities and talents. With regards to the efficacy of these three technique books, it is suggested that additional research be carried out.

**Keywords:** violin methods; music pedagogy; a violin for beginners

## INTRODUCTION

Learning the violin is more complex than anticipated. It demands passion, commitment, and plenty of motivation. Beginners who aspire to study the violin require directions on where to begin. Beginners will need help and clarity in selecting the appropriate method book. Violin method books are essential for violinists of all ages and levels of proficiency. It helps teachers and students improve musical literacy and skill, making it necessary for budding violinists. Violin technique books offer a disciplined approach to learning. Method books for the violin are great for learning music since they provide a structured method of learning and detailed instructions for performing techniques. Technique books help teachers organize and plan classes to include all the essential concepts and approaches for student growth. The strategies also help teachers and pupils overcome challenges. This study compares three beginner violin methods which commonly used in many countries (Akdeniz, 2015). Suzuki violin teaching methodology in music education is commonly used in United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, and many other countries. Content analysis was used to compare Shinichi Suzuki's Suzuki Violin School Volume 1 (1970), Auer's *Maia Bang's Violin Method* (1991), and C. Paul Herfurth's *A Tune A Day* (1991).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### History of Violin Education

The first violin approaches were geared toward amateur violinists in the 17th century because oral education was the instrument's professional history. Boyden says top players had few strategies before 1750. (1989). Stowell and Robin (1992) reported around thirty amateur violin tuition books published between 1658 and 1731. According to Robin (2006), professional violinist teaching began in the middle of the seventeenth century. According to several sources, Francesco Geminiani's 1775 violin treatise *The Art of Performing on the Violin* was one of the first to give professional violinists precise lessons. Complete violin instruction with scales, fingering, position-work, shifting, bowing, double stops, arpeggios, ornamentations, expressions, and dynamics are covered.

### Significant of Learning Violin

According to Mamedova (2020), playing the violin activates neuronal endings and trains fine motor abilities, attention, and hearing. Moreover, it improves concentration. According to Catterall and Iwanaga (1999), learning to play the violin can improve your memory, as well as your ability to solve problems, your hand-eye coordination, and your fine motor abilities. The study of the violin has been shown to improve social skills as well as a sense of belonging (Falk, B., 2010); to enhance sensory integration from hearing, touch, and sight (Society for Neuroscience, 2013); to prevent psychological problems in children (Hudziak et al., 2014); and to benefit education (Jorgensen, 2002).

### Well-known Violin Methods

Shinichi Suzuki, a Japanese violinist, invented the Suzuki Method in the middle of the 20th century. This method can be used to teach a variety of instruments in addition to

the violin. The Suzuki Method emphasizes listening, taking baby steps, progressing gradually, and building a community comprising teachers, students, and families. Ivan Galamian, a well-known violin instructor, came up with the following method: the Galamian technique. This method includes 1) correct posture, left-hand technique, and tone and 2) music theory and committed practice. The Left-hand Galamian Method is methodical in its approach. He devised exercises that would teach the right arm and hand to appear toned. Rodolphe Kreutzer wrote Kreutzer Etudes (42 violin studies). Etudes are essential to developing technique and musicianship in the classical violin repertoire. These etudes may have an emphasis on bowing, intonation or shifting. The etudes cover shifting approaches, bowing, finger techniques, and double and double stops. The pupils may have picked up harmony, rhythm, and melody through their lessons.

### **Overview Summary on Each Method Book**

The Suzuki Violin School Volume 1 is a comprehensive instructional resource that incorporates various elements, including an emphasis on sound quality and technique rather than speed. It highlights the importance of positioning the left-hand fingers on the inside corner of the fingertip and maintaining a proper bow hold. Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of maintaining a steady beat, adopting good posture, accurate counting, dynamics, phrasing, articulation, repeats, and providing information about the composers and the musical era in which the piece was composed. Part 1 of the Maia Bang Violin Method is the basis of a seven-part series. This violin education and performance course covers everything from basic basics to complex creative interpretations. The method combines new technical knowledge with melodic compositions to engage young musicians and produce immediate musical pleasure. "A Tune A Day Book One" encompasses a comprehensive array of instructional materials, including lessons, drawings, fingering charts, daily practice records, test questions, and manuscript paper for homework assignments. Ideal for use in collaborative instructional sessions, educational courses, or for individualized pedagogical sessions.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative content analysis (comparative approach) was adopted to respond to the research question 1) what are the similarities and differences of each method books? and 2) what are the strengths and weaknesses of each selected method book? The data collection in this study was research observation and textual analysis from books, journals, and articles. Additionally, the progression of material in these methods in the six main areas, namely: 1) general content, 2) book features, 3) musical elements, 4) techniques, 5) theories, and 6) the strengths and weaknesses, shall be highlighted.

### **RESULTS**

#### **General Content Analysis**

The general content analysis shows that the Suzuki method has less content than A Tune A Day and Maia Bang. The Suzuki offers a more straightforward set or repertoire;

meanwhile, Maia Bang Part 1 and A Tune A Day Book 1 provides more exercises for skills and techniques. Analysis shown in Table 1.

	<b>SUZUKI VOLUME 1</b>	<b>MAIA BANG PART 1</b>	<b>A TUNE A DAY BOOK 1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Introduction: For the Students For the Teacher For the Parent Principle of Study and Guidance Posture	Introduction About the Violin and its Component Parts How to Hold the Violin Correctly How to Hold the Bow Correctly How to Draw the Bow Correctly Illustration of How to Hold the Violin, Bow and How to Draw the Bow The Simplest Rudiment of Music (Their Names and Notation) The Staff, Bars, Measures and Time Notes Rests The Four String of the Violin Tuning of the Four Strings How to Attach the Strings Correctly Recapitulation	Introduction to the rudiments of music Introduction about the violin parts Instruction on how to hold the violin. Things to watch while practicing. Instructions on tuning the violin. INTRODUCTION LESSON 1. Open String 2. Holding and Drawing the Bow 3. Continuation of Open Strings Quarter Notes 4. Half Notes-Two Counts Each 5. Whole Notes-Four Counts Each
<b>Technique</b>	Music symbols Dynamics Key Signature Exercise for Proper E-String Posture Exercise for Changing Strings Exercises for Quick Placement of Fingers Tonalization Perpetual Motion in A major Exercise for	Exercises on Open Strings (A Strings) (E Strings) (D Strings) (G Strings) Whole-Steps and Half Steps Fingering Practice (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Finger) Exercises for Crossing and Connecting the Four Strings Exercises Quarter Notes F Natural on the D String The Scale The Minor Scale Scale of C Major Eight Notes Legato Playing (Slurred Notes) Exercises for String	OFFICIAL LESSON The Open String The Open D String Quarter Notes and Quarter Rest The Open E String The Open G String Lesson 6: The Eight Note First Finger B on the A String First Finger B, Second Finger C# on the A-String On the A String Slurred Notes *(legato) Up and Down the Ladder of D The Dotted Half Note and the Dotted Quarter Note

	the 4 <sup>th</sup> Finger Tonalization D Major Scale Perpetual Motion in D Major G Major Scale Etude Songs: Minuet 1 Minuet 2 Minuet 3 The Happy Farmer Gavotte	Transfers Varieties of Bowing Relative Distances: Whole Step and Half Step Exercises for Band F Scale of A Minor The Rhythmic Pulse Scale of G Major Detached Notes in One Bow Whole Bow Skip Across One or Two Strings Exercises for Change of Bow Exercises for Different Dynamic Expressions Duet Scale of E Minor Scale of D Major Exercises for Crossing the Strings Scale of B Minor Varied Triad in B Minor Scale of A Major Staccato Bowing Exercises for Staccato Scale of F# Minor Scale of E Major Correct Principle of Finger Exercises Scale of C# Minor	My First Solo Pieces Using the D Major Scale Detached Notes in One Bow The Fourth Finger on the D and A Strings The Up-Beat Analyzing Different Kind of Notes and Bowing based on the Hymns and Folk Songs. Five Tones on the E String Five Tones on the G String Reviewing of the Different Keys, Rhythms, and Bowing studied Ensemble Playing Trio for Three Violins Quartet for Four Violins Quartet for Four Violin
<b>Theory</b>	Music symbols Dynamics Key Signature	Broken Chords Eight Notes, Dotted Notes Whole Step Half Step Time Value (Half and Quarter Notes Dotted Quarter and Eight Notes) Dynamic Signs The D Major Triad Tempo Marks Intervals Sixteenth Notes Scales	Test Question Through : Sign and Symbols in Music Writing Test Question Through Lesson 14 Naming the Signs Naming the lines and spaces based on the piece given Naming the key Dividing into correct measures Scale Test Question Through Lesson 25 Spelling Chords Writing Notes Writing Key Signatures

## Features Analysis

The \$22.9 Suzuki has 17 sections and 49 pages. Maia Bang has eight pieces and 98 pages for \$18.99. The 26-page, 61-song A Tune a Day. These three books employ fonts up to 12. Suzuki and Maia Bang were printed on white paper, and A Tune A Day on yellowish paper. The analysis shows that the three strategies introduce posture-bowing positioning. Suzuki did not show finger placement. Maia Bang and A Tune A Day teach theory except for Suzuki. Maia Bang has eight scales, A Tune a Day four, and Suzuki three. Unlike Suzuki, Maia Bang and A Tune A Day offer optional teacher duets.

## Musical Elements Analysis

Note that reading uses the treble clef in all methods. Maia Bang and A Tune A Day then used numbering. The analysis shows that all strategies introduce similar note values. The most time signatures are used in A Tune A Day. Suzuki and Maia Bang cover the articulation technique. Next, A Tune A Day gives up bow, down bow, string crossing, and slur. According to the data, Maia Bang also has the most scales and key signatures. The Suzuki and Maia Bang techniques involve dynamics and tempo, while A Tune A Day does not.

## Techniques Analysis

The similarities can be found in the analysis, such as 1) warm-up exercise, 2) bowing technique, 3) tonalization, and 4) fingering exercise. Each book features unique scales and arpeggios. Suzuki and Maia Bang provide dynamic playing except for A Tune A Day. Suzuki is the only method with a teacher-student duet. The result shows that music students are expected to demonstrate excellent performance in musically related skills they have studied. The result supports Jorgensen's argument in 2017, where he mentioned that the violinist's skills depend on good practice.

## Theories Analysis

Three methods teach the same theoretical information, but Suzuki does not teach notation, signs and symbols, music writing, time signature, scale writing, or test questions. Maia Bang and A Tune A Day shares theoretical compositions. A Tune A Day does not teach dynamic signals.

## The Strength and Weakness

Table 2 summarizes the analysis of the method's strengths and weaknesses about the second study objective.

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
SUZ	Directed.	Uncreative
UKI	Readable font.	Theory-free
VOLU	Beginner-friendly exercise.	Self-study
ME 1	Language instruction choices. Scales, arpeggios.	unsuitable.

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	Every page has instructions. Promotes listening, repetition, and positive learning.	
MAIA BAN G PAR T 1	Organized instruction. Give all starting steps. Arpeggios and Scales Fingering Page-by-page instructions Different music types	Few duets All pages lack content space. Self-study unsuitable.
A TUNE A DAY BOOK 1	Advancement readability Finger exercises Give all starting steps. bowing Page-by-page directions Scales, arpeggios, Self-study-friendly	No dynamics explanation Lack of emphasis on duet playing

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Suzuki's Volume 1 approach stresses listening, tonalization, exact intonation, good posture, bow hold, and parental and instructor interaction to stimulate the kid. The beginning of the lecture is essential, but it quickly gains momentum. This technique book opens with an illustration of how to hold the bow and position the violin beneath the chin. This book begins with clear directions and easily legible font. It gives a straightforward exercise that is appropriate for beginners. Nevertheless, it swiftly transitions to running notes like quaver and semi-quaver. Aside from that, Suzuki focuses on only three types of scales and arpeggios. The fascinating aspect of the Suzuki method book is the diversity of pieces included. In addition, the research demonstrates that Suzuki stresses the significance of listening, repetition, and a positive learning environment. According to Suzuki (1988), the approach strongly emphasizes musical ear training because it is a vital element of musical development. However, the discovery demonstrates that the method needs to be more original, as all fingering activities are essential and obvious. Suzuki has also been criticized for its tendency to stifle young musicians' creativity by encouraging rote memorization, among other things (Bruser, M, 1997). In addition, the technique tends to be stressed in music theory, as some instructors argue that the method must provide proper training in music theory, which is essential for understanding the logic and structure of music (Knappert, L, 2006).

Maia Bang Part 1 covers methods and finger position. Images, graphs, and musical examples help students understand and apply the material in the book. The method yields the most scales and musical elements. The method also emphasizes healthy techniques to reduce harm and improve sound production (Bang, 2001). Each practice includes easy rhythm patterns and different musical styles, helping students acquire a diverse musical skill set (Bang, 2001). The research also shows that music theory must be taught enough to understand music's logic and structure (Knappert, 2006). Group play was reduced. The technique has been criticized for lacking ensemble

playing chances, a crucial part of musical development and education (Knappert,2006).

A Tune a Day Book 1 provides fingering exercises for whole, quarter, and other notes. The analysis also found that each portion of the new course provides clear explanations. The bowing techniques are beginner-friendly and transparent. Paul approved pair playing in 1961. He believes classrooms should mix individual and group education. "Pupil's Practice Record" and "Weekly Grade" helped teachers track students' practice and growth. Results show that the technique has no dynamic explanation. Dynamics are essential for musical expression and communication, according to Smith (2008). The technique book needs a more repertoire list. Beginners still respect this method book series. Its progressive learning and continuous practice improve technical abilities and self-confidence.

## DISCUSSION

The three progressive structural approach books are well-organized. Most violin technique books cover how to handle the bow, violin, and each component. Thus, a great start is crucial. The quality of a beginner's first experiences with the instrument can significantly affect their passion and participation with it (Pherson & Renwick, 2001).

Despite their similar introductions, each method book has different learning aims and goals. Suzuki exclusively utilizes 3/4 and 4/4 time signatures and G, D, and A major scales. Suzuki emphasizes listening, repetition, and parental participation. The method emphasizes intonation outcomes over talents, which limits musical aspects. Maia Bang emphasizes detached, staccato, legato, martele, and spiccato bowing more than Suzuki and A Tune a Day. This method teaches novices posture, intonation, bowing, and sight-reading. Students also receive a variety of musical exercises and compositions to help them improve. To help students grow as violinists, a solid foundation and good practice habits are stressed. Unlike A Tune A Day, this method emphasizes violin technique and foundational skills. Bowing, side reading, music theory, and tone creation were studied.

The results show that method books' strengths and weaknesses match their goals. Suzuki Volume 1 builds playing skills, musicianship, and a love of music in an organized learning setting. This method needed a theory lesson. Meanwhile, Maia Bang Part 1 covers foundations, bowing, repertoires, practice guidance, sight reading, ear training, and theory. Regrettably, this style has no duet repertoire. The method book also provides a comprehensive and well-organized strategy to help beginner violin students improve their playing and musicality through increasingly complex lessons and exercises. A Tune A Day Book 1 covers bowing, playing, early repertoire, practice guidance, sight reading, theory, and ear training. The method does not teach dynamics. A Tune a Day for Violin Book 1 is a thorough and well-organized method book for beginning violinists to improve their playing and musicality through incremental lessons and exercises.

Finally, all three methods use several teaching tools and a plan, clear, and logical topic development. Three of these solutions also offered precise guidance and practical



practice tasks. Some methods emphasize violin theory and basics while avoiding ensemble work.

## CONCLUSION

These three method books share core principles, instructional patterns, methods, and theories. These three volumes differ most in methodology. Despite this, these three method books appeal to students based on their skills and ability levels because each book has a different strategy and learning objectives. Data shows the strengths and weaknesses of these three technique books for each learning outcome. These technique books may need more theories, dynamics, and music ensembles. According to their learning results, the study's 7–14-year-old target audience could use these three books. This study found the top three violin methods: Maia Bang Violin Method Part 1 and Suzuki Violin School Volume 1. After the study, there are several ways to improve future research, including: 1) keeping up with current research, advancements, and trends in the field; 2) collaborating with other researchers; 3) to obtain more resources, different perspectives, and new findings; 4) technology use and inventive methods; and 4) e-books. Therefore, this study needs more research on these three method books' efficacies.

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