

Saburo Sumi's Life and Influence on Violin Music

by

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ABSTRACT

The life and pedagogy of Saburo Sumi (1902-1984) has had a major influence on the violin world, particularly in Japan. Born of humble origins and lacking any formal musical training until his adulthood, Sumi nevertheless rose to become one of the most important violin pedagogues of Japan. His non-traditional musical background had a profound effect on the teacher he became and contributed to his tremendous success as a pedagogue.

Since most of the existing information on Sumi is written in Japanese, this study is designed to acquaint the Western reader with this amazing pedagogue. The information for this study was gathered through books, articles, and documents related to his life as well as the writer's personal experiences with the Sumi family.

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INTRODUCTION

On June 22, 1924, a son of a Japanese tea merchant from the countryside came to Tokyo with nothing more than his violin and a little money in his pocket. Who would have thought that this young man would become a member of the New Symphony Orchestra,¹ be called a father of the Japanese violin world, and become a well-known violin pedagogue in Japan? For most in the Western world, the first name that comes to mind when a Japanese pedagogue is mentioned would be Shinichi Suzuki. However, another teacher who is just as well known in Japan and has had a major, though quiet, influence in the violin world is Saburo Sumi.

Part of his legacy was to pass on his eagerness and passion for learning and teaching the violin. Whenever famous violinists such as David Oistrakh, Josef Gingold, or Yehudi Menuhin would come to town to give a concert, he invited them over to his house to give master classes for his students.² He continually observed and absorbed from new and different violin pedagogues from all over the world. He was the first to introduce Ševčík violin studies to Japan and established it as one of the standard violin method books.³ He was a true pioneer of Japanese violin pedagogy and played a major role in Japanese violin history in the twentieth

¹ Later the New Symphony Orchestra was renamed the Japan Symphony Orchestra, then the Nihon Housou Kyokai Kokyo Gakuen or NHK Symphony Orchestra.

NHK Symphony Orchestra, Profile page, <http://www.nhkso.or.jp/about/index.php>.

NHK Symphony Orchestra, Profile page, <http://www.nhkso.or.jp/about/index.php>.

² Saburo Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini* (Chiyoda: Kousei Press, 1983), 103-5.

³ "String Interview: The Sumi family," *Strad*, August 1, 2012, 54.

century. He and two other violin pedagogues, Tatsuo Uzuka and Hirotsugu Shinozaki, felt the urgency to write a good violin method book for Japan, so they published *Atarashii Violin Kyohon* No. 1-6 (New Violin Method Book) in 1965.⁴ It is a combination of the essence of violin practices, which included not only beautiful, great, and enjoyable music selections, but also technical exercises such as scales, finger exercises, double stops, arpeggios, shifting, bow arm exercises, and much more. Although it was published more than 50 years ago, it is still used today. Their books would help not only beginners to start playing the violin, but also violinists to become more independent and mature.

Many of Sumi's students not only won various competitions, but also became professional orchestra players, soloists, and educators throughout the world. He was also the first judge for the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition and the Paganini Competition to come from Japan.⁵ Sumi's influence on violin playing and pedagogy was profound and global and continues to the present day.

⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 196-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 88-9, 104.

CHAPTER 1

THE SUMI FAMILY

Saburo Sumi (1902-1984) was born to Fusataro and Iwa Sumi in Yonago, Tottori, Japan. Yonago City resides in the center of the western side of Tottori Prefecture and spans 132.21 square kilometers with a population of just over 150,000 people as of July 2012.⁶ In the Edo period (1603-1867), the city became known as an “Osaka of San-in” because it represented commerce in the San-in region.⁷ One of the main benefits of living in this city was the convenience of traveling both by air and sea.⁸ Even today, the city gets many visitors from Seoul, South Korea, and Yonago is considered one of the gateways to Japan.⁹

The city is well known for being surrounded by rich nature such as the Sea of Japan, lakes and mountains. In 1921, the *Kaike* Hot Spring was discovered by accidently by a fisherman and is still one of the most popular hot springs in Japan.¹⁰ Unusually, this spring contains hot seawater, instead of regular hot spring water.¹¹ Because of the salt, it is believed to be very effective for health promotion, skin diseases, female

⁶ Yonago City, Totori, Home page, <http://www.city.yonago.lg.jp/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

and stomach problems, as well as nerve problems.¹² This lake was also chosen to be the site of the first triathlon in Japan in 1981, and now more than nine hundred athletes compete in it every year.¹³

Saburo would recall growing up surrounded by plentiful nature, with trees, mountains, rivers, lakes, and many fields not far from his doorstep.¹⁴ Near his house was a big silkworm farm. The farm was quite famous and had a gigantic factory for silk production on the premises.¹⁵ After passing through the factory, silkworm farms, then wheat and mulberry fields, Saburo would arrive at a cemetery where many of the Sumi family are laid to rest.¹⁶ After going through the very lonely cemetery, Saburo would reach his favorite place: a little hilltop surrounded by many trees from which he was able to see around on all four sides.¹⁷ He enjoyed sitting on the grass and looking around at the scenery. Looking at Shiro Mountain and Houkidaisen Mountain and taking in the fresh air refreshed his mind, and he would forget where he was.¹⁸ Past this point, there was the Yone River where he, his brothers, and his friends used to go fishing.¹⁹ His last wish was to come back to Yonago because it was where he grew up and

¹² Yonago City, Totori, Home page, <http://www.city.yonago.lg.jp/>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 9-10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

where his heart belonged.²⁰ He chose this favorite hilltop spot to be buried, overlooking the entire city of Yonago forever.²¹

An ancestor on his father's side was a Samurai (a warrior of high rank in Japanese society) and served to one of the Matsudaira Lords.²² After the Meiji Restoration, Saburo's father became a merchant of traditional Japanese green tea.²³ Because of Lord Matsudaira's influence, the traditional Japanese *matcha* green tea became widespread in Yonago.²⁴ In those days each household had a traditional Japanese *matcha* green tea ceremony and the fresh scent of the tea would fill the air.²⁵ Unfortunately, because of the increased price of the *matcha* green tea and numerous changes in Japanese culture, it is rare to see the traditional Japanese tea ceremony take place in homes these days.

It may be because of the character of the Samurai passed down from his paternal ancestor that Fusataro, Saburo's father (1872-1927), was very quiet and trustworthy.²⁶ He and Iwa were married on March 31, 1896, and opened a traditional Japanese teashop in Yonago.²⁷ Despite of poor health of Saburo's father, he always seated himself stoically in the front of the tea

²⁰ Kaoru Matsumoto, *Yume Ha Violin No Shirabe*, (Yonago: Tottoriken Kyoukatosho Press Inc., 2009), 140-1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 17.

²³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴ Ibid., 21.

²⁵ Saburo Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, <http://sumi-saburo-ms.jp/images/hajimekataru.pdf>, 1.

²⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 20-21.

²⁷ Ibid., 19.

store and worked very hard day and night.²⁸ Because he was very generous, honest, and caring, he had many customers. However, it was very difficult for him to make much profit because the price of the tea was so low.²⁹ The process of making *matcha* green tea requires much time and many workers who are willing to patiently grind regular green tea with a millstone until it turns into powder.³⁰ The shelf life of *matcha* green tea is very short as well because freshness is key. If the tea is not used right after grinding, it will lose its fresh taste and aroma. Since it was difficult to keep fresh, customers bought only small amounts of the tea each time they visited the store.³¹ Additionally, some people took advantage of Fusataro's kindness and never returned money after asking him to help sponsor money loans.³²

Because Fusataro and Iwa had many children, it was difficult for them to have enough money to live comfortably.³³ He had such a generous heart, and making money was not his strength.³⁴ More important to him was having compassion for people who were in need, and he would always help.³⁵ On many occasions, although he and his family had no money, he paid debts for others.³⁶ Since he was such a faithful person, he did not have negative habits. He did not have hobbies either, except that he was

²⁸ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 1.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 21.

³⁴ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 1.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 20.

very good at fishing.³⁷ When his children were fishing, he would come later and catch more fish than they.³⁸ Unfortunately, he passed away when Saburo was in his early years at the NHK Symphony Orchestra.³⁹

His mother, Iwa (4th August , 1875- 25th October, 1964) was a daughter of a priest of the Kawaguchi Shinto Temple in Uchi Machi, Yonago (which is a ten-minute walk from where the Sumi family used to live). She grew up listening to *gagaku*, which was performed at Shinto temples. *Gagaku* is a genre of ancient traditional music of the Japanese court, which has a repertoire consisting of *togagku*, *komagaku*, *saibara*, *roei*, and Shinto ritual music and dances.⁴⁰ The two Chinese characters used to write *gagaku* (literally ‘elegant music’) were originally used in China to signify Confucian ritual music.⁴¹

Saburo’s maternal grandfather played *gagaku*. The instruments he played were *hichiriki* (Japanese cylindrical oboe with seven finger holes and two thumb holes, played with a large double reed in *gagaku* court music),⁴² *taiko* (Japanese drums), and *sho* (a mouth organ used in Japanese *gagaku* or court orchestras that has 17 bamboo pipes, each with a bronze free

³⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 10-11.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Shigeo Kishibe, et al. “Japan.” Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. 9. Oct. 2012 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/4335pg5>>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "hichiriki." *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Ed. Alison Latham. Oxford Music Online. 9 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3247>>.

reed). The *sho* descended from the Chinese *sheng*.⁴³ Saburo's grandfather was especially gifted at playing both *sho* and *hichiriki*, as was Saburo's mother.⁴⁴ Since each temple in Yonago was small, he was a music leader in not only his temple, but six other temples as well.⁴⁵ Also, because there were not enough people to play *gagaku* in each temple, he coached temple leaders so that they could teach their musicians in their own temples.⁴⁶ The temple leaders helped each other perform *gagaku* on special occasions and events such as the annual harvest. Some fishermen recalled hearing the sound of the priests rehearsing coming from the temples while they were fishing.⁴⁷ All this shows that starting from his maternal grandfather, Saburo had musicianship in his blood as well as the gift of teaching.

Unlike a pastor in a Western church, a Shinto priest functions as the owner of the temple as well as a teacher of the Shinto religion. The temple is usually passed down to the priest's family and future generations. This was not the case with Saburo's family. Even though his mother Iwa was the daughter of a Shinto priest, she lost her rights to the family inheritance when she decided to become a Christian through the influence of her

⁴³ "shō." *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Ed. Alison Latham. *Oxford Music Online*. 9 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6158>>.

⁴⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 51.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

younger brother Keizo Mori.⁴⁸ Keizo had come to faith through the efforts of British Episcopal missionaries whose unusual appearance and mannerisms had caused quite a stir in that rural area where no one had ever seen a foreigner before.⁴⁹ It was especially difficult to be a Christian at that time in Japan's history and making such a decision meant losing one's family; however, they pursued their beliefs regardless of the consequences. Hajime, Saburo's oldest brother, heard that the relationships among their grandfather, mother, and Uncle Keizo in particular became very difficult after Iwa and Keizo's conversion.⁵⁰ Keizo's faith would later have a great impact on the future of the Sumi family.⁵¹

Keizo was an electrical engineer for the Yonago post office; however, he had some health issues. Because of his poor health, he spent his holidays in Kaike to recuperate.⁵² Near the beach at Kaike, one Christian elderly couple lived in a house and let out one room for Keizo.⁵³ During his visits to the town, he enjoyed listening to the sounds of ocean waves, trees, and birds and spent some quiet time studying the Bible and meditating. In the summer time he tried to strengthen his body by swimming and sunbathing.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁰ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 1.

⁵¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 12.

⁵² Ibid., 12.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11.

Keizo eventually went to seminary and became a pastor in Matsue City, about twenty miles west of Yonago.⁵⁵ Later he was sent back to his hometown to be a pastor near where Saburo and his family lived. The local church grew after Keizo moved back to Yonago.⁵⁶ The church, which had started as a small meeting at home, grew into a thriving community with its own church building. At that time, there were not many people interested in learning the English language; however, the church started having English conversation classes.⁵⁷ These were very successful and the church continued to grow. As it kept growing, the church was able to construct a new church building, a pastor's house, and the Ryozen Kindergarten.⁵⁸ In 1905, Saburo and his other brother Jiro became members of the inaugural class of that kindergarten.⁵⁹ They were given scholarships so they did not need to pay tuition.⁶⁰ Hajime thought it might be out of the kindness of the church and congregation to support the Sumi family.⁶¹ They knew how hard their uncle worked as the pastor of the church at that time, and the family served the church and the local community very much. Since Hajime's middle school was very close to the kindergarten, he used to take his younger brothers to the kindergarten every day.⁶²

⁵⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 14.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 2.

⁶¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 14.

⁶² Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 2.

Iwa also had weak health, but was very passionate about her beliefs and her children.⁶³ She always encouraged them to pursue their interests; if a child loved to paint, she encouraged him to paint freely.⁶⁴ Every night, the Sumi family had a home concert. She encouraged each child to sing his or her favorite songs at that concert and she would always join her children in singing songs from a Christian hymnal.⁶⁵ Sometimes, the program for the concert was not only singing songs, but also playing music with a Chinese violin, flute, violin, and organ; and it brought joyous evenings.⁶⁶ They were not wealthy and needed to save all of their pennies to make a living. They always wore well-worn *kimonos* and never had fancy clothes or toys.⁶⁷ However, whenever a child needed something that was important for his or her future, Iwa would not hesitate to buy it and to give it to the child, even if it was very expensive.⁶⁸ Her love and passion for her children were very strong and Saburo's love and passion for teaching was greatly influenced by his mother.

Uncle Keizo's congregation sent him and his wife to study abroad in Canada while their house was being renovated.⁶⁹ However, because of

⁶³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 11.

⁶⁴ Sumi Saburo Memorial Society, *Kyoudai*, <http://sumi-saburo-ms.jp/images/kyoudai3.pdf>, 1.

⁶⁵ Ibid., *Hajime Kataru*, 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 11.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 12.

severe cold weather on the trip, Keizo became very ill with pulmonary tuberculosis.⁷⁰ They quickly returned to Japan and went to Akashi City, about one hundred thirty-eight miles away from Yonago, so he could rest and recuperate there.⁷¹ Unfortunately, his condition did not improve and he ended up returning to where the Sumi family lived.⁷² Since there was no cure for tuberculosis at that time and it was highly contagious, no one except family visited him.⁷³ Jiro and Saburo visited their uncle with their violins and played for him in his room. Keizo loved his nephew's visits more than anyone else's, and enjoyed listening to the private concerts performed by his them.⁷⁴ He never fully recovered from his illness.⁷⁵ After he passed away, his faith and desires were passed on to the remaining members of the Sumi family.

Even though Iwa did not have much formal education, she was a great educator to her children.⁷⁶ She used her Christian beliefs as a guide for how to live life fully and especially as a guide for parenting. She was also very open to new things, such as music and arts, which most other parents would not have allowed their children to pursue careers in.⁷⁷ Often she made all the children do *origami*, the Japanese art of folding paper into

⁷⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 12-7.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 32-3.

intricate decorative designs and objects.⁷⁸ Saburo later said that he believed the folding of *origami* at a young age helped his fingers to develop dexterity, and that it could help children to focus on tasks and develop fine muscle skills⁷⁹ and hand-eye coordination. Iwa was very creative and gifted in many ways. She was a poet, painter, doll maker, wife and—most of all—a loving mother.⁸⁰ She even wrote a poem about seven flowers that referred to her seven children and Jiro later put it to music.⁸¹

Iwa's poem about their children⁸²

七色の花 鷺見岩子
みかみのもとえ めされゆくと
おもひながらも みかえすあと
なごりはつきぬ わがいのりぞ
たのしみうえし あいのはなよ
かわけるひには つゆにしめし
かぜふくときは つえにたたせ
しもふるよには やどをなして
わがてになれし あいのはなよ
わがみはやがて やすらうとも
つちにまことの ねさしかため
ひごとかおりを そらにたてよ
ななついろの あいのはなよ

⁷⁸ "origami, n.". OED Online. September 2012. Oxford University Press. 9 October 2012
<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132555?redirectedFrom=origami&>>.

⁷⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 31-35.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 40.

⁸² Ibid., 39.

*** English translation

Thinking of the day I will be going to be with the Lord
Looking back at what God has done in my life
Thinking of a life with my beloved flowers
I am reluctant to leave my children
This is my prayer
My joy is to plant love inside my loving flowers, my beloved children
On dry days, moisten with morning dews
On windy days, use a stick as support
On frosty days, cover with myself
Growing with love and care by my hands, my beloved flowers

Soon I will be gone to be with the Lord in peace
Grow your roots deep and strong in Christ
Be as a fragrant offering to the Lord daily
Sending sweet fragrance to the sky
My seven different flowers, my beloved seven children

These two key factors, Christian upbringing and music, influenced the future of each child in the Sumi family and made them much different from the other families in the city. Saburo's younger sister Aiko (meaning "daughter of God's love") still remembered in her late seventies their mother's sweet lullaby.⁸³ The lullabies Saburo's mother sang were always from her favorite hymnal.⁸⁴

⁸³ Sumi Saburo Memorial Society, *Aiko Kataru*, <http://sumi-saburo-ms.jp/images/watanabeaiko.pdf>, 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

These days, the phrase “*ikuji houki*” (parental neglect of their own children) is used very often in the media in Japan. In some cases, as “discipline,” parents do not feed their children and force them to stay in small boxes. Sadly these children often become malnourished and, in the worst cases, even die. In contrast to such horrible parenting that has become increasingly common in Japan today, Iwa demonstrated a true mother’s love and passion for all of her children, even when it required much sacrifice by her and her husband to take them to a church every Sunday, and encourage them to pursue arts in their life. Fortunately, all the Sumi children understood and appreciated their mother’s sacrifice and went on to become successful in their careers.⁸⁵

The importance of their mother’s Christian faith and their regular church attendance made a tremendous impact on all the Sumi brothers and sisters, which led and shaped their future in unique ways. With a house full of music in traditional Japan, the Sumi family seemed very unusual to others.

Love of music in the Sumi family was very well known, not only in their neighborhood, but also in other cities as well. It was said, “Even a cat in the Sumi family would sing.”⁸⁶ In that era, people were very simple and

⁸⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 31-41.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

were not very educated, especially in the countryside.⁸⁷ If someone practiced music day and night, people considered them to be very odd. For this reason, other relatives had a hard time understanding the Sumi family. Some of them even disliked the family and treated them as traitors to their heritage and old-fashioned way of life.⁸⁸ Perhaps times and people have not changed all that much; when compared to professions like business, accounting, computer science, law, or medicine, a career in fine arts is by-and-large distasteful in Japanese society even to this day.

However, Iwa never stopped supporting her children, ever since she found that some of her children were gifted in music. She even helped acquire a copy of the Stradivarius violins for Saburo by borrowing money from their relatives.⁸⁹ Although their relatives disliked them, eventually they could not refuse to help, because they saw the power of a mother's love in Iwa.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 33.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE VIOLIN

The Sumi family was blessed with five sons and two daughters: Hajime (“the first born child”), Jiro (“the second son”), Saburo (“the third son”), Aiko (“daughter of God’s love”), Motome (“seeking God”), Shiro (“the fourth son”), and Goro (“the fifth son”).⁹¹ All the sons except the oldest chose to pursue careers as musicians and the daughters became porcelain doll-making artists.⁹² Even though the family was poor, their parents treated each child as special and poured out their love to them.

Saburo believed the reason all of his younger brothers chose music as their profession was their close relationship with the church while growing up.⁹³ Although the oldest brother was the most talented and creative in music and many other areas, he had to work at the father’s business rather than pursue the arts.⁹⁴ This was because he was the eldest of the siblings, and in those days the eldest child was responsible for taking care of the family, along with his parents. Church life was very important to the family and influenced them in many ways. Saburo frequently remembered the beautiful music that was sung by missionaries or Sunday school teachers during his childhood.⁹⁵ The children would listen to a missionary sing hymns innocently and beautifully and then join in the singing and make

⁹¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 33.

⁹² Sumi Memorial Society, *Kyoudai*, 1.

⁹³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 17.

⁹⁴ Sumi Memorial Society, *Kyoudai*, 1.

⁹⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 22.

music together in the church. During the Christmas season, the family was heavily involved at the church. One Christmas day, Saburo recalled, a missionary named Mr. Man sang beautifully while accompanied by his wife on the piano, which they believed was brought from England.⁹⁶ At that time, a piano was very rare not only to own, but even to see, because it was a very expensive Western instrument and there were not very many pianos in Japan. The encounter with the piano was one of the significant events for the Sumi children and inspired their hearts.⁹⁷

The eldest brother Hajime recalled that until he finished his junior high school studies, he took his younger brothers to church every Sunday, even on rainy and snowy days.⁹⁸

“This was key in leading them to the music world. At church, they sang hymns, listened to the pastor’s messages, and sang hymns again. More than listening to the hymns, they enjoyed singing them. On the way home from church, all the Sumi brothers and sisters sang hymns and sometimes their mother joined in singing the chorus. Later, near their house, a mission was built and it held evening services twice a week. They always attended and enjoyed singing hymns there. Sometimes there were special outdoor evangelistic meetings, and it was a pleasure to hear the local missionary sing hymns loudly and joyfully accompanied by his

⁹⁶ Sumi Memorial Society, *Kyoudai*, 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., *Hajime kataru*, 2

accordion. Whether it was a Sunday service, Sunday school, an evangelistic meeting, or a prayer meeting, the Sumi brothers were there to attend each meeting, which happened almost every day. There was not a day that they did not sing hymns. Since their uncle was the pastor of the church, and because they attended church regularly, the congregation was very kind to them and on many occasions they helped the Sumi family financially.”⁹⁹

Since there were many children in the city, Yonago decided on a site for a new school in town.¹⁰⁰ Both Jiro and Saburo went to the new elementary school, the Keisei Elementary School, and Hajime transferred to the school when he was in fifth grade.¹⁰¹ None of the other schools in the city had a piano, but the Keisei Elementary School bought one ¹⁰²—something very fortunate for the children. Not only did the Sumi children sing and play at their home and at church, but they were also active in a marching band at their elementary school.¹⁰³ The marching band had a percussion section with a variety of drums, and woodwinds with flutes and recorders. Each section practiced intensely and competitively, and they tried to be better than one another.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime kataru*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

On special sports days, one of the biggest events for children and parents, which usually happened around the autumn season, the entire student body divided into groups, from youngest to oldest, to compete against each other in various sports.¹⁰⁵ From early morning, parents would make beautiful and delicious *bento* lunch boxes to be shared with neighbors. It was a silent competition between families. On one of these occasions, the marching band performed various types of music such as marches and children's and popular songs and showed their musical talents and abilities to the school and community.¹⁰⁶

After the Russo-Japanese War, soldiers came back to the city.¹⁰⁷ Since there was no train station between Okayama Prefecture and Yonago at that time, soldiers needed to come back by walking a great distance (more than eighty miles) from the nearest train station.¹⁰⁸ On the way the soldiers needed to pass through the *Siju magari touge* "Forty endless winding hills," which was the most dangerous and difficult terrain in the area.¹⁰⁹ Every day, the neighbors and all the students of Keisei Elementary School rushed to the bottom of the Chugoku *San myaku* hills to welcome the soldiers back to Yonago.¹¹⁰ The streets were filled with people and

¹⁰⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 32.

¹⁰⁶ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime kataru.*, 32

¹⁰⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 22.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Japanese national flags.¹¹¹ As always, the Sumi children and marching band members walked in the very front and led the entire school.¹¹² Although their mother needed to walk for a great distance with their younger sister on her back, she was always there to cheer them on as they were performing for the soldiers. And she always told them, “Your marching band was better than all the others.”¹¹³ Sometimes the Keisei Elementary School marching band was chosen to provide music for dance contests at a local girl’s high school.¹¹⁴

The eldest brother, Hajime, was very creative and gifted with handiwork.¹¹⁵ One day, he was bothered by how his wooden flute sounded so he decided to make one by himself.¹¹⁶ He went to a river near their house, cut some bamboo shoots, and made a flute from it with a small knife and drill. He put a paper-like fiber from the reeds over the holes of the flute so that it made a unique sound.¹¹⁷ Soon his flute became popular in their neighborhood and he and his brothers performed together with the special instrument he had crafted.¹¹⁸ Since the Keisei Elementary School emphasized the importance of music, for encouragement, it created many

¹¹¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 22.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

musical activities for the students to participate in. The Sumi brothers were always invited to perform solos in many of those activities.¹¹⁹

Because of the Russo-Japanese War, no one at that time was able to have an instrument or earn the extra money to buy one. The entire country was in poverty; however, with or without money the Sumi brothers did not give up easily on obtaining instruments. They used their brains to make one. They were able to work together and figure out the structure of the instrument so that they could make one for themselves. In addition, they began teaching others how to play their newly created instruments. Real poverty is to give up your dreams before reaching them or even before thinking about how to reach them. The Sumi brothers showed that when you are determined enough about what you would like to be or have, there is no turning back.

In the Railway Administration Bureau of Yonago, there was a man named Taizo Oohara who played the violin and later became a Christian evangelist.¹²⁰ Behind his house, there was the house of Pastor Nishimura who had been a wonderful mentor and counselor to the Sumi family, especially for Iwa.¹²¹ Many times the Sumi brothers were sent to Pastor Nishimura's house to run an errand. One day, when they came to the pastor's house, the Sumi brothers heard the sensational sounds of a violin

¹¹⁹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 3

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

being played by Mr. Oohara.¹²² Later Hajime described the experience, saying, “There are no words that would perfectly define the astounding sounds of the violin.”¹²³ This encounter changed the lives of the Sumi brothers forever.

One day Hajime heard a man playing a *kokyu* (a traditional Chinese violin), and noticed similarities in sound between the *kokyu* and the violin.¹²⁴ He gathered his brothers and proposed making a *kokyu* by hand. They went to an umbrella maker and got extra pieces of bamboo left over after cutting what was used for the center shaft of an umbrella.¹²⁵ Then they went to a *shamisen* (three-stringed fretless Japanese guitar, similar to a lute) store to get torn *shamisen* skins for free. They then glued the skins to the body of the *kokyu*. A big bamboo and wooden plate became the body and neck of the instrument, and the strings were used strings from a *shamisen*.¹²⁶ A bow was chosen from a flexible bamboo shoot, which was similar to a whip. For bow hairs, their sisters wanted them to use their own hairs, but human hair has oil and rosin could not stick.¹²⁷ Since they wanted to use real horse’s hair, they went next door to a rice merchant. While the horses were resting after pulling a wagon of rice from the rice field, each brother pulled hairs from the horses and ran as fast as they

¹²² Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 3.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 23-4.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

could before the horses kicked them.¹²⁸ It must have been very painful to the horses, because they jumped and ran furiously. Sometime the horse owner chased the brothers.¹²⁹ However, the brothers were determined to collect enough hairs for their bow and so they kept pulling hairs and running away. Later, after they finally collected enough hairs to make a bow, their bamboo – shoot bow was complete.¹³⁰ Saburo's job was collecting all of the materials, such as the horse hairs and pine tree rosin.¹³¹ By trying different materials for the body, such as leather or skins from the Tung tree, they experimented to see what would make the best sound for their *kokyū*.¹³²

For tuning, since a *shamisen* was the closest instrument to a violin that they could see and touch, the brothers went to the *shamisen* studio to learn.¹³³ However, they found that the tuning systems between a violin and the *shamisen* were different.¹³⁴ There are three special ways to tune a *shamisen*: *hon chousi*, *ni agari*, and *san kudari*. The *hon chousi* (“basic tuning”) is tuning the *ichi no ito* (the first/lowest string) to one octave below middle C. Then using *ichi no ito* to tune *san no ito* (the third/highest string) by making it one octave higher than *ichi no oto*, which is the middle C. The *ni no ito* (the second string) is the same note as

¹²⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 23-4.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

the fourth position of *ichi no ito*, and the sixth position of *ni no ito* is the same as *san no ito*.¹³⁵ *Ni agari* (“second tuning up”) means tuning the second string to a perfect fifth higher than the first string so that it would be a note of G below the middle C. *San kudari* (“third tuning down”) is turning the second string to a perfect fourth higher than the first string to become a note of F below the middle C. And the third string is a minor seventh lower than the first string to become a note of B flat.¹³⁶

Although the concept of tuning the strings was similar, the actual notes for a violin were far different from those for the *shamisen*.¹³⁷ After many trials, they discovered the best way to tune their violin, and later, they learned that their tuning system was exactly the same as violin tuning. Although it was not a violin, Saburo practiced diligently with their *kokyū* every single day.¹³⁸

Later, Aiko recounted the history of the musical instruments the Sumi family owned.¹³⁹ The first instrument was a “baby” organ, which might have been borrowed from one of their wealthy relatives.¹⁴⁰ The next was a harmonica, which might have been given to them by one of their relatives. There was always a huge battle raging among the siblings over who would

¹³⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 23.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Aiko Kataru*, 1.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

get to play the harmonica first. Next was a violin, followed by an organ.¹⁴¹

The violin was rented from Mrs. Koyoko Tanaka, and Jiro, who had secretly saved up his money, bought the organ.¹⁴² Although at first their parents were surprised and upset at Jiro for buying such an expensive instrument, eventually the entire family loved the organ and fought over who got to play it.¹⁴³ Later, Goro spent most of his time playing the organ, and eventually he became a church organist.¹⁴⁴

By having natural artistic senses, the Sumi family drew near to music and musical instruments through church, school, or even their relatives; they were able to experience each instrument such as *kokyu*, baby organ, harmonica, organ, and piano. Poverty did not stop them from making a *kokyu*. Instead, with their passion for music and their creative gifts, they were able to make their own *kokyu* with help of all the brothers. Throughout their lives, they kept supporting each other and passed through difficulties. Later, they would have a chance to touch and play a real violin in their lives. The dreams of the Sumi brothers would come true.

¹⁴¹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Aiko Kataru*, 1.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

THE KEISEI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

On the first of April in 1908, a brand new elementary school was opened in Yonago, the Keisei Elementary School (the Japanese school year starts at the beginning of April and ends at the end of March).¹⁴⁵ The city already had three other elementary schools, but the demand due to the increasing population of young children was getting stronger and a new school was definitely needed.¹⁴⁶ Except for Hajime, Saburo and his siblings were privileged to be able to attend the school starting in the first grade (Hajime was attending another school, and transferred to Keisei, graduating as a member of the inaugural class).¹⁴⁷ The name of the school was taken from the Imperial Rescript of Education and was meant to encourage the development of intellectual faculties and to form the character of each student.¹⁴⁸ Saburo recalled that the principal was enthusiastic about education as well as arts and music.¹⁴⁹ As already stated, although none of the schools in town had a piano, the principal of the Keisei Elementary School was the first to decide to buy a piano for the school.¹⁵⁰ Later, when the Sumi brothers needed a place to practice with their instruments, he

¹⁴⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 27-8.

¹⁴⁶ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 27-8.

¹⁴⁹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 24.

often let them use the school for their rehearsals and encouraged them to perform at the school.¹⁵¹

In July 1911, when Saburo was in the third grade, Otojiro Kawakami and his company came to Yonago to perform their show as part of their tour.¹⁵² Kawakami was a Japanese comedian, actor, and the founder of a theater company. He and his company toured around both nationally and internationally. They were actually the first Japanese company to tour the West, performing in countries such as the United States, England, Russia, France, Italy, and throughout all of Europe; and they were successful.¹⁵³ They were such a sensation because they broke with the traditional style of Japanese theater by mixing Eastern and Western subject matter and including women in their plays as well. In Otagiro's group, his wife Madame Sadayakko, a beautiful actress as well as great dancer and singer, was the most famous actor of the company.¹⁵⁴ Because of her beauty and artistic talents, many famous artists like Picasso and Rodin wanted to acquaint themselves with her.¹⁵⁵ Puccini also used her as a model for the main character in his famous opera *Madame Butterfly*.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 3.

¹⁵² Kawakami Otojiro Memorial Society, Home Page. <http://www.chi-bunkei.net/otosada/>.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

When the theater company came to Yonago to perform, all of the schools in the city went to see the show at the Asahi Theater.¹⁵⁷ The Asahi was built in 1888 and used for artistic performances as well as for educational purposes, but unfortunately caught on fire, burned down, and was closed in 1976. The show Otogiro's company performed was either called "The Singing Violin" or "The Singing *Kokyu*" (Saburo thought it might have been *kokyu*, since violins were not well known at that time).¹⁵⁸ One scene of the show in particular had a great impact on young Saburo's heart. It was that of a young handsome boy playing a little melody on his violin without accompaniment. Either because of the beauty of the scene or because of the violin's sound, it captured Saburo's heart and made him more curious about the violin.¹⁵⁹ The performance made him want to hold and play a real violin. He later found out that the main character was played by a woman and thought it might have been Madame Sadayakko herself.¹⁶⁰ He would never have guessed that many years later, in 1937, he would give his own violin recital on the exact same stage where that show and the violin had first captured his heart.¹⁶¹

At the Keisei Middle School, there was a teacher named Mr. Anji.¹⁶² His wife, Mrs. Koyoko Tanaka (1897-1935) was the first female news reporter

¹⁵⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 28.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 29.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶² Ibid., 24-6.

in Tottori Prefecture and was also a successful writer. Her novel won a prize and became a serial novel in the Osaka Asahi Newspaper.¹⁶³

Mr. Anji saw the Otogiro's show as well and also wanted to play a violin. Although there were not very many people who had violins in Japan at that time, his wife had one and did not use it.¹⁶⁴ One day, Mr. Anji wanted to play his wife's violin; however, he did not even know how to tune it.¹⁶⁵ So he brought it to school and he asked Saburo if he would like to play it. Although it was his first time encountering and touching a real violin, Saburo took the violin without hesitation and tuned it with the note of A played on the piano.¹⁶⁶ When Mr. Anji observed Saburo doing so, he was very impressed and decided to lend the violin to Saburo. The violin, an intermediate-level Suzuki violin, became his treasure, and he practiced very hard with it every day. The more he practiced, the more he could produce beautiful sounds with the violin. He borrowed that violin for a long time.¹⁶⁷

Saburo's life at the school was not just playing the violin. He was also a child, and each time he played some pranks on others, his teachers would lecture him.¹⁶⁸ On one occasion when he must have been in the fourth

¹⁶³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 24.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 30.

grade, he put candle wax on the hallway at school and laughed when some students slipped and fell down. He did not intend to harm anyone, but just thought it would be a funny thing to do.¹⁶⁹ Of course, he got into trouble and made his teacher cry. Seeing his teacher cry persuaded him not to do it ever again and made him think about the severity of the trouble he created. He felt really awful, but was grateful for the valuable lesson in life. He later thanked his many great teachers in an essay for the valuable lessons he received from them.¹⁷⁰

Every graduating senior would make a collection of essays before they graduated.¹⁷¹ When Saburo was graduating from his school, he looked back on his time there and gave thanks to all the teachers who helped and guided him from the first grade onward, especially the teacher who taught him through tears the difference between right and wrong.¹⁷² In those essays he also mentioned that he wanted to be an educator in the future. It seemed that the work of his teachers had paid off, for the many good teachers he encountered at the school must have influenced young Saburo to realize the importance of education. He chose a motto for himself that was one of the old Japanese proverbs made by a famous military general of the Yonezawa Domain in the eighteenth century.¹⁷³ Lord Yozan Uesugi

¹⁶⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 31.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 28-31.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

had used it in a letter to his little son, but was originally written by Lord Shingen Takeda of the sixteenth century:¹⁷⁴

Do and it will be done; do not do and it will never be achieved. If something is not done, it is because no one has even tried to achieve it.¹⁷⁵

The meaning is similar to the American expression, “Where there is a will, there is a way.” One who has a will to conquer something and work on it will succeed. Just wanting without acting on that desire will not give any good results. The problem is not even intending to try.¹⁷⁶

In the end of his collection of essays for school, Saburo said he would like to be a teacher in the future. He was blessed to have had many great teachers and friends during his school years, and through them he experienced the importance of having a good education.¹⁷⁷ Just as he wrote in this essay, not only did he take the path of being a teacher, but he also became an educator and pioneer of violin pedagogy in Japan. Some of the work of the graduates is still kept at that school today, especially the works of those who became famous, and Saburo’s essay is one of them.¹⁷⁸

Although Hajime loved playing the violin more than anything, as the oldest brother he needed to work with his father to help support the

¹⁷⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 30.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 31.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

family. When their parents asked him to give up his dream of becoming a violinist, he was shocked and so depressed that he could not get out of bed for three days. However, he understood their family's financial situation and obeyed his parents.¹⁷⁹

Although Hajime helped with his father's business, the life of the Sumi family was still very hard. The father ran between customers until late at night to get more business and the mother tried to save up all of their pennies. Money was constantly in short supply due to the needs of providing for a family of nine with seven children.¹⁸⁰

In the midst of their challenging life, music lifted up their spirits.¹⁸¹ When they were severely strapped for finances, they could only sing songs, but later when things got better they were able to have a *minteki* (Chinese flute). After work or finishing household chores, the whole family made music together, whether by singing or playing some instruments.¹⁸² Since their house was one of a group of tenement houses, all of their neighbors lived close by. Some enjoyed the mini-concerts held every night at the Sumi house, but others complained about what they considered to be constant noise that bothered them every day. Sometimes neighbors made loud noises when closing their doors and some would even send letters

¹⁷⁹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Kyoudai*, 3.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 47.

anonymously to the Sumi family, complaining about their music-making. They had no place to practice, and sometimes they climbed up to the roof for their joyful music times.¹⁸³ There was no need to make a particular sign to start a concert. Always someone in the family would just start singing or playing and one-by-one the entire family joined in the singing until it became a choir with some instruments.¹⁸⁴ Like bees coming to look for a flower's nectar, some other music lovers started coming and participated in the Sumi family home concerts.¹⁸⁵ Thus both the number of performers and the volume of the voices became bigger and richer over time.

Saburo's friend Tomo Kageyama described the Sumi family through his impressions of them.¹⁸⁶ Mr. Sumi with his big smiles was soft-spoken, faithful, and full of love for his family. Mrs. Sumi was also soft-spoken, but she was also very humorous as well. All of the Sumi brothers gave the impression of being unfriendly and quiet at first; however, they were like completely different people when they picked up their instruments or started to sing.¹⁸⁷ All of them had musical talents, with good ears for music, perfect pitch, and beautiful voices.¹⁸⁸ The Sumi family always held home concerts without needing any special reason to do so. Some of the

¹⁸³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 33-49.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

concert programs included “Ave Maria” and “Serenade” by Gounod, a famous duet from *La Traviata* by Verdi, a lullaby from the opera *Jocelyn* by Benjamin Godard, and “Connais-tu le pays?” from *Mignon* by Amroise Thomas. For violin they performed ‘Souvenir’ by Drdia, ‘Ave Maria’ by Schubert, ‘Legend’ by Wieniawski, ‘Aria on the G String’ by Bach, ‘Zigeunerweisen’ by Sarasate, or a sonata by Handel. On Organ, Mozart and Bach were played most often.¹⁸⁹ Kageyama said that he was so impressed with Mrs. Sumi’s musical selection because she always chose hymn music by Foster as well as internationally well-known songs for her solos. Also, she always shared the thoughts and ideas she had while listening to Saburo play the violin.¹⁹⁰

There was another wonderful story about Mrs. Sumi and Saburo. Saburo heard that there was a Stradivarius on sale for thirty yen and mentioned it to his mother, knowing that they would not be able to buy it.¹⁹¹ Instead of just refusing him, she first went out to see the instrument herself and listened the sound of the instrument. She was so moved by that violin’s tone that she ran out to all of their relatives and asked them to lend her money, so she could buy the violin for Saburo.¹⁹² Since the Sumi family was always facing financial difficulty and often borrowed money from their relatives, some of them did not even listen to her request. To them, the

¹⁸⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 35.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 33-5.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Sumi family was the odd bunch among the relatives, because without having even enough money to support themselves, they still let their children ‘play around’ instead of working and wasted what precious resources they had on ‘worthless’ arts and music. However the relatives eventually changed their minds, because of her constant begging out of love of her children.¹⁹³

Saburo recalled that time:

I never thought my mother would go to all of our relatives in order to buy the Stradivarius for me. One day before I bought my violin, although I was laying down on my futon (Japanese mattress), I was not able to sleep. There were no words for expressing my happiness. Like a child playing with Legos, I played with fifty *sen* coins like toys and thought about having the Stradivarius in my hands the next day. Thinking of the beautiful sounds the instrument would make me not be able to sleep at all.”¹⁹⁴

Thirty yen at that time was a considerable amount of money. To give an idea of the value, in those days it required one thousand yen to build a house.¹⁹⁵ Thirty yen was considered expensive, not only for wealthy people but for anyone.

¹⁹³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 34.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 2.

After graduating from *Koutou Shougakkou* (similar to junior high school in the West), Hajime decided to live and work with one of their uncles who had a business near Yonago Station.¹⁹⁶ While Hajime was away from home, Saburo felt lonely and did not practice his *kokyū*,¹⁹⁷ because Hajime had been such good company and a good competitor for music. After one year, Hajime came back home to live again with the family because he had not been able to make much money to support them while working with his uncle and had no freedom to play the *kokyū* in his free time, seeing as he was a servant and was never given any.¹⁹⁸ Although they kept struggling with poverty and a hectic life, it was wonderful for him to be able to live with his family again. Again, Saburo and Hajime started playing their *minteki* and *kokyū* together, and those were the most delightful moments of each day.¹⁹⁹ Later, they had a chance to buy a used Suzuki violin “Special Edition B” (this edition was produced between 1907-1923 by Suzuki Violin Op. Ltd.)²⁰⁰ for only one yen and fifty *sen* (at that time, ten kilograms of rice was about one yen).²⁰¹ Although it was the most inexpensive among the Suzuki violins, there was no comparison between owning a real violin and having a *kokyū* or borrowing a violin from somebody else. After the brothers practiced for a while, the tone of the violin rang out more and became more sonorous. The neighbors enjoyed

¹⁹⁶ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 2.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 35.

²⁰⁰ Suzuki Violin, Home page. <http://www.suzukiviolin.co.jp/products.html>

²⁰¹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 2.

hearing the sounds of the Sumi brothers playing violin and *minteki* together every night.²⁰²

Later, some *Enka* singers (*Enka* is a traditional style of Japanese popular songs)²⁰³ came from the Osaka area and became popular among the citizens of Yonago.²⁰⁴ Adults and children imitated their style of singing, including the Sumi brothers; except they played the *Enka* music with the violin, rather than with their voices. There were more violinists in Yonago by that time, and some groups of people would occasionally stand at the street corners playing *Enka* songs on their violins.²⁰⁵ Even though it was fun to play *Enka* songs—the ‘pop tunes’ of their day, the brothers wanted to learn to play the violin seriously.²⁰⁶

Once they heard that a violin method book had been published in Fukuoka Prefecture, they quickly ordered it.²⁰⁷ As soon as it arrived, they opened the book and tried to practice. However, they were totally unsuccessful; they could not read one single note of musical notation. At that time no one, not even school teachers, were able to read music notes in their city.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless the brothers were determined to study on their own and eventually they were able to read the notes by themselves. In the

²⁰² Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 2.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 26.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

beginning, they did not understand anything in the book because there were numbers underneath the musical notes that looked very strange. After countless struggles and failed attempts, they realized that the numbers indicated the notes usually designated by letters. At first they could only use numbers to play an etude or two, but later they figured out how to read standard notation and abandoned the number system.²⁰⁹ The ability to read notes opened a door of possibilities for the brothers. Now with the violin, they were able to play a greater variety of songs, such as children's songs, pieces for *koto* (a thirteen-stringed long semi-cylindrical Japanese zither plucked with small picks), music such as "*Rokudan*," "*Hidori no Kyoku*" (two of the most important *koto* pieces), "*Harusame*" ("Spring Shower"), and other Japanese folk music, such as the Japanese National Anthem and the "*Gunkan* (Warship) March." It was a very delightful time for them. ²¹⁰

Later, they were not satisfied with playing only children's songs and folk songs, but wanted to get real training as violinists.²¹¹ They heard there was someone ten years older than their brother who played woodwind instruments as well as the violin. Even though Hajime and Saburo did not know anything about Mr. Toshihiko Terada, they decided to visit him on

²⁰⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 26.

²¹⁰ W. Adriaansz. "Koto." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. 11 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15420>>.

²¹¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 26.

their mission to know how to play the violin seriously.²¹² When they told him that they wanted to have real training and that they were searching to find a way to play the violin correctly in the Western style, he was thrilled. Like the brothers, he also wanted to have real training in playing the violin. Since his house was big, he suggested using one of the rooms for a society for the study of the violin. His mother owned a photo studio, and while she worked at her studio, she always enjoyed hearing them practice the violin.²¹³ The encounter with Mr. Terada led the Sumi brothers on the right path towards classical music in the “real” way, the Western way.

Word of the society spread out to people who wanted to play the violin seriously and the study group grew to seven members. Just as a Japanese maple leaf was made of seven pieces (unlike the Canadian maple leaf), they named their club as “The *Kaede* (Maple) Club.”²¹⁴

Mr. Terada became a teacher at the *Giho Shou Gakkou* (Giho Elementary School), which was about a ten-minute walking distance from the Sumi brothers’ home. When Mr. Terada had night duty at the school, the club met in his room and practiced together.²¹⁵ At last they no longer needed to worry about playing their instruments loudly. They became very active

²¹² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 26.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

and played on many occasions at both the local church and the school.²¹⁶

Whether it was a Christmas concert in church or arts festivals and musical concerts at school, they were there to perform their violins with Mr.

Terada's organ accompaniment.²¹⁷

Later the brothers were not satisfied with having only violins, and Mr.

Terada suggested they talk with Akiyama, a music teacher at the Yonago Girls High School (presently Yonago Nishi Senior High School, which has now become a co-educational school), who could play the piano. Teacher Akiyama was pleased with their invitation to join the club as their pianist.²¹⁸ None of them ever forgot their first rehearsal with Teacher

Akiyama.²¹⁹ Adding the sound of the piano with the strings was astonishing and they were all deeply moved. The club kept growing and until they had a piano, five *kotos*, and four or five violins.²²⁰ They played for many occasions, such as musical concerts and dance festivals at the high school. One concert program was a sonata by Handel, 'Romance' by Beethoven, 'Zigeunerweisen' by Sarasate, and 'Home Sweet Home' by Henry Rowley Bishop. Even though Saburo was only thirteen years old, he was the best among the group, and already started showing his talent on the violin.²²¹ Hajime said about that time, "Saburo was the best among us

²¹⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 27.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 5.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 41-7.

²²¹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 5.

and he was very musical. His gifts were far beyond ours. He must have received his musical gifts from our maternal grandfather, Priest Mori. His efforts with and love for the violin were extraordinary, which indicated that he was different from others. He was special.”²²²

²²² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 27.

CHAPTER 4

A RECORD PLAYER

While Saburo was finishing his elementary school studies, Hajime left home and worked for their uncle. Although Saburo did not have strong health, he still needed to work at his father's shop in place of Jiro who had even poorer health.²²³ The work at the tea store was hard and tiring physically, but he still made time to practice his violin. Once he started practicing, he forgot about the time and practiced enthusiastically, causing neighbors to sometimes complain about the noise.

Jiro was very artistic and he sang as well as composed. He was very interested in new technology and was the first to buy and bring a record player to the house.²²⁴ Even though Saburo (around age 19 at the time) had ordered some violin music from Osaka, there was no one in the city who could teach the music to Saburo, so Jiro's records became his teachers.²²⁵ Compared to today, the value of the records was priceless. Again, showing his enthusiasm for the violin, he even went by train to visit a stranger to borrow some records.²²⁶ At that time, an iron needle was used for the record player and it scratched a record easily. Although it took time and effort, the brothers used their handcrafting skills and actually made a record needle out of bamboo, which was softer and more

²²³ Sumi Memorial Society, *Hajime Kataru*, 4.

²²⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 47.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., 50.

flexible than the iron.²²⁷ His record collection contained works such as ‘Legend’ by Efrem Zimbalist, ‘Zigeunerweisen’ by Toscha Seidel, and ‘Habanera’ and ‘Miramar’ by Pablo Sarasate.²²⁸ He, Jiro, and their friend Mr. Kageyama were prompted to record some of their performances, such as “Gavotte” from *Partita No. 3 in E major* by Bach, *Minuet in G Major* by Beethoven, and “Home Sweet Home” by Bishop.²²⁹ Throughout his life, he listened to records in order to study the details of how professional violinists did shifting, phrasing, and so on.²³⁰ Also, he was always interested in the newest technology.²³¹ Whenever a recording system became available, he would quickly buy and use it for his students.²³² At that time, it was rare to use a recording system for teaching students; however, he knew the importance of doing so. The recording would tell the truth of how a student played. He recorded each lesson so that later both he and his students could listen and learn from it.²³³ For teaching, he did not hesitate to spend money to buy anything needed, and collected as many as he could.²³⁴

²²⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 49-50.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Sumi, Saburo, Tatsuo Uzuka and Hirotsugu Shinozaki. *Violin No Okeiko* (Shinjuku: Ongaku No Tomo Press, 1999) Ibid.

²³⁰ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 106-9.

²³¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 46-57.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 106-9.

CHAPTER 5

A LINK TO TOKYO

A few years later, Saburo was anxious to leave his hometown to pursue his career as a violinist.²³⁵ His greatest hope was to be able to study the violin seriously in Tokyo and his desire to do so grew more and more each day until it was all he could think about. One day the chance arrived. A writer, Mrs. Tanaka, now married the famous writer Yoshihiro Wakushima. Mr. Wakushima was working as a concert promoter and recruited many professional musicians from Tokyo to come to Yonago for giving concerts.²³⁶ At that time, he invited a soprano singer from Tokyo, Akiko Seki. After she listened to Saburo play *Romance* by Beethoven, she encouraged him to go to Tokyo to study violin.²³⁷ Although it was one of the hardest decisions for him to make in his life, he pursued his love and passion for the violin.

Iwa was worried about letting him go to Tokyo alone and asked a missionary for his advice about Saburo's decision. The missionary did not seem to agree with Saburo's decision to go to Tokyo, and suggested that he remain in Yonago.²³⁸ His primary reason was that Tokyo was such a big city and the missionary was concerned that there would be too much temptation for young Saburo to face alone, especially too much for an

²³⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 58.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 59.

innocent country boy like him.²³⁹ He had never grown up in the big city nor even left his hometown area since he was born. They also feared that he might get lost in the city and feel lonely, which might lead him to lose focus on studying the violin and thus his time would be wasted.²⁴⁰ The parents considered the missionary's words and discussed it between themselves; however, they decided to trust Saburo and gave him permission to go to Tokyo to pursue his dream of studying the violin seriously.²⁴¹ He believed the reason he was able to focus on his studies and be successful was because of the love and support of his family, as well as the missionary's wise advice; and he was grateful for all of them.²⁴²

Saburo was blessed by many people in his life. At first, Mr. Wakushima gave him an opportunity to perform for a professional singer from Tokyo, and she encouraged him to pursue his dream in that city.²⁴³ Although Saburo knew what he wanted to do with his life—pursue music wholeheartedly—he chose to put his family first. The reason was because he knew the financial difficulties his family was facing, and he could not leave them behind to selfishly pursue his own dreams.²⁴⁴ Such a decision showed how tight the relationship with his family was, and it showed his respect for his parents through obedience. However, the parents wanted

²³⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 59.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 58.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 59.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 58.

all the best for their son by going to Tokyo, instead of sacrificing his life for their family in Yonago. It must have been very hard for the parents to send their son off to Tokyo without knowing what would happen to him there.²⁴⁵ Saburo did not waste his life nor did he give in to any temptation to do something other than his dream of studying the violin.²⁴⁶ He took this opportunity to not only study the violin in Tokyo, but also to perform in the best orchestra in Japan, as well as to teach many gifted young children in the country. A door for his life had just opened.

²⁴⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 59.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

LIVING IN TOKYO

On June 22, 1924, one year after the great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, Saburo finally moved to Tokyo at age 22.²⁴⁷ This earthquake was the biggest in Japanese history up to that time (the Tohoku Earthquake in 2011 was bigger than this, with a magnitude 9.0).²⁴⁸ It was a 7.9 magnitude earthquake on the Richter scale that hit the Kanto area (cities around Tokyo) at 11:58 a.m. on September 1, 1923, and it was estimated that more than 105,000 people died.²⁴⁹ Since it hit at lunchtime, many people were using fire for cooking their lunches, so fires broke out and spread out throughout the area. More destructive than the earthquake, it was the fires that caused the most deaths.²⁵⁰ Since the earthquake, every September 1st has been a day to remember the big earthquake and for the people to show their respect for those who lost their lives that day. The day also became one day to have emergency disaster drills in every school throughout Japan.

At that time, Tokyo was nothing except burnt ruins. Although Saburo came to Tokyo with only his violin and the fifty *sen* (approximately 50 cents) his parents gave him, his heart was full of hopes and dreams.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 59.

²⁴⁸ Japan Meteorological Agency, Homepage, <http://www.seisvol.kishou.go.jp/eq/higai/higai-1995.html>.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 60.

Coming to Tokyo was and is still a big event for many Japanese and can sometimes seem more challenging than living overseas.²⁵² Instead of familiar places such as his favorite mountains and rivers, there were burned and ruined fields, and more crowds than in Yonago. Although the city was tremendously damaged, people were ready to rebuild it. It was a new beginning for Tokyo, as well as a new chapter in Saburo's life.

Living in Tokyo was far different from living in the countryside. The fast pace of life, different dialects and manners – everything seemed different and strange to him. Tokyo was a mix of many different cultures from all over Japan. Soon after his arrival, a friend introduced him to an executive of the Toyo "Eastern" Muslin Company, Mr. Shinjiro Ozawa, and arranged for Saburo to stay at his home as a household servant.²⁵³ After encountering the culture shock, as well as being shy and speaking with a thick Yonago accent, it was difficult for him to communicate with others, so he stayed with one couple from Yonago for a week at first.²⁵⁴ Later he moved to the Ozawas, and he met Mrs. Ozawa's younger brother who was also studying the violin and suggested that he take lessons from Professor Hisaharu Ohno (10 October 1884 – 25 March 1931) at the Tokyo Music School in Ueno.²⁵⁵ It is still one of the top music schools in Japan, although the name has since been changed to the Tokyo University of

²⁵² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 59-60.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

Arts.²⁵⁶ Before he knocked on the door of Professor Ohno, he brought a recommendation from Mr. Torazo Tamura, an educator from Tottori Prefecture, as a courtesy.²⁵⁷

At the Tokyo Music School there were two famous professors who happened to be sisters. Both Nobu Kouda (19 April 1870 – 14 June 1946) and Kou Kouda (6 December 1878 – 8 April 1963) were gifted musicians who had been sent to study abroad.²⁵⁸ Since the *Meiji* Restoration, Japan was open to western culture and tried to modernize the country, especially with regard to education.²⁵⁹ The government built *Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari*, a music institute for the research and establishment of western music.²⁶⁰ An educator, Shuji Isawa (30 June 1851 – 3 May 1917), and an American music educator, Luther Whiting Mason (3 April, 1818 – 14 July 1896), took a western music curriculum and built a new music system for Japan.²⁶¹ Their efforts tremendously changed the Japanese music system and set a strong foundation. The institution later became the Tokyo Music School, which changed to Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, and now it has become the Tokyo University of Arts.²⁶²

²⁵⁶ Tokyo University of the Arts, Home page. <http://www.geidai.ac.jp/>.

²⁵⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 59.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 60.

²⁵⁹ Tokyo University of the Arts. <http://www.geidai.ac.jp/>.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

While Mason was in Japan, he saw tremendous musical gifts in one young student, Nobu, and taught her until he left the country. Before he left Japan, he suggested to her that she study overseas, so she went to America and Europe to study piano, violin, and viola.²⁶³ Several years later, her younger sister Kou also won a scholarship from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture and studied in Germany and Austria.²⁶⁴ Both were violinists; however, later Nobu concentrated more on piano and composition.²⁶⁵ Kou studied the violin under Joseph Joachim, a close friend of Brahms in Germany.²⁶⁶ After coming back from Germany, like her older sister, she taught at the school, and also gave lessons to members of the Japanese Royal family and their relatives.²⁶⁷ She was the first Japanese to be invited as a judge to an international violin competition.²⁶⁸ She brought out many talented artists, among them Shinichi Suzuki and Hisatora Ohno.²⁶⁹ They played very important roles in Japanese music history and without their efforts Japanese music, especially music for strings, could not have become what it is now. They were pioneers of music history in Japan.

²⁶³ Bonlyn Hall. "Mason, Luther Whiting." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press. Web. 22 Oct. 2012.
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51121>>.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Bonlyn Hall. "Mason, Luther Whiting." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press. Web. 22 Oct. 2012.
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51121>>.

²⁶⁸ Mehl, Margaret. 2010. Japan's early twentieth-century violin boom. *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 7, no. 1: 23-43,
<http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/926920689?accountid=4485>.

²⁶⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 123.

Professor Hisatora Ohno's family had always been a part of the Imperial Court Orchestra in Japan.²⁷⁰ For many years, the Ohno families were *sho* specialists in *gagaku* music and Professor Ohno also played *sho* in the orchestra as well as violin for western music. After the *Meiji* Restoration period, the orchestra not only played the traditional *gagaku*, but also started to play western music. This orchestra was the first to play western music in Japan.²⁷¹

Ohno not only got training as a court musician, but also went to the Tokyo Music School to study violin.²⁷² Later he became an assistant of Kou Kouda after he graduated. After studying in Germany for a couple of years, he worked at the university as an assistant professor under Kouda from 1914 until retiring from the school in 1923.²⁷³ One of his colleagues at the school was Kosaku Yamada (9 June 1886- 29 Dec 1965) who studied composition under Leopold Carl Wolff at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik. He became one of the most well-known Japanese composers and conductors in the early twentieth century.²⁷⁴ He always respected Professor Ohno and would ask his opinions regarding his compositions. He composed and dedicated a piano quintet *Hochzeitsklänge* to celebrate

²⁷⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 123.

²⁷¹ Kunaichoushiki Gagakubu, home page, <http://www.iha-gagaku.com/history.html>.

²⁷² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 123.

²⁷³ Kunaichoushiki Gagakubu, <http://www.iha-gagaku.com/history.html>.

²⁷⁴ Masakata Kanazawa and Yo Akioka. "Yamada, Kōsaku." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 20 Oct. 2012.

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30669>>.

Professor Ohno's engagement. It started with a simple theme taken from his and his fiancée's name *hi* (it sounded close to No. 1 in Japanese) *sa* (No. 3) *fu* (No. 2) and *ku* (No. 9), which became C – E – D – D.²⁷⁵

Since the *Meiji* Restoration, people started wearing more westernized clothes. Saburo did not have money to buy western clothing and still wore a *kimono* and pairs of *geta* (the Japanese wooden clogs).²⁷⁶ The professor always sat properly and wore *hakama*, a Japanese divided skirt for men for formal dress (now women can wear it also), which was worn over a *kimono*. The reason might be because he was from a family that had a long history of being members of the Imperial Court Orchestra, or simply that it was more comfortable for him to wear it because one of his legs was amputated.²⁷⁷ He spoke softly; however, he always had a dignified attitude and directly got to the point in lessons. Saburo always highly respected him, and at the same time feared him.²⁷⁸ One day Saburo asked the professor about the possibilities of his future in the violin world, and he simply said, "No possibility." It was difficult to take; however, it made Saburo work harder.²⁷⁹ Most of all, the sounds the professor made with his instrument were incredibly beautiful and inspired Saburo to practice more. Before one particular lesson, Saburo came in front of the

²⁷⁵ Masakata Kanazawa and Yo Akioka. "Yamada, Kōsaku." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 20 Oct. 2012.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30669>.

²⁷⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 60.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 84.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

professor's house for his lesson, and heard his teacher practicing. It was so breathtaking that he was not able to move until the professor's wife found him standing outside and invited him in.²⁸⁰

After hearing Saburo play, Professor Ohno suggested that he relearn starting from the basics and build techniques through an etude book such as the second volume of Kayser.²⁸¹ The first piece he was given was *Andante Religioso* by Francis Thomé and later *Air Varie No. 2* by Dancla and *Concerto No. 23* by Viotti.²⁸² Later he chose all three of those pieces for use in his method book, *Atarashi Violin Kyouhon* ("New Violin Method Book"). Both *Andante Religioso* and *Air Varie* could be found in his fourth method book and *Concerto No. 23* was in the fifth.²⁸³ Although Professor Ohno was a soft-speaking person, his demand for each piece was extremely high.²⁸⁴

Saburo was so fortunate to be accepted into Professor Ohno's studio; however he was in trouble financially.²⁸⁵ Although he did not need to pay for his living expenses, he did not have money to pay his lesson fees. The lesson fees were ten yen for four lessons, which was a lot for him.²⁸⁶ When

²⁸⁰ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 84.

²⁸¹ Heinrich Ernst Kayser, 36 Elementary and Progressive Studies, Op. 20 (Complete), (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 2010).

²⁸² Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 84.

²⁸³ Sumi, *New Violin Method Book* vol.4, (Shinjuku, Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo Press, 1982), 12-16.

²⁸⁴ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 84.

²⁸⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 60.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

he was thinking of how to get through this, he heard that a movie theater, the Teikoku Kan (an Imperial Theater), was hiring live musicians. At that time, all movies were silent and they used musicians to provide live background music.²⁸⁷ As soon as he took a chance and auditioned, he was hired as one of thirty musicians for silent movies.²⁸⁸ Since he started working at the theater, it was difficult to work at home as a houseboy. So he quit the houseboy job and lived with the family from Yonago, who took him in when he came to Tokyo in the beginning.²⁸⁹

Finally he was covered as to his living situation and finances; however, he had no place to practice his violin. When he realized that there was no one at work early in the morning, he decided to go to the theater earlier than everyone else to practice his violin there.²⁹⁰ After intense morning practices, even a simple and inexpensive breakfast tasted absolutely delicious to him; it not only filled his stomach but also refreshed his mind.²⁹¹ However, his practice time did not really stop in the morning. Even during his work hours, he always tried to squeeze in even a little more time to practice his violin, whether it was during breaks or his free time at his favorite spot, behind the theater.²⁹² As much as he loved practicing, he felt the urge to catch up on what he could have

²⁸⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 60.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid., 61.

accomplished had he started taking proper violin lessons earlier. With his countless efforts and Professor Ohno's guidance, he started improving rapidly and got promoted at work. Now he was paid seventy yen, which gave him the opportunity to save some money for his future. He was then secure financially and able to live independent from his family.²⁹³

The transition from Yonago to Tokyo was very challenging for Saburo, with a new city, culture, and people to deal with; however, meeting with people who supported him combined with his eagerness helped him conquer each challenge step by step. His desire and determination led him to study with one of the top violin professors who had studied abroad, as well as to become a member of the first non-government orchestra in Japan.

²⁹³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 61.

CHAPTER 7

NHK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

As music education in Japan started bringing about changes in schools, a movement began among some professional musicians as well. Rather than having only orchestras owned by the government, a true form of a traditional Western orchestra was formed.²⁹⁴

The history of Japanese orchestras started with the Imperial Court Orchestra as well as military bands.²⁹⁵ At that time, there were no non-government orchestras in existence. Since Western musical instruments were rare and very expensive, ordinary people either never or hardly ever saw any with their own eyes, and only privileged people such as members of the Imperial Court Orchestra, military bands, music teachers, missionaries, or wealthy people had access to instruments or private lessons.²⁹⁶ Since access was limited to certain people, the number of musical instruments that could be found in Japan was low.²⁹⁷ Additionally, information from overseas was limited and people had neither seen nor heard of the existence of classical orchestras in Europe or the United States of America.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Margaret Mehl. "Japan's Early Twentieth-Century Violin Boom." *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 7, no. 1 (2010) 23-5.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

Kosaku (or Kósçak) Yamada, a young conductor and composer who studied in Europe, aspired to have an orchestra like the ones he saw abroad.²⁹⁹ The story of Yamada's ancestors was interestingly similar to that of the Sumi family. Like the Sumi family, an ancestor of the Yamada family was a Samurai, and Yamada's father also became a merchant after the *Meiji* Restoration.³⁰⁰ When he was teenager, he lived with his older sister Tsune and her husband George Edward Luckman Guntlett (1868-1956). Since Guntlett was an English teacher as well as a pipe organist, Yamada received Western musical training from his brother-in-law, as well as through listening to church music.³⁰¹ Later he decided to pursue his career as a professional musician and went to the Tokyo Music School as a vocal major.³⁰² He wanted to study composition; however, there was no composition major at the school at that time. After he graduated from the school, with the support of wealthy businessman and baron Koyata Iwasaki, he went to the Berlin Hochschule to study with Max Bruch and Leopold Carl Wolff.³⁰³ He also had the opportunity to hire and conduct one of his compositions with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁹ Masakata Kanazawa. "Yamada, Kósçak." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. Ed. Stanley Sadie. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 25 Oct. 2012.

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O907001>>.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

After coming back from Germany, Yamada wanted to start an orchestra in Japan.³⁰⁵

Despite the fact that the first orchestra he attempted to form dissolved after only one concert, he did not abandon his dream of having a professional orchestra in Japan someday. After his orchestra had dissolved, he left Japan and visited the United States of America.³⁰⁶

During his stay in the United States, the highlight of his trip was to have the opportunity to hire an American orchestra and give a concert at Carnegie Hall.³⁰⁷ Although he came to the US with a broken heart, this occasion encouraged him to pursue his dream of building a professional orchestra in Japan again.³⁰⁸

In 1925, the Japan Symphony Orchestra, the first non-government orchestra in Japan, was started under Yamada.³⁰⁹ Some of the orchestra members had classical music training, but the rest came from different backgrounds such as military bands, silent movie theaters, and several universities around Tokyo.³¹⁰ Yamada thought the most effective way to inspire people to build a professional orchestra was to bring in a real

³⁰⁵ Masakata Kanazawa and Yo Akioka. "Yamada, Kōsaku." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 25 Oct. 2012.

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30669>>.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 63.

professional orchestra from abroad.³¹¹ His idea and dream came true, and he was able to connect with some Russian musicians who escaped from the Russian Revolution and lived in Harbin, China.³¹² The Japan and Russia Exchange of Courtesies Symphony Orchestra Concert was held.³¹³ Josef König was concertmaster of the Russian orchestra and Nicolai Schiferblatt the assistant concertmaster, and they became the future conductor and concertmaster of the NHK orchestra respectively as well as Saburo's teachers.³¹⁴ ³¹⁵ The concert succeeded in inspiring both musicians as well as others in the community to build an orchestra. It also played an important role in bringing gifted professional musicians from Russia to Japan to help build a foundation for Japanese orchestras as well as for music education, especially with regard to stringed instruments.³¹⁶

Later Hidemaro Konoe (or Konoye), who also studied both conducting and composing in Germany, joined Yamada to build an orchestra in Japan. In Germany, he studied conducting with Weingartner and Kleiber.³¹⁷ Like Yamada, he was one of the few Japanese composers and conductors who

³¹¹ Masakata Kanazawa and Yo Akioka. "Yamada, Kōsaku." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 25 Oct. 2012.

³¹² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 63.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 107.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 73.

³¹⁷ Japanese musician of noble family. 1937. Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File), Aug 15.

were able to hire the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and conduct them while he was in Germany.³¹⁸

He came from a wealthy noble family and some of his early ancestors were related to the imperial family. Konoe's family's long history with the imperial family and the government had lasted more than four thousand years and the relationship has been very close ever since.³¹⁹ Many among his family were involved with politics, and his older brother Fumimaro Konoe became a prime minister at a young age.³²⁰ Hidemaro did not choose politics as his career because conducting was far more important to him. However, it seemed that he, along with his family, gave full play to his political abilities in building and maintaining the orchestra.³²¹ Since he was wealthy, he brought back a lot of music from Germany, which was very helpful to the orchestra as well as to Saburo and others, since it was difficult to purchase foreign music at that time.³²²

The timing was perfect. This happened just one year after Saburo came to Tokyo. If it had been a year earlier, he would have still been in Yonago and

³¹⁸ Japanese musician of noble family. 1937. Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File), Aug 15.
<http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164721795?accountid=4485>.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES. 1937. Anti-Japanese in U.S. hit by viscount konoe. New York Times (1923-Current File), Oct 31.
<http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/102072702?accountid=4485>.

³²¹ Fujiwara Ryouzaku. "Oyabun kobun monogatari." Toa Shobou. 8. August. 1936.

³²² Sumi. *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

would not have known about or even been ready to take an audition.³²³ As soon as Saburo heard the orchestra was having auditions, he went and took with him a recommendation letter from Professor Ohno.³²⁴ Within a short time, he was hired as last chair of the second violin section. Later he humbly admitted, “it must have been because of the magic name of Professor Ohno.”³²⁵ The professor may have been a great help in his getting hired, but it was clearly through Saburo’s own efforts that he later became the principal second. When he retired from the orchestra, he sat on the third stand of the first violins.³²⁶

As for the orchestra, its size grew and repertoire expanded from that of a chamber orchestra to a full symphony orchestra.³²⁷ Yamada invited Konich, the concertmaster of the Russian orchestra, to be his concertmaster and conductor. His gifts in performance and conducting, along with his valuable experience working with orchestras in Europe, set a foundation for the orchestra, especially for the string section. However, one year later, when the orchestra seemed to be going well, some problems occurred between Yamada and Konoe. Although a long time has passed, the truth behind the conflict has still not been revealed.

³²³ Saburo Sumi. *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

³²⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosuji*, 61.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid., 63.

³²⁷ Ibid., 61.

More than ninety-five percent of the members, including Saburo, left the orchestra with Konoe.³²⁸ Although they needed to start from the beginning, they were able to build a brand new orchestra, the Japan New Symphony, within a year. Later the orchestra was sponsored by NHK (which stands for *Nippon Hoso Kyokai* or Japan Broadcasting Corporation), and renamed the NHK Symphony Orchestra in 1951.³²⁹ The orchestra grew and became one of the best orchestras in the country.³³⁰ Aside from the effort of all of the members, without Konoe's effort as conductor, director, and financial supporter, the orchestra would not be where it is today.³³¹

February 20, 1927, was a special day for both the orchestra and Saburo. It was a formal debut concert at the *Nihon Seinen Kan* (the Japanese Youth Theater) for the orchestra. Since that day, Saburo decided to live his life as an orchestra player and quit his job at the silent movie theater, even though his salary from the theater was seventy yen, which was far greater than the orchestra salary of only five yen. It was a very difficult decision for him to make, choosing his dream over financial security. However, later he was thankful for all of the savings he had earned through working at the theater, which greatly helped him.³³²

³²⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 61.

³²⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 93.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Konoe slated as orchestra's guest leader. 1937. *The Washington Post* (1923-1954), Jan 31.

³³² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 62.

Although the salary from the orchestra was low, there were no complaints about the experience of being in a professional orchestra. Working beside European professional orchestra players as well as his colleagues, he absorbed as much as he could.³³³ With great help from Professor Ohno, Saburo worked hard and improved greatly. Konich saw Saburo's efforts and chose him from to move the last chair of the second violins to the third stand of the first violins.³³⁴ Because Saburo started his serious violin training late, he took violin lessons from many teachers until age thirty-five.³³⁵ Throughout his life, he never stopped learning the violin, whether through going to lessons for himself or by attending his students' lessons from international violinists who would come to give concerts in Japan or had come back from studying abroad. Some of his main teachers were Professor Ohno, Konich, Schiferblatt, and pianist Kreutzer.³³⁶

The orchestra became more active, and a schedule for subscription concerts was set regularly along with broadcasting programs for the radio. With between forty to fifty members in the orchestra, it was very difficult to find a place big enough for holding rehearsals. The orchestra moved around from a restaurant's upstairs room to the second floor room of a piano warehouse in order to find a suitable rehearsal room; however, noise

³³³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 63.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

³³⁶ Ibid.

and space were always issues. They concluded that they desperately needed their own rehearsal space and the first rehearsal studio was built in Ebara, Shinagawa, Tokyo. During the daytime it was used for rehearsals, and at night it became a gathering place for sight-reading music that Konoe had brought back from Germany.³³⁷ It seemed that they did not get tired of each other and were not satisfied with just making music in the mornings. They were eager to learn more new music. Unlike how it is these days, because of the cost of transportation and printing as well as not having many consumers of music, collecting sheet music was very limited in Japan at that time. It was very valuable and joyous for orchestra members to spend their spare time sight-reading the music collection of Konoe.³³⁸

Since 1927, the orchestra had both main and honorary conductors, which included: Hidemaro Konoe (1926-35), Josef König (1927-29), Nicolai Schiferblatt (1929-36), Joseph Rosenstock (1936-46, 1956-57, 1951-85), Hisatoda Otaka (1942-51), Kazuo Yamada (1942-51), Shinichi Takada (1944-51), Kurt Wöss (1951-54), Niklaus Aeschbacher (1954-56), Wilhelm Loibner (1957-59), Wilhelm Schüchter (1959-62), Alexander Rumpf (1964-65), Joseph Keilberth (1967-68), Lovro von Matačić (1967-1985), Wolfgang Sawallisch (1967-94, 1994-present), Hiroyuki Iwaki (1969-2006), Otmar Suitner (1973-2010), Horst Stein (1975-2008), Yuzo

³³⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 65.

³³⁸ Ibid..

Toyama (1979-present), Tadashi Mori (1979-87), Herbert Blomstedt (1986-present), Hiroshi Wakasugi (1995-2009), Charles Dutoit (1996-98, 1998-2003, 2003-present), Vladimir Ashkenazy (2004-07), André Previn (2009-12, 2012-present), and Tadaaki Otaka (2010-present).³³⁹ As guest conductors, the orchestra had also invited Herbert von Karajan, Ernest Ansermet, and Ferdinand Leitner.³⁴⁰

The orchestra kept changing and growing. Along with well-known conductors, the orchestra also worked with outstanding musicians. Now it gives an average of one hundred twenty concerts a year and has toured throughout the world since 1960.³⁴¹

The year 1927 brought not only happy experiences for Saburo, but it was also a sorrowful time for him and his family. His father Fusataro had passed away at age fifty-five. Saburo was not able to see his father before he died and only received a telegram from home. His father was young and did not get to see the successful futures of Saburo and his siblings. Particularly, he did not get to see Saburo as an active member of the NHK Symphony Orchestra or as he became one of the most famous violin pedagogues in Japan.³⁴²

³³⁹ NHK Symphony Orchestra, Home page, <http://www.nhkso.or.jp/en/about/conductors.php>

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 65.

After receiving the telegram of the death of his father, he hurried back to his hometown in Yonago.³⁴³ This mournful event actually did not have such a sad ending, for it would become a turning point for Saburo as well as his family. After spending some nights with his family, he saw some beautiful dolls made by his younger sisters.³⁴⁴ As hobbies, his sisters always made paper dolls with his mother. After trying with corn husks and other materials, they realized that pieces of cloth were the best for making dolls. Saburo saw how beautiful the dolls were and immediately sensed that they could be sold in Tokyo.³⁴⁵ Soon his prediction was proved right, and the dolls became famous among his friends and neighbors.³⁴⁶ Wakushima and his wife had also moved from Yonago and lived in his neighborhood. He especially liked the dolls and helped make a connection with Shingyouji, a manager of the purchasing department at Mitsukoshi Department Store (one of the long-established stores in Japan) in Ginza (the center of Tokyo's business and shopping districts as well as the location of the Royal Palace). Saburo carefully wrapped the dolls in *furoshiki*, Japanese traditional wrapping cloths, brought them to the store and asked if he could sell them at the store on a trial basis.³⁴⁷ Every few days, he worried and went to the store to check how many dolls were sold.³⁴⁸ In a month, ten dolls were sold and gradually, orders started

³⁴³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 65-66.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

coming steadily.³⁴⁹ Shingyouji liked those dolls; however, he felt that the dolls needed to be more refined, rather than rustic. He suggested that Saburo bring his sister Aiko to come to Tokyo to broaden her senses and abilities through experiencing life in Tokyo. So, Aiko joined Saburo living in Tokyo.³⁵⁰

In addition to Mr. and Mrs. Wakushima, Midori Osaki, a successful female writer from Tottori Prefecture and a friend of Mrs. Wakushima, also lived in the neighborhood.³⁵¹ Since there were not many people from Tottori who had come to Tokyo, they kept close as fellow friends who had come from the same prefecture to live in the “foreign land” of Tokyo.³⁵² Aiko remembered the time she enjoyed spending at the Wakushimas and how she learned about Tokyo lifestyle through Mrs. Wakushima.³⁵³ Although Mr. and Mrs. Wakushima and Ms. Osaki later had difficulties in Tokyo that forced them to move back to their hometown, Saburo and Aiko remained.³⁵⁴ Saburo was busy with studying and practicing his violin as well as working in the orchestra, but he did whatever he could to help his sister by taking orders, collecting bills, and making pedestals for the dolls with plaster.³⁵⁵ The doll business became a big success and needed more hands from their family to help. Within the next few years, starting with

³⁴⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 66.

³⁵⁰ Sumi Memorial Society, *Aiko Kataru*, 4.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 66.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

his mother Iwa and youngest brother Goro, the entire Sumi family eventually left Yonago and moved to Tokyo.³⁵⁶ Both Aiko and Motome became professional porcelain doll makers and succeeded in their business.³⁵⁷ Hajime, the oldest brother, expanded the business and became the first doll maker to import dolls to other countries.³⁵⁸ When Shiro came to Tokyo, Saburo wanted him to learn the cello. However, because of financial issues, he suggested that Shiro study the violin with him instead.³⁵⁹ No one knew teaching his younger brother would change the lives of both of them in the future.

It was the beginning of a golden era for Western orchestral music in Japan and for the Sumi family. Saburo had witnessed the founding of the first Japanese professional orchestra and an influx of European professional musicians and Japanese musicians trained abroad from whom he could learn. His acceptance into the later well-known NHK Symphony Orchestra was a turning point in his life that put him on a career path where he would not only be working closely with professionals but would also make him into a legendary violin pedagogue. With his family all together in Tokyo and a booming business providing for them financially, he was free to pursue his musical dreams that were quickly becoming a reality.

³⁵⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 66.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Sumi Memorial Society, *Kyoudai*, 2.

³⁵⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

CHAPTER 8

BECOMING A TEACHER

Although Saburo was busy working as an orchestra musician, he did not stop practicing the violin on his own. He used etude books such as Kayser, Dont, Hohmann, Kreutzer, and Rode for his own practice and later for teaching his students as well.³⁶⁰ Those method books are still being used as standard method books now, and have spread out from Europe throughout the rest of the world. Through the study of these method books, Saburo was able to experience Western standard methods right from the beginning, although he only started taking serious violin lessons in his twenties. Throughout his life, he never retired from growing musically and from teaching the violin, but instead always sought to learn something new from others. Through his own experiences, he deeply sensed the importance of early music training, one-on-one private lessons, and ensemble experiences. Those three key points became the mottos for his teaching and with them he not only influenced numerous private students, but, on a broader scale, many music universities in Japan as well.

Among Saburo's teachers, Josef König (1874-1932) was his first foreign violin teacher and conductor.³⁶¹ On his first visit to Japan, he came with

³⁶⁰ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

the Russian orchestra to give a concert with Yamada and his orchestra.³⁶² Later, Yamada invited him again as concertmaster and conductor to train the Japanese orchestra. Almost all the violinists in the orchestra took lessons from König.³⁶³ Since König was from the Czech Republic, he was influenced by Otakar Ševčík.³⁶⁴ This Bohemian-born passionate teacher thoroughly taught basic practice method techniques to Saburo and focused on each technique in detail.³⁶⁵ Although he easily got frustrated and yelled when Saburo was not able to play the way he wanted him to, he knew how hard-working Saburo was and did not take any lesson fees from him.³⁶⁶ From König, Saburo was again reminded of the importance of basic practice, and listening closely to how König played his violin may have been some of the best lessons for Saburo.

What led Saburo to live his life as a violin pedagogue; however, started through carefully teaching his younger brother, Shiro. As Shiro's teacher, Saburo received affirmation of his teaching abilities from people he admired dearly, Konoe, Schiferblatt, and his mother Iwa.³⁶⁷ This encouraged him to take this new step in his life.

³⁶² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 73-4.

³⁶³ Ibid., 88.

³⁶⁴ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 91.

³⁶⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 73-4.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 67-8.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, when Shiro moved to Tokyo at age seventeen, Saburo suggested that Shiro study the violin.³⁶⁸ The reason he chose the violin instead of the cello for his younger brother was because of their financial situation.³⁶⁹ There seemed to be no other choice for Shiro except to study the violin; however, this situation turned out to be fortunate for both Saburo and Shiro. Because they did not have any extra money to spare for taking lessons from others or choosing another instrument, Saburo was able to discover and hone his pedagogical gifts through teaching Shiro. Not only did his life change, but so did Shiro's. Later Shiro chose to live his life in the same field as Saburo, and he became a professor at the same university, Kunitachi Music University.³⁷⁰

The age gap between Saburo and Shiro was more than ten years, which made it easier for them to be teacher and student.³⁷¹ In recent years, respecting elders has changed to become more casual in Japan; however, it used to be one of the most important values in that society. Especially before the Second World War, people in authority such as policemen, teachers, and parents held much power and were respected and treated well. Although some abused their positions and created problems for others, Saburo used his position of power in a positive way, which worked well for teaching Shiro. Since there were no technique books, Saburo

³⁶⁸ Matsumoto, *Yume*, 83.

³⁶⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 86.

³⁷⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 68.

³⁷¹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 85.

needed to teach his brother by showing him each detail. Although he was not sure how it would work or how he could help Shiro succeed, he just kept teaching Shiro day and night.³⁷² This demonstrated how passionate Saburo was for teaching, as well as how he did not give up even though he was not sure about Shiro's future. In a way, teaching Shiro was like a pedagogy experiment for Saburo. Throughout this experience, he searched and studied how to teach more effectively for the next students to come.

One day Konoe told Saburo that every time he passed Saburo's house on his way to orchestra rehearsal, he heard not only beautiful and diligent but also gifted violin playing and asked who making that music.³⁷³ After hearing the comments about Shiro's violin practices, not only was Saburo encouraged, but Shiro was so encouraged that he put even more effort into his practicing.³⁷⁴ It was fortunate for Shiro to have Saburo as his teacher, because he was always there for him and patiently taught him every day.³⁷⁵ Throughout Saburo's life, he knew the importance of one-on-one private lessons, and always wished to teach each student every single day so that he would be able to not only see speedy improvement in his students but also be able to quickly guide them to the right path if they practiced the wrong way.³⁷⁶ This showed how passionate and patient he was with his students, traits he maintained to the end of his life. With the help of

³⁷² Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko* 85-6.

³⁷³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 67-8.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 76-77.

Saburo, Shiro improved rapidly and took only one and a half years to pass an audition for the same orchestra Saburo was in, and became a second violin player.³⁷⁷

After König left the orchestra, Schiferblatt became the next conductor.³⁷⁸ When Saburo took Shiro to Schiferblatt, at first he praised how gifted Shiro was and then asked who taught him.³⁷⁹ After hearing Saburo humbly admit that he was Shiro's teacher, Schiferblatt acclaimed Saburo's gifts of teaching and encouraged Saburo to be a teacher, and Shiro to be a performer.³⁸⁰ Schiferblatt's words encouraged Saburo to be a teacher, instead of a performer, so he put more effort into studying and learning from Schiferblatt. Saburo seriously took Shiro's assignments as his own and did in detail as Schiferblatt instructed.³⁸¹ Particularly, Schiferblatt emphasized the importance of scales and intonation, and both brothers practiced very hard to meet the demands.³⁸² Observing Shiro's lessons with Schiferblatt not only inspired Saburo but also taught him the important lessons of building basic technique at an early stage as well as how to teach others effectively.

³⁷⁷ Matsumoto, *Yume*, 83

³⁷⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 67-8.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 85

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid, 86.

In 1932, the first Japanese music competition was held, sponsored by NHK and the Mainichi Newspaper.³⁸³ Although Shiro had only a couple of years of training with Saburo, he played Mendelssohn's violin concerto and won first prize.³⁸⁴ He did not stop winning after just that one year.³⁸⁵ The following year, Shiro played the entire concerto of Lalo, and won two years in a row. Shiro's triumph not only brought success to him, but also to Saburo.³⁸⁶ In a couple of years, the competition became well known and drew more applicants. More people wanted to study under "the teacher of the winner," so Saburo became even busier than before.³⁸⁷ The truth was that Saburo had also planned to be in the competition, and worked very hard with Shiro for the first competition. However, his mother Iwa knew Saburo's gifts of teaching and suggested that Saburo withdraw.³⁸⁸ There was no record of how Saburo felt about that, but only of the fact that he took his mother's advice and worked behind the scenes to support his brother. What if he had tried the competition with Shiro and won? He might have pursued becoming a performer over being a teacher, and he probably would not have been able to teach as many students in Japan as he did. If so, the legacy of Sumi may not have existed in the Japanese violin world and he may never have been able to help bring Japan to its current level of violin prowess, or to help produce so many professional

³⁸³ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 85.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 86.

violinists. No one, including himself, knew that his decision to withdraw from the competition could affect the Japanese violin world so much. Through a combination of his mother's sense, Saburo's flexibility, and his making the right choice, this led not only to success in the Japanese violin scene for him, but also for his brother as well.

At first, it was not common to have younger children apply for the competition, but the effect of the competition's being such a huge success inspired younger children to start playing the violin at an earlier age.³⁸⁹ In 1936, at the fifth competition, Hiroshi Hatoyama, a thirteen-year-old student of Saburo surprised everyone by winning the competition.³⁹⁰ Including Shiro, four students of Saburo won the first prize in the first eleven years of the competition.³⁹¹ Since there were some years the violin competition was not held, almost fifty percent of the first prize winners were students of Saburo. Through this competition, Saburo's name spread and his efforts as a teacher were acknowledged.³⁹² For Shiro, he kept playing his violin in the orchestra for many years; however, later he followed Saburo's footsteps to be a pedagogue, and he became a professor at Kunitachi College of Music where Saburo taught for a while.³⁹³ Saburo's youngest brother Goro watched the success of his brothers and started

³⁸⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 86.

³⁹⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 68-71.

³⁹¹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 86-7.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 68-71.

playing piano seriously at age twenty.³⁹⁴ Since he started learning the piano later than others, he also struggled to improve his technique, which made him study harder and search for the best ways to improve.³⁹⁵ Three years later he also won third prize in a piano competition, and the name of the Sumi brothers became more famous.³⁹⁶ Besides solo study, Goro became a collaborative pianist for Saburo as well as his students, and later for professional violinists also.³⁹⁷ His creativity did not stop with just playing the piano. He also composed and arranged music, and even exhibited his paintings.³⁹⁸ Although painting was just a hobby, his paintings were popular and were sold out at each exhibit. When the Sumi siblings were young, they always had difficulty in finances. However, each of them inherited the gift of talent, which helped them later in their lives.

Saburo was blessed with not only great conductors and concertmasters but also wonderful colleagues in the orchestra. Many of them were seriously pursuing their lives in music and became the backbone of the Japanese music world. Their inspiration and support helped Saburo to grow more as a violinist and as a teacher.

³⁹⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 68-71.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

The young conductor Naotada Yamamoto was an example of a pioneer in the music world in Japan.³⁹⁹ He was very talented, and faithfully worked for the orchestra. Although he unfortunately did not stay in the New Symphony Orchestra for long, he later started the Gunma Symphony Orchestra in Takasaki, Gunma Province, which was about seventy miles northwest of Tokyo.⁴⁰⁰ He knew of Saburo's gifts of teaching and recommended him to teach at *Jiyu Gakuen* ("School of Freedom") as a strings instructor in 1935. The school was a Christian school and their motto was based on John 8:32 in the Bible: "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." In contrast to traditional Japanese schools, this school had a unique style, which emphasized the personality and creativity of each child. One of the buildings was designed by the famous American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. It sent out many artistic and creative students, such as Yoko Ono, the musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, and others.⁴⁰¹

Saburo's first teaching position in the school, *Jiyu Gakuen*, involved using music for cultural and educational purposes, which was different from Saburo's focus on teaching violin.⁴⁰² He was teaching because he wanted to raise professional violinists in Japan. He emphasized the importance of having private lessons for each student, so he asked the administration to

³⁹⁹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 76-77.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 75-6.

⁴⁰¹ Jiyu Gakuen. Home page. <http://www.jiyu.ac.jp/>.

⁴⁰² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 75-6.

change the program.⁴⁰³ To him, there were benefits of having group lessons, such as inspiring and supporting each other to grow. However, it would make it more difficult for both teacher and younger students to study in a group, because a teacher would not have enough time for each student.⁴⁰⁴ He also emphasized having the students' guardians come to the class, so that they could learn how to teach the violin and support the students at home. After Saburo's suggestion, the system was changed to private lessons; however, to encourage each student to be more independent, their guardians were not allowed in the class.⁴⁰⁵ Through working in a school system, he struggled, he searched for the best ways for his students to learn, and he did whatever he could to make things better for them. Through this experience he was able to explore more of his developing teaching method and philosophy.

At school, his students were not able to bring their guardians to the lessons; however, for his private students, he strongly recommended that they bring them to lessons as supporters.⁴⁰⁶ Although Saburo would have preferred to teach each student every day, it was not possible, both financially and physically. So instead of his teaching them daily, their guardians could be teachers to their children at home and could teach them every day.⁴⁰⁷ For his private students, he knew the importance of providing a place for students to perform. He held a student recital once a

⁴⁰³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 75-6.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 76-7.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

year named the *Izumi Kai* (“fountain”) Association since 1935.⁴⁰⁸ The origin of the name served as a metaphor; the Association aimed to bring forth great violinists as a fountain gushes forth waters.⁴⁰⁹ In recitals of *Izumi Kai*, he programmed not only solo performances but also ensembles on the program, which made this recital unique at the time. Even today, his son Takeaki and daughter-in-law Nobuko keep the *Izumi Kai* going and now hold the recital twice a year in some of the best concert halls in Japan.

Saburo must have learned the importance of having a collaborative pianist for violin lessons from one of his teachers, Leonid Kreutzer. Kreutzer studied piano with Yesipova and composition with Glazunov at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After working at the Hochschule für Musik for twelve years and giving recitals in the US, he went to teach at the Tokyo Music School.⁴¹⁰ Although he was a pianist, he could play violin and gave lessons. Saburo was like a dry sponge soaking in what Kreutzer was trying to teach. He taught not only violin, but music itself.⁴¹¹ He had much knowledge, and Saburo never forgot what he learned from him. His fingerings were very similar to a style of Carl Flesch in not using the fourth

⁴⁰⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 78.

⁴⁰⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

⁴¹⁰ James Methuen-Campbell. "Kreutzer, Leonid." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 1 Nov. 2012.
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/44620>>.

⁴¹¹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

(weakest) finger.⁴¹² Saburo did not keep this great artist to himself, but also took his students to him so that they could experience directly what he was experiencing. During lessons, Kreutzer's piano was not played as a piano. Instead, he always created sounds of an orchestra through his piano to accompany Saburo or his students.⁴¹³

The present writer was fortunate enough to be able to take lessons with both Professor and Mrs. Takeaki Sumi and participated in the *Izumi Kai* recitals for almost fifteen years. Given my youth and immaturity, I did not understand how to enjoy performing in a recital and preferred just watching and listening to others. However, even at a young age I knew something was different about the Sumi family recital.

When a student was about to finish a piece, they would have a lesson with one of the collaborative pianists. Usually there were six or seven collaborative pianists working with the students of Sumi, and they were either professional or top-level graduate students of the Toho Gakuen School of Music. They not only played the piano well, but could give the students lessons as well. Since they often played the same repertoire, they knew many pieces inside and out. They always gave valuable instruction on phrasing, fingering, or anything else.

⁴¹² Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 88.

⁴¹³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 84.

A couple of weeks before the recital, the dress rehearsal was held in a public hall near Professor Sumi's house. Before the dress rehearsal, it was a requirement to have a lesson with a collaborative pianist. For the recital, the Sumi students were always privileged to play not only with professional collaborating pianists but also in the best concert halls in Tokyo. The recital would always start from nine in the morning and end around seven at night. The performance level of the students was very high and many of them won competitions. Some students would even fly in once a week just to have lessons with Professor and Mrs. Sumi. Many of them came from very wealthy families and had very expensive instruments. It was hard for the writer to imagine and understand their stories of going abroad for music festivals or studying in foreign countries. Although everything was new and somehow strange, it was wonderful to listen to great performances from others, as well as to play "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star and Variations" or other pieces arranged by Saburo and Goro Sumi in a big ensemble. I have never forgotten the first time I played in an ensemble and how beautiful the sounds were. When students were divided into three different groups such as first violin, second violin, and an obbligato part, from three-year-olds up to junior high or high school students to play variations in an ensemble, it was a delightful moment in the recital. Little ones would have an opportunity to play and enjoy the performance, supported by older students. An ordinary violin teacher would not be able to have a student recital at the best concert halls

such as the Yamaha Hall in Ginza or the Suntory Hall in Roppongi. And after a long day, it was delightful to go to one of the best hotels in Ginza, the Imperial Hotel, with all the students and families to have a buffet dinner and enjoy a meal and the company. Although *Izumi Kai* was stopped during the World Wars, it was extraordinary that they have kept the tradition of the recital for more than seventy years.

Saburo's life was not only just teaching the violin. In 1936, when he was thirty-five, he got married to Ikuko Kondo (later she changed her name to Ikuyo), a pianist from Tottori.⁴¹⁴ She came from a wealthy family with a long history. Their first acquaintance started when Ikuko and her two older sisters visited him at his dressing room after an orchestra concert in Hibiya, Tokyo.⁴¹⁵ Through music, Saburo moved to Tokyo to find jobs but happily met his wife in the process as well.⁴¹⁶ Since they came from the same neighborhood, the story of a wealthy daughter and a successful violinist in the orchestra became a romantic story in Yonago.⁴¹⁷ After they got married, she spent her life fully supporting him. The couple was blessed with three children. The first son Takeaki was born in 1937, and two years later, a daughter Reiko was born.⁴¹⁸ In 1944, the second son Yasurou was born.⁴¹⁹ Since Saburo was so busy teaching, Ikuko took care

⁴¹⁴ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 112-5.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

of all their three children as well as his students.⁴²⁰ When guest violinists would come to their house to give a master class, she welcomed them with delicious home-made meals.⁴²¹ Besides being blessed with having a supportive mother, he was also blessed with having his wife support him and his teaching while taking care of everything else. If he did not have a great partner like Ikuko, it would have been difficult—if not impossible—for him to take care of his family and his students at the same time. If she had not understood or appreciated what he was doing, he might be not have been able to continue teaching for the long time that he did.

During the Second World War, things got worse each day. Living in Tokyo was unstable, and all of his students evacuated to other prefectures far from there.⁴²² The Sumi family also felt that living in Tokyo was dangerous and moved back to Tottori with the elderly mother Iwa as well.⁴²³ However, even in the midst of the chaos, the orchestra was still active, so Saburo lived his life between Tokyo and Tottori.⁴²⁴ Some artists such as classical musicians, actors, or others were required to have a special pass from the government in order to perform.⁴²⁵ Only certain artists who met all of the requirements were able to receive the special

⁴²⁰ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 112-3.

⁴²¹ Matsumoto, *Yume*, 137.

⁴²² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 80-1.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 92-3.

pass. With the pass, Saburo along with his fellow musicians went to play music to comfort people in hospitals and manufacturing plants.⁴²⁶

From March 1945 until the end of the war, bombings in Tokyo increased in both frequency and magnitude. On April 24th, Saburo lost everything he owned except for two violins (one from the conductor Kosaku Yamada and the other from a tenor, Yoshie Fujiwara).⁴²⁷ The bomb that hit his house destroyed not only the home, but his grand piano and a collection of precious hand-copied music as well.⁴²⁸ During regular orchestra concerts when there were no bombings, the orchestra would give concerts wearing national uniforms, gaiters, and air raid helmets during the concert.⁴²⁹

In spite of losing everything, as soon as Saburo could rent a house, he started teaching again.⁴³⁰ He simply had to teach violin and make music. The reason was that he felt he was alive when he was teaching, and music was precious especially at a time like that. He was grateful to God for giving him music as his career.⁴³¹ Music had been a source of strength in his life since he was young. He knew poverty because he had experienced it himself. He knew how to cope with adversity because he rose from it with the help of music. Music made the misery around him disappear and

⁴²⁶ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 92-3.

⁴²⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 81.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 92-3.

⁴³⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 81.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

he found strength in it.⁴³² Although two of his younger brothers went to war, they were sent back home because of their poor health.⁴³³ Fortunately, because of his age, he did not need to go to war.⁴³⁴ From the destruction of the war came a new beginning for his life.

In August 1945, the Second World War ended. During the war, when he carried his violin with him, some people called him a ‘traitor’ out loud, because violins were originally made in West and anything Western was considered an enemy.⁴³⁵ Now, he was free to do anything he wanted with music again. Although Tokyo looked worse than ever before, he could not wait to make music with his violin.⁴³⁶ He knew people needed something like music to give them hope to live again.

For improving skills related to ensembles, he formed a small orchestra, “Ensemble Fontaine,” with his students and toured around to many places.⁴³⁷ They even went to an U.S. Occupational Armed Forces camp to give a concert. In order to visit the camp, he was required to have a special type of pass, and his ensemble was given the special A rank, which was the

⁴³² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 82-4.

⁴³³ Ibid., 81.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 82-4.

⁴³⁵ Ibid. 80-4.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 82-4.

highest level.⁴³⁸ Since only the NHK Symphony Orchestra and his ensemble were active at that time, they were used in many ways while touring around Japan, including his hometown Yonago.⁴³⁹ In each concert program, he tried to include different types of performances, such as solos, ensembles, or choruses.⁴⁴⁰ It was amusing to see the disappointed faces of the audiences change to ones of excitement and amazement when they first heard those amazingly talented young adults perform.⁴⁴¹ It was delightful for him as well as his students to see their audience. Concerts in Yonago were especially successful and became some of the most memorable concerts for both Saburo and his students. Besides leading the ensemble, he also played in many music programs in NHK, and did recordings as well. His recordings with Victor sold more than 10,000 records.⁴⁴²

In 1946, he started teaching at the *Nihon Daigaku Geijutsu Ka* (Japan National University of Performance Arts) and Kunitachi College of Music.⁴⁴³ The founder of Kunitachi College of Music, Daigoro Arisima, knew of Saburo's gift of teaching and invited him to teach at the college.⁴⁴⁴ The college was started as *Tokyo Koutou Ongaku Gakuin* in 1926.⁴⁴⁵

⁴³⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 82-4.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 86-7.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Kunitachi College of Music. Home page.
<http://www.kunitachi.ac.jp/>

From 1946, Saburo was the first head of the strings department, and he taught for twenty-six years at the college.⁴⁴⁶ Part of the entrance exam for the college was written using materials Saburo had brought back from Russia.⁴⁴⁷

Although the present writer attended the Kunitachi College of Music, Saburo's efforts at the college were not as well-known as those of his brother Shiro. At that point, half of the violin professors were Saburo's students and I studied with two of his best, Ryosaku Kubota and Tugio Tokunaga. Although Kubota and Tokunaga were different in regards to their teaching methods, both demanded the best from their students. They were strict and exacting teachers and carried on the legacy of Saburo's teaching.

Kubota started playing the violin while in the first grade in Osaka. After he graduated from a junior high school, his family moved to Tokyo and he began studies with Sumi.⁴⁴⁸ His talents developed rapidly, and in 1946 he won first prize in a competition.⁴⁴⁹ In 1950, Sumi and two other violin pedagogues were interviewed about who was the most promising young Japanese violinists, Sumi mentioned Kubota's name. He believed that

⁴⁴⁶ Kunitachi College of Music. Home page.
<http://www.kunitachi.ac.jp/>.

⁴⁴⁷ Sumi Saburo Memorial Society, *Saburo Sumi 10th memorial anniversary concert program*, (Yonago: Sumi Saburo Memorial Society, 1994) 7.

⁴⁴⁸ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*. 97.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

Kubota was gifted and noted that he practiced earnestly.⁴⁵⁰ As Sumi predicted, later, Kubota became chair of the strings department in Toho Gakuen School of Music, and he was a violin and viola instructor for the Crown Prince Naruhito.⁴⁵¹ Later he worked closely with Saburo in developing the Sumi violin method book.⁴⁵²

Tokunaga studied violin with his father and Saburo.⁴⁵³ After winning numerous competitions, he became the youngest concertmaster in the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. After studying with Michel Schwalbe in Berlin, he became the concertmaster in the NHK Symphony Orchestra.⁴⁵⁴ Although he is busy as a concert artist, he still teaches at Kunitachi College of Music, Toho Gakuen School of Music, and Senzoku Gakuen College of Music.⁴⁵⁵

Saburo joined with several talented Japanese artists to fulfill his vision of creating a school for young musicians. A voice instructor at *Jiyu Gakuen*, Nobuko Suzuki left the school and started her own music studio by renting a part of *Kasei Gakuin* (Domestic Science School).⁴⁵⁶ She wanted to focus more on teaching music, and Saburo started teaching violin at the same studio. After Saburo, Goro, and Suzuki discussed their dream of a music

⁴⁵⁰ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 97.

⁴⁵¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 105-7.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Sumi Memorial Society, *Saburo Sumi 10th memorial anniversary concert program*, 8.

⁴⁵⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 75-6.

school for children, she visited Hideo Saito, a cellist, conductor, and educator.⁴⁵⁷

Saito was a pioneer in the cello world in Japan, and was also well known as Seiji Ozawa's conducting teacher.⁴⁵⁸ He studied the cello in his teens, and went to Germany to study at the oldest music university in the country, *Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig* (University of Music and Theater "Felix Medelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig), with one of the greatest cellists in history, Julius Klengel (1859-1933).⁴⁵⁹ After completing his studies in Germany, he joined the NHK Symphony Orchestra. Later in his life, he became more famous as an educator and conductor.⁴⁶⁰ In 1948, he and some educators started a Music Academy for Children, the origin of Toho Gakuen School of Music. Ozawa, Hiroko Nakamura (piano), Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi (cellist and university president) were all alumni of the Music Academy.⁴⁶¹ In 1984, Ozawa and Kazuyoshi Akiyama (conductor) started the Saito Kinen Orchestra with some of Saito's students in commemoration of professor Saito's achievements and to remember what he had done for Japanese musicians.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁷ Saito Kinen Symphony Orchestra, Home page, <http://www.saito-kinen.com/>.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Watson Forbes and Margaret Campbell. "Klengel, Julius." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 29 Oct. 2012.

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15140>>.

⁴⁶⁰ Saito Kinen Symphony Orchestra, Home page, <http://www.saito-kinen.com/>.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

He and Saburo brought out many talented young musicians to the world, and built “*kodomo no tame no ongaku kyoushitsu*” (a music academy for children).⁴⁶³ Later, when needing a place for graduates of the music academy, it expanded to include a music high school (1952), a junior college (1955), and a school of music (1961).⁴⁶⁴ Toho Music University became one of the top music universities in the country.⁴⁶⁵ When the School of Music was established, Saburo was invited to be a professor, and he taught there for many years. Saburo’s first son, Takeaki, was one of the inaugural students of the university, and now serves as a professor emeritus at the school, just as Saburo had.⁴⁶⁶

Because of the wars, most music textbooks for children were burned or destroyed and new ones were needed.⁴⁶⁷ From 1949 to 1955, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture chose Saburo to be an editor for children’s music textbooks in Japan.⁴⁶⁸ He put in much effort towards developing the best textbooks for Japanese children with a balance between songs and instrumental music.⁴⁶⁹ He recognized the need for a new violin method for Japan.⁴⁷⁰ Although he collected as many violin

⁴⁶³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 86.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 113-4.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 196-9.

method books for his students and himself as he could, he was not able to find a suitable book that contained both technical exercises and pieces in a single volume.⁴⁷¹ After thoroughly researching the books he had collected, he carefully selected etudes and pieces for each student. He then asked each student's guardian to copy them by hand into the student's notebook.⁴⁷² This process was time-consuming however and made him want to write a book that included both important exercises and the pieces. Finally in 1951, he and two other violin pedagogues (Tatsuo Uzuka and Hirotsugu Shinozaki) published *Atarashi Violin Kyouhon (New Violin Method Books)* Vols. 1-6.⁴⁷³ These method books included many familiar folk tunes, both Japanese and international, as well as beautiful pieces. Unlike the Suzuki method, these books contained important technique exercises such as finger exercises, scales, arpeggios, double-stops, position changes, and bowing practices, which were helpful for both teachers and students. Unlike other method books, these books were not simply divided in half with exercises in the front and pieces in the back. Instead, in Sumi's method books, right before each new song, the most essential and specific technique exercises for the song were listed so the student was introduced to the necessary techniques in order to play the piece that followed. At that time, almost all the existing method books contained either exercises or pieces; however, his books had both and because of this

⁴⁷¹ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 196-9.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Saburo Sumi, *Atarashii Violin No Kyohon* No. 1-6. (Shinjuku: Ongaku No Tomo Press, 2005).

they were different and astonishing.⁴⁷⁴ Not only were important exercises included, but the pieces were beautiful and challenging as well. Many of the folk songs in his books were from songs he and his family used to sing or play at their home concerts, or ones he learned from his teachers in Tokyo that had special meaning to Saburo. As he had learned techniques as well as musicality through these pieces, he wanted his students to have the same wonderful experiences. Interestingly, until recently, the Suzuki method books contained mostly pieces with very few technical exercises. But in the recent edition, more exercises were added for each individual piece and the format of the revised Suzuki method now bears a strong resemblance to Saburo's 1965 method.

Also, in 1964, Saburo and two of his younger brothers published *Violin Gassou Hensou Kyokushu*, a book of violin ensemble for building techniques using themes and variations.⁴⁷⁵ It contains "Theme and Variations of *Hinomaru* (Rising Sun)", "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," and "*Long, Long Ago* Theme and Variations" in three different parts. These simple and beautiful ensemble books were used at *Izumi Kai* for many years and provided good starting ensemble pieces for younger students.

⁴⁷⁴ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 92.

⁴⁷⁵ Saburo Sumi, *Violin Ensemble Variation Book for Building Technic* (Shinjuku, Tokyo: Ongaku No Tomo Press, 1977).

In 1952, Saburo decided to retire from the orchestra where he had served for 27 years and live the rest of his life as an educator.⁴⁷⁶ Some suggested that he stay a little bit longer, so that he could have a higher retirement allowance. But, once he knew what he wanted for his life, he did not wait and he shifted towards becoming an educator alone.⁴⁷⁷ In addition to teaching at the two universities, the music academy and private students, he also started teaching at Soai University in Osaka in 1955.⁴⁷⁸ His life became even busier than before.

Following Shiro's success, many of Saburo's gifted students won competitions in subsequent years. One such student, 15-year-old Shizuko Ishii, played Saint-Saëns' *Violin Concerto No. 3* and won third prize in the Lon-Thibaud-Crespin Competition in 1959.⁴⁷⁹ He became a sensation in both Japan and Europe. Sumi was invited to be a judge for the next competition in 1960.⁴⁸⁰

Deciding whether or not to travel to Europe to judge the Lon-Thibaud-Crespin Competition was difficult for Saburo. Because he did not speak any other languages and had never traveled to Europe, he was nervous about the trip. However he knew the value of this experience and he

⁴⁷⁶ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 93.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 87-8.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 88-9.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

decided to leave Tokyo for both the competition and for observing European students and teachers.⁴⁸¹

His schedule included departing Tokyo on June 6th with stops in Rome, Venice, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt, Zurich, Vienna, Moscow, Copenhagen, Munich, Salzburg, Munich again, Stuttgart, back to Paris, and then returning to Tokyo on the 8th of August.⁴⁸² Although he travelled alone, he planned his schedule well before he left. He made sure to visit and experience famous places such as Teatro dell' Opera, Basilica di San Pietro in Vatican City, and many more.⁴⁸³

Despite the extensive touring he undertook, the most important aspect of this trip for Saburo was the opportunity to visit his former students and observe their lessons with their current teachers.⁴⁸⁴ He was able to observe, with the help of translators, lessons taught by Remy Principe and Gabriel Villon with his former students Hideo Iso and Shizuko Ishii.⁴⁸⁵ He was scheduled to observe Nathan Milstein's lesson as well; however, the translator missed the lesson.⁴⁸⁶ Although he was extremely disappointed with the incident, in the competition he was able to meet Leonid Borisovich Kogan, Henryk Szeryng, Gabriel Villon, Antoine Ysäye, and

⁴⁸¹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 89.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 89-90.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 90-103.

Joseph Calvet.⁴⁸⁷ There were other judges in the competition; however, these musicians made the strongest impression on Saburo.⁴⁸⁸ Later, many of them came to Japan to give concerts and recitals, and he invited them to his house to give master classes to Saburo's students.⁴⁸⁹

Through this experience, he met many of the most active violinists and pedagogues of the time and observed their teaching first hand.⁴⁹⁰ In turn, he was also able to inform the European community about Japanese violin education.⁴⁹¹ Since there were not many Japanese violinists who had auditioned for international competitions in the past, it must have been shocking for them to find out how much improvement had been made in music education in Japan.⁴⁹² Lastly, making direct contact with those judges was a treasure for him as well as his students. Although Ishi placed third, instead of first, it was surprising to see how well they received Ishi's performance and how much they praised her gifts and effort.⁴⁹³ They sent her an invitation to play a solo with an orchestra, along with a recommendation to Heifetz.⁴⁹⁴ In addition, they honored her teacher by asking Saburo to send some students to the Paganini International Competition in Italy, and to host the Ysäye Competition in Japan.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁸⁷ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 90-103.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 102-3.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

In 1961, Toho Gakuen expanded their curriculum, and in addition to the junior college, the Toho Gakuen School of Music was formed as a four-year program. Saburo became a professor at the new school and trained more college students.⁴⁹⁶

Besides the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition, he was also invited to be a judge for the Paganini Competition in Genoa in 1962.⁴⁹⁷ This was evidence of international acknowledgment of the improvements in Japanese music education.⁴⁹⁸ When one of his students, Estuko Hirose, took second prize in the competition, it especially added joy for him. In the same year, she received the special award in the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition.⁴⁹⁹

Unlike the first trip, he invited three other colleagues, Ryosaku Kubota (former student), Tatsuo Uzuka, and Yuji Togi to go on this trip with him.⁵⁰⁰ Aside from the competition, they spent their time observing lessons by famous professors such as Efrem Zimbalist, Ivan Galamian, and Oscar Shumsky.⁵⁰¹ They also visited almost all of the violin stores in each

⁴⁹⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 102-3.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 107.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 106-9.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

town.⁵⁰² Saburo was famous among his students for researching and collecting many violins, bows, and strings.⁵⁰³ As soon as he found an instrument he liked, he bought it and added it into his collection.⁵⁰⁴ When his students needed better instruments, he would lend his out without hesitation.⁵⁰⁵

His teaching job never stopped, and in 1966, he was invited to the Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow. Since 1945, he was a judge for the Music Competition of Japan, and was involved in many competitions both nationally and internationally.⁵⁰⁶

In 1962, NHK started a music educational television program, “*Violin no Okeiko*,” (Violin lesson) and he became a regular teacher for the program.⁵⁰⁷ Although making this program was time-consuming, through it, Saburo’s name was spread out to non-musical families. His teaching became popular among ordinary homes, and he took charge of three series.⁵⁰⁸ Since Saburo was so busy, Shiro and Goro gathered all his materials for him, which became the *Violin Ensemble Variation Book for*

⁵⁰² Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 106-9.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 118.

⁵⁰⁶ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 102-3.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 104

⁵⁰⁸ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 108.

Building Technique in 1964.⁵⁰⁹ Nobuko Suzuki, his future daughter-in-law, appeared in the program regularly.⁵¹⁰

It seemed that Saburo was an old-fashioned teacher. He always got frustrated with a student who would come to a lesson without practicing, and sometimes he would often show his displeasure by looking out the window silently or leaving a student alone in the room.⁵¹¹ Because he was not able to have lessons in his youth, it was a source of sad and frustrating for him to see these young students waste their gifts, money, and time. He often just said “Not good” without telling them what was wrong.⁵¹² He might have been searching for an answer for himself; however, it was good training for a student to think and search for solutions also. Almost all of his students described him as dignified and devoted and they were all scared of him. Some students said that they would become nervous whenever they reached the train station near Saburo’s house.⁵¹³ ⁵¹⁴ Later in their lives they realized that because Saburo was serious and devoted in teaching, he needed to be very tough.⁵¹⁵ Not only Sumi students and their parents, but also merchants in the market near the train station knew the name of Sumi. From the station, there was *Taira machi shoten gai* (Taira

⁵⁰⁹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 109.

⁵¹⁰ “String Interview: The Sumi family.” *Strad*, August 1, 2012, 48-51.

⁵¹¹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 113.

⁵¹² “String Interview: The Sumi family.” *Strad*, 48-51.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Sumi Memorial Society, *Saburo Sumi 10th memorial anniversary concert program*, 13-4.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 7-9, 18-23.

city shopping area) with small stores. After passing through the area, there was a gentle slope. It called as *namida zaka* (a slope with tears) among the students and the merchants in the shopping area, because all those merchants saw Sumi's students and their mothers or fathers nervously walked down the slope carrying their violins. Later they would come back crying. Sometime Sumi would not be happy with the student's work, and it made the mother upset. On the way back, she would berate her child and make the student cry. Other times, a mother was embarrassed or felt sorry for her child, so both the student and the mother cried on the way back. When the present writer was at one of the stores after having a lesson from Saburo's daughter-in law, Nobuko, one of customers in the store inquired, "What is happening the top on the hill?" as she was mystified by the parade of crying youths.

But Saburo's words were not always harsh and intimidating. Whenever a student did well, he offered praise with simple words. Especially for younger students, he tried to get them to enjoy their lessons, instead of only being serious.⁵¹⁶ He directed their hands to play a simple tune so that they thought they played it themselves. When they showed interest in learning the violin, little by little he introduced basic skills such as how to stand, hold a bow or hold a violin.⁵¹⁷ When his students needed many lessons before their competitions, he would let them stay at his house and

⁵¹⁶ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 21.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

gave them lessons day and night.⁵¹⁸ For his students' recitals or exams, he often sat straight in front of them and tried to capture each single detail of their performance without missing any points.⁵¹⁹ He taught his students not only how to play the violin, but also how to be professional artists.⁵²⁰ He was always well-prepared.⁵²¹ When his student broke a string during a performance, he would be the first one backstage changing the string for the student.⁵²² He was always at his students' side. Sometimes he bought tickets to famous violin recitals for his students, took them out to coffee houses to listen to records, or even had dance parties at his house.⁵²³ He always liked new things and always dressed up when he taught.⁵²⁴ Most of all, he loved music and his students.

In Dorothy Delay's book, *Teaching Genius*, there are some sentences that describe a pedagogue's life:

“Music teachers do not make their pupils famous, but the reverse – teachers owe their reputations to their successful students, and even the greatest pedagogues are usually known only within the music world.”⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁸ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 97.

⁵¹⁹ Sumi Memorial Society, *Sabuto Sumi 10th memorial anniversary concert program*, 8-9.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 118.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid., 100-1, 117-9.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 108.

⁵²⁵ Barbara Lourie Sand. *Teaching Genius* (Pompton Plains, NJ: 2005), 41.

This was applicable to Saburo's life, as one of the greatest pedagogues in Japan. As much as he worked and spent his life for his students, his name became well-known mainly through his successful students.

More than one hundred students of Saburo's won national competitions and more than thirty students won international competitions.⁵²⁶ It is not an exaggeration to say that almost all violinists in Japan were either directly or indirectly related to Saburo. This year (2012 at the time of writing) is the eightieth anniversary of the Music Competition of Japan. From its beginning until around 1980, just a few years before Saburo passed away, more than ten of his students won first prize, not to mention those who won second, third, and other prizes. Besides this competition, he sent numerous winners to the Student Music Concours of Japan in 1947.⁵²⁷

Not only did his students win many competitions, but they also became active soloists and orchestra or chamber musicians, as well as pedagogues like Saburo. Many of his students studied abroad and pursued higher education as well as performance experiences.

Junko Edo, Hamao Fujiwara, Kouichiro Harada, Etsuko Hirose, Kikuei Ikeda, Shizuko Ishii, Ryosaku Kubota, Teru Morioka, Shizuka Nakamura,

⁵²⁶ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 109.

⁵²⁷ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 106.

Tomoko Nakayama, Yuriko Kuronuma, Taeko Miki, Yoko Sato, Kazuki Sawa, Mariko Senju, Takahiro Muroya, Takashi Shimizu, Tomotada Sou, Hidetaro Suzuki, Yoko Tatebe, Tsugio Tokunaga, Asako Urushihara, Keiko Urushihara, Takayoshi Wanami, Akeo Watanabe, Hiroyuki Yamaguchi—these names are just a few of Saburo’s students.⁵²⁸ Many of them were and still are concertmasters or members of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, and many more.⁵²⁹ Both Kouichiro Harada and Kikuei Ikeda are the original members of The Tokyo String Quartet. Most of the top music universities in Japan have former students of Saburo’s on faculty, such as Kunitachi College of Music, *Musashino Ongaku Daigaku* (Musashino Academia Musicae), *Osaka Geijutsu Daigaku* (Osaka University of Arts), Soai University, Toho Gakuen School of Music, *Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku* (Tokyo University of the Arts), and *Tokyo Ongaku Daigaku* (Tokyo College of Music).⁵³⁰

Some of Saburo’s students worked abroad, such as Yuriko Kuronuma, who won first prize in the National Student Competition at age 16 and the 1st and special award in the Japan Music Competition.⁵³¹ Later she studied at the Musical Arts Academy of Prague with David Oistrakh and Henryk

⁵²⁸ Sumi Memorial Society, *Sabuto Sumi 10th memorial anniversary concert program*, 14-5, 24.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 113-122.

Szeryng. She has played with the Chicago, NHK, and Prague Symphony Orchestras as well as the National Symphony in Mexico. She is a founder of the Academia Yuriko Kuronuma in Mexico and spends her life helping children in Mexico. In 2007, she received that country's highest award for a musician.⁵³²

Yoko Takebe, who studied with Sumi, also studied with Galamian and Szigeti at the Juilliard Conservatory and is a long-time member of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Her husband, Michael Gilbert, is a retired member of the orchestra and the current music director of the orchestra is their son, Alan Gilbert. Their daughter Jennifer Gilbert is the concertmaster of the Orchestra National de Lyon in France.⁵³³

Akeo Watanabe, a violinist and conductor, studied with Saburo, Kou Kouda, and Alexander Moguilewsky. After he graduated from the Tokyo Music School, he went to Juilliard to study conducting. He is the founder of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra and has received awards from Finland, France and Japan.⁵³⁴

⁵³² Academia Yuriko Kuronuma A.C., Home page. <http://www.ayk.com.mx/yuriko-kuronuma/?lang=en>

⁵³³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 108.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 112.

Although Daishin Kashimoto, the concertmaster in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, was not a student of Sumi's, he did study with Kumiko Eto, who was a former student of Saburo.⁵³⁵

Some of the students that were most important to Saburo came from his direct line—his son Takeaki, daughter-in-law Nobuko, and granddaughter Eriko. They also became professional violinists. Takeaki Sumi was born in 1937.⁵³⁶ At age 5, he studied piano with his uncle Goro Sumi and started learning violin from his father at age 7. Since his life was surrounded by violins, he had assumed everyone in his class played the violin but learned that there were some children who could not.⁵³⁷ When he was young, he and his younger brother Yasuro did not feel close to their father emotionally, although he was actually very near to them. From an early age, he had learned to be ready to play his violin anytime for his father.⁵³⁸ Through the Music Academy of Children, he studied at the Toho School of Music, and went to study at the Conservatorio di Genova Nicolò Paganini in 1965.⁵³⁹ He won first prize in the Student Music Concours of Japan. He has also studied with Paul Klengel, Jeanne Isnard, Toshiya Eto, and Franco Gulli. He attended music festivals such as the Aspen Music Festival, the Siena Music Festival in Siena, Italy, and recently he became

⁵³⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 112.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ "String Interview: The Sumi family." *Strad*, 48-54.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

an instructor at the Music Festival of Belluno, Italy as well as in Austria.⁵⁴⁰

Like his father, he became a professor emeritus at Toho Gakuen School of Music and raised many gifted violinists.⁵⁴¹

Nobuko Sumi studied violin with Saburo and Takeaki.⁵⁴² After graduating from a music university, she attended the Siena Music Festival in Italy.

After Nobuko married Takeaki and gave birth to her daughter Eriko she felt her responsibility was to focus on teaching Eriko and other children.⁵⁴³

When the Crown Prince and Princess Henri Albert Gabriel Felix Marie Guillaume (Luxembourg's Head of State at present) came to study and learn the Sumi method (the effective teaching method for children) from Saburo and his family, she demonstrated how to teach violin to children by giving a lesson to Eriko and three other children.⁵⁴⁴ When Eriko went to Juilliard, Nobuko went with her and took both Teaching Method and Ensemble classes at there and at the Manhattan School of Music, along with a language program from Columbia University. She teaches most children using the Sumi method.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁰ "String Interview: The Sumi family." *Strad*, 48-54.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 51-4.

Seven days after she was born, Eriko Sumi was given a violin as a “toy” from Saburo.⁵⁴⁶ The first time he saw her, he checked her fingers to see whether she had suitable fingers for playing the violin.⁵⁴⁷ He was so pleased to see that she had suitable fingers that he started teaching her at age one-and-a-half, as an experiment.⁵⁴⁸ She was not only important to him as his granddaughter, but she was also his youngest student.⁵⁴⁹ In the beginning, he played some pieces with her violin by holding her in his lap.⁵⁵⁰ Through his experiences with teaching young children, he focused on having fun instead of forcing her to play her violin. He was grateful to have three generations playing the violin and watching her grow as a person and a violinist was his hope and joy.⁵⁵¹ Although it was challenging to have lessons for the same piece with three different teachers at the same time, Saburo and her parents, Eriko learned how to be flexible.⁵⁵² Since, in the Sumi family, only sleeping and eating were considered more important than playing the violin, she thought everyone played the violin.⁵⁵³ But, like her father, she experienced a similar encounter with her classmates where she learned that some children could not play the violin.⁵⁵⁴ While she was a student at Juilliard, she won first prize at the Michelangelo Abbado

⁵⁴⁶ Matsumoto, *Yume*, 131-5.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 118-9.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² “String Interview: The Sumi family.” *Strad*, 49-54.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

International Competition for Violinists in 1994.⁵⁵⁵ After she graduated from the Juilliard School, she moved to Italy and has been busy giving recitals as well as teaching in both Italy and Japan.⁵⁵⁶ In 2009, she played a solo with the Orchestra Accademia della Opere at Milan Conservatory's Verdi Hall.⁵⁵⁷ She played in the Royal Palace of Milan and was the first Japanese violinist to play in the Parliament building in Budapest.⁵⁵⁸ Currently, she is a judge of the Michelangelo Abbado International Competition.⁵⁵⁹ Her teachers were Dorothy DeLay and Edward Wolfson.⁵⁶⁰ From having learned to play the violin as the granddaughter of Saburo and the daughter of Takeaki and Nobuko, along with what she learned from other teachers, she takes all of the various methods and tries to produce a new performing and teaching style of her own.⁵⁶¹

What made Saburo Sumi so different from other violinists? Why were his students so successful? How did he teach them? He always emphasized having early music education, having one-on-one private lessons, and learning the importance of the ensemble.

Through his own experiences, he struggled to master each technique because he started playing violin later than others. Although the starting

⁵⁵⁵ "String Interview: The Sumi family." *Strad*, 49-54.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

age for children seems to get younger each year, it was common in Saburo's generation to begin playing musical instruments at an older age. Fortunately he was surrounded by music at both church and home, and he had a supportive family who encouraged him to pursue a career as a violinist. Saburo's love for the violin was strong and he studied his violin harder than anyone else; however, he faced another challenge. Although he put much effort into practicing, it was clear that having a good violin education was necessary. For building techniques, one has to master them while muscles are tender and flexible. After muscles harden, it is difficult to improve even the basics. However, Saburo did not stop in the midst of his difficulties. Instead, he used himself as an example to encourage children to start playing the violin.

Because he struggled with his technique, his research for how to overcome these challenges was useful for his students. Because he put effort into learning each technique, he was able to teach his students. He always brought a pair of binoculars to recitals and concerts so that he could watch each detail of a performer's fingerings, phrasings, bowings, and so on.⁵⁶² Poverty and not owning a violin were not problems to him. Through their struggles, he and his brothers learned how to make a violin and expanded their creativity. To him, not trying was the worst thing for people.

⁵⁶² Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 112.

When he was in his twenties, he finally met and studied with real classical violinists and musicians. Through listening to records and reading from books, he learned some information; however, having lessons with teachers made much more sense and was easier for learning. During his teaching experiences, he was often reminded that private lessons are preferable to group lessons. In a group lesson setting, students may get inspired by others and some may grow faster than through a private lesson, but it would be challenging to have enough time to teach each child in a group equally, since each child has different strengths and challenges. According to each child's personality and physicality, a teacher can develop the best training method, and take enough time for each child to master his skills in a private lesson setting. Each child needs attention, encouragement, and inspiration from a teacher.

Saburo always searched and learned new methods from others. Since he was fortunate to have a relationship with the NHK Symphony Orchestra, he had the privilege to learn from some of the best musicians in the world. He always went to concerts and recitals performed by special guest violinists, and did not hesitate to ask them to give master classes with his students at his home.⁵⁶³ If there was a teacher who was good at a certain piece, he did not hesitate to send his students to learn it from that teacher. Not only did his students learn from the teacher, but he also could learn

⁵⁶³ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 78.

along with his students. For instance, he went to his son Takeaki's lessons with Paul Klengel and learned a new method, Ševčík.⁵⁶⁴ He was fascinated with the book, and soon he used it for his students. He became the first Japanese violinist to use the Ševčík method and spread it to the rest of Japan.⁵⁶⁵ He was not afraid of losing his students by sending them to other teachers for lessons.⁵⁶⁶ Instead, he gained new knowledge through others. In the past, the many professional violinists Saburo invited to give master classes or lessons with his students included Devy Erlih, Raymond Gallois–Montbrun, Jeanne Isnard, Paul Klengel, Leonid Borisovich Kogan, Henryk Szeryng, Gabriel Villon, Joseph Gingold, Michele Auclair, and Sándor Végh.⁵⁶⁷

Finally he emphasized the importance of playing in an ensemble, big or small. He was in the top orchestra in Japan, and kept close relationships there. For an ensemble to perform well, it requires many techniques, such as colors, intonation, harmony, phrasing, rhythm and so on. Experience with an ensemble helps students grow. For Saburo, the orchestra kept growing and always invited the best conductors as well as instrumentalists. Because he was in the orchestra and formed good relationships, he was able to work with and study closely with some of the best musicians in the world, whether they were guest conductors,

⁵⁶⁴ “String Interview: The Sumi family.” *Strad*, 54.

⁵⁶⁵ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 113-5.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 112-3.

⁵⁶⁷ Sumi, *Violin No Okeiko*, 103-9.

concertmasters, or soloists. As he was blessed through his colleagues in the orchestra, he dearly wanted his students to experience the best also.

CONCLUSION

A little before Saburo died, he started losing control of some muscles because of an illness. However he was still a teacher whenever his students visited him. He taught violin up until the day he died on November 26, 1984, at the age of 82. Where did his vitality come from?

He was fortunate to have grown up in a supportive family who encouraged him to pursue his career as a violinist. In Tokyo, he was able to meet wonderful teachers and colleagues, and to study the violin more seriously.

After being encouraged by some of his teachers, he discovered he possessed a gift and passion for teaching. Soon he began to focus on pedagogy rather than performing and produced many accomplished violinists who met with success nationally and internationally.

Throughout his life, he was busy teaching many students both at music universities and in his home, and he constantly studied and researched

new and better techniques and teaching methods from other teachers. He also collected different types of violins, bows, and recording.

As much energy and passion Saburo put into his teaching his students would in turn put in even more to their practicing. Since he was a teacher of the old school, he inspired fear from most of his students, including his own sons. However, the students sensed and were touched by his seriousness and passion for teaching. Just as he always studied his students and was able to use the best method for each of them, teachers need to constantly research and study new techniques and teaching methods⁵⁶⁸ so that they can be flexible to teach different types of students and to keep growing with them.

Saburo's life was filled with music. He spent his entire life learning and teaching the violin. That was his way of showing his love for the violin and for his students. He was one of the greatest pedagogues in Japan. He understood fully these wise words of Helen Keller:

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁸ Sumi, *Violin Hitosujini*, 77-81.

⁵⁶⁹ Helen Keller. *Sage. Intheblack* 75, no. 6: 16-16, 2005.

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