

## **Swiss National Suzuki Workshop, May 2004**

*by Sandrine Schär-Chiffelle, director of the workshop 2004 and of the Suzuki School in Bienne*

By the Lake of Thun in the midst of the Swiss Alps, 200 children and young musicians spent four days together preparing a final concert which was held in a beautiful old music hall in the centre of historic medieval Bern. Two tour groups were invited for the event: the "Rondo di Cello" from Marseille, France, directed by Chantal Latil, and the "Hartt Viola Tour Group" from Connecticut, U.S.A., directed by Melinda Daetsch. Together with the Camerata Suzuki from Bienne, Switzerland directed by Marc-Antoine Bonanomi and Sandrine Schär-Chiffelle, the invited groups formed an orchestra and performed arrangements of Libertango and Meditango by A. Piazzola. Another orchestra formed by all the Suzuki teachers of the workshop accompanied 4 young pianists in J.S.Bach's Concerto for 4 pianos in A-minor. Both orchestras were directed with enthusiasm and skill by Jean-Claude Latil from Marseille, France.

During the workshop all the young musicians took group lessons on their instruments, as well as lessons in folk music or jazz improvisation, in arts and crafts, and even in African dance and drum playing. In the evening chamber music concerts were given by the youngest participants, while the older musicians were touring the region, giving, for example, a concert in the Romanesque church of Interlaken. An African evening, beginning with a buffet of African specialties, provided the opportunity for all the participants (children and their parents) to get acquainted with a new instrument (African drums), and to try out some African dance routines. Everyone was dressed in traditional African clothes: "boubous" or African T-shirts made by the children during the workshop craft sessions. A professional group of African musicians and dancers then closed the evening.

Along with respecting the basic principles of the Suzuki method--especially the positive attitude in teaching as well as the joy of playing the well-known Suzuki repertoire together--this workshop opened new doors into the music world. Several pieces were added to the repertoire, such as the Prelude, Waltzes and Polka for 2 violins by D. Shostakovich, the 6th Brandenburg Concerto by J.S. Bach for the violists, and Tangos by J.C. Latil for the cellists to mention a few of them. These were all played in the final concert in Bern, as were selections from the classical Suzuki repertoire. One of the aims of the organisers (The Association of the Friends of the Suzuki School of Bienne, presided by Mr. J. Bader) was to expose the children to the riches of various musical cultures, so new musical experiences were introduced by means of the jazz and folk music courses. The orchestras, in which young European and American musicians played side by side, further enhanced their multi-cultural and multi-linguistic experience. As a result, letters and e-mails are now flying around the world to maintain these new relationships. So, on a plane above the sheer musical experience, we can hope that Suzuki workshops of this nature contribute in their way to more peace in the world.