

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**

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This Year in Matsumoto

By Karmalita Bawar, Richmond, Virginia

The term "research" does not begin to describe my experience in Japan this year. I went in order to research tone, and how the Japanese teachers demonstrated their high expectations to the students during this year's 10-Piano Concert in Matsumoto. I also researched the important teaching points of the many pieces which were performed.



Ogiwara Sensei teaching an American student at the Talent Education Institute, Matsumoto 2010. Photo by Malinda Rawls.

Even as many years of my own research have passed, the message remains the same: use the same technique and tone first taught in the Twinkle Variations to achieve high musicality in all of the subsequent pieces, even the most advanced ones. Clear, ringing tone, without force, is something one must hear to understand. I may try to explain it to my students and their parents, but if I myself am not sure, how will they be made to understand? This is why, I believe, so many excellent teachers return

year after year to study with Dr. Suzuki, then Dr. Kataoka, and now, the Japanese Piano teachers in Matsumoto, Japan. I must remain humble and be open in order to change and learn. The moment I feel like I know it all, I am indeed lost!

My intention for traveling this great distance is to dedicate myself to research, and to expose another student from my own studio to this experience. I allowed my student to find her own path while there. I simply encouraged her, and took notes during the rehearsals, which I later shared with her. Every time I saw her, I met with her for a few moments. Her safety and security were a top priority for me. Her experience there was very different from mine, albeit very positive and truly extraordinary in every way imaginable. Then, by sharing our experiences with each other, our own adventures were made the more rich.

Some of my unique adventures this time included: making Soba Noodles from scratch; joining my host family's annual Miso Paste making tradition; Fujikyū Amusement Park; learning how to make two different brooch crafts from my host mother and then creating my own brooches which I (and my roommate, Aleli Tibey) presented as gifts to each teacher; eating out at an Irish Pub; enjoying the famous graphic design artist's paper work on display at the Matsumoto Art Museum; visiting Kiso Valley's famous craft

town Narai during a mild blizzard; and baby-sitting Hisayo Kubota's adorable son, Soichiro.



Snow falling on the historic town of Narai, Japan, 2010.
Photo by Malinda Rawls.

I doubt I will ever be sufficiently unself-conscious to enjoy the wonderful Onsen (Japanese Hot Spa Bath Houses) for which Matsumoto is renowned, but it certainly is an option other teachers have chosen.

So, as you see, there is much to do in this gorgeous part of the world, and more research to be had. I feel I have grown, but am already yearning to hear that 10-Piano sound again as soon as I am able. I encourage all Suzuki Piano Teachers to "learn from the source," and attend the next 10-Piano Concert of your choosing. It will be an ear-opener, and you, too, may want to research your own tone and understanding of it.



Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation General Membership Meeting.

This year's general membership meeting will be held during the Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Institute, July 20-24, 2010, exact day and time tba. Current members are invited to attend. Nominations for new officers may be submitted to Ann Taylor: ann@anntaylorstudio.net before July 15, 2010. See you in Louisville!

Brooches

by Aleli Tibay, Laguna Niguel, California



Kazue Kano, the "Queen of Crafts." Matsumoto 2010.

Photo by Malinda Rawls

One of the highlights of the Japan trip had nothing to do with the piano. I am not a person interested in doing crafts, sewing, knitting, etc., but our host mother, Kazue Kano,* is the queen of crafts. Every dish and cup we used in the house were handmade pottery. By her! All the baskets we saw were handwoven. By her Framed dried flower arrangements adorned the walls of every room. Curtains were sewn by her. She also gives cooking and baking classes at her home for friends.

All our meals could beat 5-star hotel/restaurants. And no matter how late we came home, she would be ready with dinner. (Am I lucky To end up in that House or what?!?)

Kazue Kano taught me and my homestay partner, Karmalita Bawar, how to make brooches from cut-up

handkerchiefs and newspaper scraps. With just toothpicks, scissors, glue, skewers, glittery nail polish; the final products were unique and beautiful. We proudly wore our brooches every day to rehearsals: sometimes hooked up to my headband; other times on my shirt. Many of the teachers were gushing over them with *oohs* and *aahs*. We decided to make more to give to the admirers. We ended up making 18 newspaper brooches for each American teacher, and eight handkerchief brooches for each Japanese teacher. We were constantly running out of materials, especially glue. Actually, it was Karmalita who made the majority of them while seated at re-hearsals, as I had to be on stage to help adjust seat and footboxes for the students on Piano No. 2.

I even visited a craft store (strange place for me, a non-"crafty" person) to get materials for a weekend fun class we offered for anyone interested.



Handkerchief brooch made by Aleli Tibay, Matsumoto 2010. Photo by Aleli Tibay.

**Kazue Kano is the mother-in-law of Hisayo Kubota, one of the Japanese teachers in Matsumoto.*



Aleli Tibay with handmade brooch in her hair. Matsumoto, 2010.

Photo by Malinda Rawls.

ATTENTION :

Matsumoto 10-Piano concert DVD for \$65, while supply lasts.

Check payable to Piano Basics Foundation.

Send to: Linda Nakagawa, 242 River Acres Dr. Sacramento, CA 95831

Yuko Mori

by Bruce Anderson, St. Petersburg Beach, Florida

This year my visit to Japan had a two-fold purpose. Besides the 10-Piano Concert I was invited to attend the Celebration Concert for fifty years of teaching of Yuko Mori. Ms. Mori, a Suzuki violin instructor held in high esteem around the world, worked closely with Dr. Suzuki from the beginning. Her studio has continually produced the finest examples of the Suzuki Violin Method.

During my 3½ years in Japan studying with Dr. Kataoka, I was also fortunate to study the Suzuki Violin Method with Ms. Mori and Dr. Suzuki, starting with the bow. I was also Ms. Mori's accompanist during those years.

Today there is nothing that could make me happier than to have my students perform with 'beautiful sound' and to have three- and four-year-old students exhibit proof of the high potential of young children... Dr. Suzuki's focus on the ability of young children was the spark that provided me with a surprising challenge in a new field. This spark grew stronger as I glimpsed into the faces of the future. Observing students who studied 5-10 years in a place of living education to find 'beautiful sound' gave me something to work and live for over the

In her greeting to the audience, Ms. Mori wrote:

past fifty years. In addition to this, playing the violin every day fed both my body and spirit.

As I sat and listened to this concert I was deeply moved and realized that Ms. Mori had truly realized her dream. The following day there was a teacher's workshop for which I was translator. I then realized how much of my teaching was influenced not only by Dr. Kataoka, but also by Ms. Mori and Dr. Suzuki himself. We can always learn from great teachers, regardless of which instrument or methods they teach.



Bruce Anderson helping his student, Kelly Margaret Doyle, at rehearsals for 10-Piano Concert. Matsumoto 2010.

Photo by Malinda Rawls.

A Big Surprise

by Suzanne Dixon, Asheville, North Carolina



One of the most surprising aspects of listening to rehearsals was learning to appreciate the true beauty of two pieces that I had not particularly cared for in the past: Sonata, G major, Op.49, no.2, *Tempo di Minuetto* and Sonatina, F major, *Allegro assai*: both pieces by Beethoven. Upon reflection, I believe the reason was because I had played these pieces (poorly) during my childhood, and still retained the aural memory of that time.

Thank you Japanese teachers for opening my ears to these two beautiful pieces! I look forward to getting home and studying them, using the Basics.

Left: Suzanne Dixon with origami outside Harmony Hall at the 2010 10-Piano Concert, Matsumoto.

Photo by Sophie Wong.

Making Soba Noodles

by Christine Albro, Cary, North Carolina

One morning during our time in Matsumoto Malinda Rawls and I were invited to Kano-san's house, which had been our homestay in 2008. This morning the Kano family was making soba noodles. Karmalita Bawar and Aleli Tibay stayed with the Kano family this year. The four of us were introduced to the ancient art of making these noodles.

First the flour is mixed: two parts buckwheat and one part white flour. (There are infinitesimally small bugs in the buckwheat flour that add to the smell and the taste of the noodles.) Next, water is very gradually worked into the flour mixture until it forms a ball. The ball of dough is rolled out, in a set pattern, with a regular size rolling pin, until it is about 14+ in diameter. Then the dough is wrapped around a long rolling pin and worked in a special way until it forms a square. After



Malinda Rawls slicing soba noodles, Matsumoto, April 2010.
Photo by Christine Albro.

that it is folded in half and then in thirds and taken to another table where the dough is hand-sliced into ribbons a little thinner than a matchstick. When enough have been sliced off, the noodles are carefully picked up, lightly twisted into a bundle, gently shaken to remove any excess flour, and laid in a box.

Then, when the noodles were all made, we got to eat soba noodles. The noodles are cooked, in small batches, for one minute in boiling water. Next they are placed in a colander and rinsed with cold water, drained, and dished up for the table. Each person has a bowl of flavorful liquid as well as a small plate with shredded daikon, slivered spring onion, and wasabi to add to the liquid along with the noodles. We ate a lot of these delicious noodles. Then a little of the soba-cooking liquid was added to the broth left in the bowls, and we drank soba tea! It was a lot of fun to work and eat together!

Sad Goodbyes

by Ann Taylor, Tucson, Arizona



Arizona teachers Vicki Merley (L) and Ann Taylor at rehearsal for 10-Piano Concert. Matsumoto, 2010.

Photo by Malinda Rawls.

One thing that always stays in my mind after going to 10-Piano in Matsumoto is the memory of the departure. The day after the concerts and the banquet that follows, we meet early (6:30 a.m.) at the buses to go back to Narita and home. It is so hard to say goodbye. The families we have stayed with and the teachers who live there . we have to leave them! We have worked hard together to have wonderful concerts, and we feel very bonded to each other,



Homestay families waving goodbye. Matsumoto 2010.

Photo by Malinda Rawls.

Many of us cry and the rest of us feel like it. Since we are on two buses, and we will stop only briefly on the ride back to the airport, we also have to say goodbye to some of the students we have come to know, and some of our fellow teachers as well. We all feel close to each other . we have learned much together and shared adventure! Working and sharing so intensely for 2½ weeks has been a memorable time and a wonderful gift. Now we have to go back to our individual studios, and apply what we have gleaned It is a challenge and exciting, but it is sad as well..

My Time in Japan

*by Jason Li, age 13, student of Fumi Kawasaki, Sunnyvale, California
performed Beethoven's Sonata, Op.49, no.2, Tempo di Minuetto*

I didn't come here to Japan for sightseeing or shopping. I came here to play piano. For two weeks, for more than 3 hours each day, I was in the piano room. Measures 27 to 39, 100 times – I can practically cite all the parts I had to do each and every day. By the day of the dress rehearsal, I admit I was tired of my piece, but repetition was what the Japanese practiced. Repetition was their method of bringing out more tone, better timing, and note accuracy. I did more than teachers asked. If they asked for 20 times, I knew I was lacking and had to step it up to 50. I have no room for flaws. I am a guest here in Japan, and I can't let down my teachers and my friends.

The 18 days I spent here in Japan didn't just teach me how to practice piano. It didn't teach me how to just play one piece. Everything I learned at rehearsals can be put to use with all my future pieces. Outside the piano room, culture and language boomed all around me. Surrounded by new foods, language, manners, and games, I found myself submerged in a totally different world. The air, mountains, and streams are very different from the tall buildings of San Jose. Japan wasn't just a trip. It wasn't just a concert. It was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to enter a whole new world, much different from anything I have seen. My host family was caring and fun. The mother worked extra hard

to cook, the dad took us places whenever he had time. I made many great friends here, and it most definitely wouldn't be complete without all the teachers who supported me. I only had a mere 18 days worth of the interesting Japanese life, but I hope I can someday come back, and relive this moment once again.



Jason Li in rehearsal with his teacher, Fumi Kawasaki. Matsumoto 2010. Photo by Malinda Rawls.

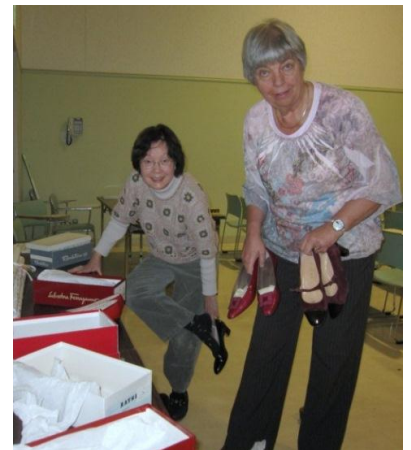


Mei Ihara and Cleo Brimhall trying on Dr. Kataoka's shoes. Matsumoto 2010. Photo by Malinda Rawls.

Can We Fill These Shoes?

by Malinda Rawls

One day before rehearsals, after we all took turns teaching and being taught, the Japanese teachers brought in several pairs of Dr. Kataoka's shoes and invited us to try them on and, if they fit, to take the ones we liked. We thought it was symbolic that we were "trying to fill Sensei's shoes." Not that that we ever could.



Pam Werner and Cleo Brimhall with Kataoka Sensei's shoes. Matsumoto 2010. Photo by Malinda Rawls.

Paying Respects

by Christine Albro, Cary, North Carolina



Malinda Rawls at the tomb of Dr. & Mrs. Suzuki. Matsumoto 2010.
Photo by Christine Albro.

In 2006, 2008, and again this year, 2010, all the teachers who came to Matsumoto have gone to Dr. Kataoka's grave to pay our respects to our Sensei. We all miss her very much since she passed away on January 10, 2004. The cemetery in Matsumoto is high on a hill just out of town. As we approach the cemetery we can see the entire side of the hill

covered with pale pink cherry blossoms.

As we gather around Sensei's monument, we have a beautiful view of the surrounding hills and valleys. The spring air is soft and fresh. One or two of the Japanese teachers sweep the gravesite and clean the stones with water from buckets kept in the cemetery. All of us quietly remember our wonderful teacher as we each approach the site of her interment and lay a stick of incense and perhaps some flowers there.



Linda Nakagawa laying incense at Dr. Kataoka's tomb, with Malinda Rawls taking photograph. Matsumoto, 2010. Photo by Christine Albro.

After that we make our way to the very top of the hill to pay our respects to Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki at their gravesite.

During this brief interlude in the 10-Piano Concert preparation we remember Dr. Kataoka and Dr. Suzuki and their legacy for us. We are reminded how important it is to carry on their work so that their wisdom will not be forgotten. Dr. Kataoka's research in sound production is left to us now. Dr. Suzuki's dream of peace in the world through the universal language of beautiful music-making must not descend into oblivion.

Piano Basics Foundation

To add or change items on the Suzuki Piano Basics website, contact
Karen Hagberg (kh@hagbergsuzuki.com, 585-244-0490).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:
<http://core.ecu.edu/hist/wilburnk/SuzukiPianoBasics>

Thank you to the following teachers who purchased an additional studio membership for their families!

Phyllis Newman
Dr. Carolyn Barrett

