

Vol. 15.2 March/April 2010

Suzuki
Piano
Basics
foundation News

To facilitate, promote, and educate the public on the way of teaching and playing the piano taught at the Talent Education Research Institute in Matsumoto, Japan by Dr. Haruko Kataoka

**Piano Basics
Foundation News**

Editor

Karen Hagberg

Layout

Teri Paradero

Translators

Chisa Aoki
Teri Paradero

Production and Distribution

Linda Nakagawa
Barbara Meixner
Sacramento Teachers
Research Group

Send Articles to:

Piano Basics Foundation
67 Shepard St. Rochester NY 14620
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com
FAX: 585-244-3542

Memberships / Subscriptions

Linda Nakagawa
242 River Acres Drive
Sacramento, CA 95831
916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

Next Deadline: April 15, 2010

*How to Capture
the Hearts of Children*

(Part 3a of 3)

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
Vol. 13 No. 10, April 5, 2004
from a Lecture delivered at the
39th Chubu Japan Medical Congress of Pediatrics, Matsumoto,
August 24, 2003 (4 months before Sensei's death in January, 2004)
Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

Until recently, I had been living peacefully by myself, but I am now living with my grandchildren and their family. As a result, I have truly been given the opportunity to study.

Recently, I found my granddaughter, a fifth grader, sitting at our table impolitely slouched and propped up by her elbows. So I promptly proceeded to tell her, "Hey! Why are you sitting like an old woman. Tables are not made to support your elbows!" She responded, "Mom does it." Her mother who was nearby jumped to her feet startled by the comment. Her immediate reaction was to claim that she had no recollection of doing such a thing. Understandably, she felt put on the spot in the presence of a strict mother-in-law.

After mulling it over all next day, she was apologetic but wondered when she could have possibly sat hunched over leaning on her elbows. However, she finally realized that she would sit at the table in the same exact way while she read the newspaper. Those of us from the older generation have a saying, "Children are mirrors of parents." Children do what parents do. Working with my students, I can truly attest to being able to actually envision their parents just from watching the children's behavior.

Long ago, I had a student whose family was originally from Shimazu Domain (one of the most powerful feudal clan from the Edo era), Kagoshima. As an adult, he attended the medical school at the Shinshu University. It was rumored that his family was very proper. Since he was very young, his manners were quite exemplary. At some point, I had given him a piece of candy at his lesson. At the very next lesson, he stood erect in a well-mannered posture and said, "Sensei, thank you so much for the treat last week!" I had to ask him what treat I had given him because I had already forgotten the incident. He politely replied, "I received candy from you." Observing his perfectly proper manners and his tendency to be a little on the stiff side when he played the piano, I asked curiously, "At your house, if you lay about watching TV, who scolds you?" He said that it was his father. I came to the conclusion that their household must be conducted in a very strict manner in accordance to their Shimazu tradition of very proper etiquette and manners. Children truly grow up watching and observing their parents' behavior. It is so true that it is easy to capture the hearts of children. All you have to do is relate to them as individual human beings. You cannot think that they are merely children. Of course, when it comes to playing with children, I join right in playing with their childish toys. I refer to them as ___-chan (suffix used as a diminutive for a child or a fond person). However, when the lesson begins, I never use the suffix. Instead, I use 'you'. I will say, "You must do this properly!" Calling them ___-chan when they are engaged in studying or having to do tasks in a correct way changes the whole mood of the situation. It results in reverting to the world of treating them like children.

There is an old adage: Within a word contains the soul. You should not say to children, "You are such a good child." It is fine to say it when they are at play. However, when discussing a serious subject with them and you do not treat them like children, they will not only understand the gravity of important issues, but they will remember it forever. They will remember good issues as well as bad ones.

Just recently my forty-year-old daughter brought up an incident that happened over thirty years ago. We were bidding guests from Europe farewell. She happened to be carrying her very favorite purse. Our guest's child really admired and wanted the purse. Though it was an item that was not easy to find, I insisted that my daughter give it to the child and I promised to buy her another one. My daughter must have been five or six years old at the time. She told me that to this day she still begrudges what happened. I had assumed that since she was such a young child, she would have forgotten about it, but one should never do such a thing. By unilaterally deciding to give a child's most prized possession away and quickly dismissing the action by a promise to replace it, a child's feelings can be hurt. You have to ask their permission, first. Without asking her, "Is it okay to give this away?", I ended up treating her like a child. Childhood is truly a wonderful stage in life. I believe that we as adults, those of us who are part of children's lives, must take the treatment of children very seriously.

There have been terrible incidents recently involving children in the news that were very upsetting to me. A child was pushed off a tall parking garage. A teenager who lied to her parents about her whereabouts so she could go to Shibuya (city in the middle of Tokyo where youth like to hang out and can get themselves into trouble) was found out and quarantined by her parents. One of the Cabinet Ministers harshly criticized the parents for the abuse of their children, and stated that the parents should be severely and publicly punished like in the olden days when they would tie up a criminal with a long rope and let a horse drag him around the village in public and then behead him. This minister was not aware that what happened was his responsibility, too. He should be beheaded. All the adults should be beheaded. They did not protect the children. Parents, however, because of their immediate proximity to their children, must bear direct responsibility for their children. Unfortunately, it is the trend of our modern society where parents themselves are weak human beings. Everyday we witness

murderous acts on TV. In Shibuya, the store shelves are lined with merchandise to entice anybody's desires. With such temptations, it seems too daunting a task for mere parents and children to tackle. Nevertheless, children need extraordinarily strong parents to be able to handle this world such as ours.

Of course parents are not the only ones to bear this responsibility. Because this is a sign of our times, responsibility is inherent in what has become the reality of the present. This should already be apparent to the very people who run our country, the ones who should bear the very

punishment that they say should befall abusive parents. Shouldn't it be their top priority to enlist change? Watching their happy smiling faces on TV, I felt that they are devoid of such awareness or responsibility.

As I mentioned before, because the left-brain intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge are not fully developed until children become adults, not only the parents, but all adults in their environment must look out for their best interest. We must be earnest in teaching children everything since this is their most crucial stage for learning.

Teachers: Encourage Parents to Join Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation!

At our general membership meeting in Louisville last summer, the members present decided to try hard to persuade their families to join Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation. It was felt that each family would read the newsletter more attentively if they were to receive their own copy. Reading Kataoka Sensei's writing is inspiring to parents. Moreover, parents find it very motivating to read about our workshop, institute, and 10-Piano Concert events, and it gives them the idea of participating in the future.

So please join us in our effort! We enclose a copy of our membership form that you may reproduce and circulate in your studios. Let's allow our organization to touch the lives of our students directly through their parents, and not just from us at a weekly lesson!

New Found Career: The Call that Changed My Life

by Barbara Ray Francis, Brooklyn, New York

Life's journey is often guided by Divine providence. As I look back over the past ten years, I can see how one telephone call helped to change the course of my life and musical career.

After having taught traditional piano for a number of years, I lost interest in continuing along that path. The results of my labors seemed so unrewarding.

From my childhood experience I remembered how alone I felt in studying the piano. So, as a teacher I began seeking something that would spark the interest of children and give them a sense of connectedness to others. Music Mind Games was the resource provided and thus my journey began.

My interest in locating a Music Mind Games workshop led me to call Kathie Sheeley in Atlanta, GA. Upon Kathie's advice I called Dr. Karen Hagberg, who invited me to attend the Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Workshop in Sacramento, CA.

I recall saying to myself I am not interested in Suzuki



Barbara Ray Francis (standing) with Ogiwara Sensei and student Shailen Smith at Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop, February 2010.

piano. I just want something fun for kids. Dr. Hagberg convinced me to come to Sacramento that summer. The SPB 10-Piano Workshop was like none other I had ever attended. Daily, Kataoka Sensei and her helpers from Matsumoto, Japan helped to sculpt compositions students had learned individually into an ensemble of ten performers who learned the art of teamwork, responsibility and appreciation for excellence in quality tone production.

The Workshop was coordinated by Linda Nakagawa. I was made to feel welcome by the Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation members. I sensed that this organization's purpose was the total development of the ability of each student and not elevating personalities. What a wonderful opportunity to have spent five days observing the intense preparation for the 10-Piano Concert.

Realizing my need to get on to the opening of the Music Mind Games workshop, I mentioned to some teachers that I would be leaving the day before the Concert. I was informed that it would not be wise to leave without witnessing the finished product. With some schedule adjustments I stayed, and my life has been changed forever.

I began attending workshops regularly, and had the good fortune of studying with Kataoka Sensei at a few of them. I have been teaching SPB for almost ten years and Dr. Hagberg has been a wonderful mentor. My students have attended the Louisville Summer Music Institute, and also workshops in Rochester, NY, and most recently Louisville, KY. Leah Brammer has also come to teach at my studio in Brooklyn, NY.

Each workshop inspires me to grow so that I may nurture my students by love. I am inspired to respect and to cherish the selfless efforts of the Japanese teachers and those who have studied with Dr. Kataoka over the years

Research is ongoing and ever unfolding knowledge of the simplicity of Basics for the production of beautiful tone.

Ability Development and the Growth Mindset

by Leah Brammer, Portola Valley, California
blog from 2/14/2010 at www.coresuzukipiano.net

Alfred Binet, the inventor of the IQ test in the early 20th century, wrote:

A few modern philosophers...assert that an individual's intelligence is a fixed quantity, a quantity which cannot be increased. We must protest and react against this brutal pessimism...With practice, training, and above all, method, we manage to increase our attention, our memory, our judgment and literally to become more intelligent than we were before.

It is interesting that the Binet-Simon scale was adopted in the US and has come to represent a number which defines a person's "fixed" intelligence.

Dr. Carol Dweck, a psychologist at Stanford, has written the book ***Mindset: the New Psychology of Success***. She defines two types of mindsets about learning: Fixed mindset and Growth mindset. A *fixed mindset* is one in which you believe your intelligence, or "the way I am," is "fixed" or not changeable; and a *growth mindset* is one in which you believe that you can develop talent/ability/habits with practice.

Her documented re-search over many years shows just how much a person's mindset affects his/her ultimate ability to learn. When students believe that intelligence is fixed, they are set up to need to prove their intelligence; they do not want to understand the value of working hard; and they become fearful of mistakes which would make them look dumb. They believe that if you have to work at something, you must not be good at it, and that things come easily to people who are true geniuses.

One interesting result of this research shows that praising children about their intelligence negatively affects their performance. Dweck says:

If success means they're smart, then failure means they're dumb...If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by

mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. That way their children don't have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence.

How do we teach effort and determination? Infants and toddlers already have an intense amount of determination and drive. Our job is to preserve it by not praising results which focus on being smart or fast, but instead to appreciate the process of repetition and effort.

Dr. Dweck says:

When we say to children, "Wow, you did that so quickly!" or "look, you didn't make any mistakes!" what message are we sending? We are telling them that we prize speed and perfection. Speed and perfection are the enemies of difficult learning.

Dr. Suzuki says: "Knowledge plus 10,000 times equals ability." In Malcom Gladwell's ***Outliers: The***



Leah Brammer. Photo by Ron Long.

Story of Success the second chapter is entitled "The 10,000 hour rule." He discusses several breakthrough thinkers/performers/achievers from Mozart to Bill Gates. In each case he approximates it took them 10,000 hours to acquire "true expertise." In Mozart's example he notes that the "masterworks" were composed at age 21 and later, after Mozart had been composing full pieces for over ten years. He also points to the variable of opportunity (environment) and shows how each great achiever had the right opportunity at the right time.

Last week I attended the Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop in Phoenix, Arizona where I had a lesson. It must seem so odd to hear that after thirty years of studying and teaching Suzuki piano, I am taking a lesson on Twinkles. Yet each time there is something new to learn and improve, and I come back motivated to continue practicing and working to improve my tone.

There were several students in the workshop who are now graduated from high school and yet they

are still coming to workshops to study and perform. I believe one of them is majoring in piano, but the others are not. To me this shows how wonderful the Suzuki Method is! The students, after all this time, are still studying piano because they did not grow up practicing only for the next competition.

...praising children about their intelligence negatively affects their performance.

Rather, they practiced for their own learning, to participate in non-competitive graduations which are based on skill acquisition, to play together with others in 10-Piano Concerts, or for a Friendship Concert. They have a lifelong love for music and sound that did not end after they graduated from high school and listed their competitions on their college applications.

A growth mindset enables a person to continue to improve even after s/he is already one of the "best" in the field. It sustains intrinsic motivation by keep-ing alive the drive to learn for self-improvement and for a sense of contribution and purpose. This is Life Ability: the ability to live life optimally.

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

<http://core.ecu.edu/hist/wilburnk/SuzukiPianoBasics>

