

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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Tough Love

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
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Translated by Chisa Aoki and
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"Nowadays, mothers are overly indulgent," said a teacher in junior high school. "When it's raining, the school gate is full of cars with mothers picking up their children. You'll also see a long line up of students at the school pay phone holding phone cards demanding, 'Come pick me up!'"

I remember when I was in elementary school: it was a private school so most of the students were commuting by train or by bus. When it started raining, there were some parents who delivered umbrellas to their children. However, although I lived 20 minutes away, my mother never brought me an umbrella, no matter how hard it was raining. Naturally, even at a young age, I developed independence. For example, as it started to rain, I often asked my friend who lived in the same area, "Did you bring an umbrella?" and if the answer was "Yes," I would ask her to share her umbrella with me; or if I had a piano lesson after school, as I arrived the Mejiro Station I would think of the best way to walk through town with the least chance of getting wet. Eventually, as I was getting ready for school in the morning, I learned to look up at the sky and make my own decision of whether I needed to bring an umbrella or not.

Children should never be overprotected. They need to be allowed to be in situations where they are required to be responsible.

We had the opportunity to learn this valuable lesson at the 10-Piano Concert in November, 1997. It happened when I was rehearsing with ten advanced students who would be performing the first movement of the Haydn Sonata. At this level, once students learn the notes of a piece they become complacent and usually do

not practice seriously. The final week before the concert fast approached, and although the students were able to play without mistakes or hesitation, it was obvious that the parts of the piece I had specifically taught them to practice a few days prior had not improved.

So I shouted instinctively, "Not even one of you is practicing seriously. It is completely meaningless to come together to rehearse with such people. Go home! Practice and come back at 8 tonight to rehearse again." As I was yelling, I wondered if I was being too severe. Furthermore, there were three or four students who lived far away. It would take them about 3 hours round trip and would not leave them much time to practice. What should I do? Nevertheless, determined to be tough,

I repeated, "Go home and practice!" I recall that it was already after 2pm.

That night, all ten students came back to rehearse after returning home to practice. When they started to play, we all thought Wow! All the teachers, both local and from the U.S., were amazed. It was hard to believe that these were the same exact students who played unsatisfactorily only a few hours ago. Their performance was unbelievably beautiful and reached a much higher level.

I realized then that I was so glad that I had been tough! I came to be fully convinced that adults should always remember to be stern with children. And yes, children are wonderful! They get scolded, become motivated, and can transform and improve to such a high level in only three or four hours of practice!

The best time to study and master any endeavor is during childhood when efficiency for learning and practicing is at peak level. Let us all work hard!

Greeting by Mrs. Keiko Ogiwara

Translation by Haruko Sakakibara

A speech delivered after the Friendship Concert in Sacramento on Sunday, February 7, 2010

*Translator's note: Today is the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II. It is very special that we had a **friendship** concert on this particular day. Exchange of the Japanese and American students began with an idea of Sacramento student Derek Wong I believe, and Dr. Kataoka really made it happen. How fortunate we all are that we can watch wonderful exchanges through music like this!*

Thank you for coming to the concert. We are so happy to see so many of you. I am really glad that I could come again and was able to listen to the students' performances.

This year it is really so hot and humid in Japan, so we were sweltering every day before we came to the U.S. We are so lucky to find Sacramento to be fairly cool.

Well, let me tell you something about Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, the originator of the Suzuki Method. He used to say, "Did you know there is a day when you don't have to practice? It is any day when you don't eat anything from morning till night. Practicing is the same as everyday meals!" He actually meant that we have to practice every single day, but he always loved jokes, and that is how he used to talk to us. He always made us laugh.

What do you think? Can we actually practice every day? Isn't it so hard to do that? Dr. Haruko

Kataoka, who was our teacher used to say, "No matter where I go, anywhere in the world, there is no such thing as a child who loves to practice." So parents, please help your children to practice. Say, "It is time for your practice today!" in a nice voice.

Childhood passes so quickly. If children practice piano every day, it will be their fortune in the future. By practicing playing the piano, they learn how to be patient, how to accumulate effort, how to concentrate, and they will also be able to develop their beautiful sensitivity.

The fortune they are building now is something that cannot be purchased in the future. These invaluable inner qualities become important building blocks for their ability to manage their lives. I sincerely hope parents who are here today will share this conviction.

Thank you.

Ogiwara Sensei Becomes Honorary Member of SPBF Board

The Board of the Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of Keiko Ogiwara Sensei as an Honorary Member. We feel privileged that she accepted invitation to serve in an advisory capacity. The SPBF Board made this appointment in the spirit of fulfilling our mission to maintain close contact with the activities and the pedagogy of Dr. Kataoka's followers in Japan, and to continue our active exchange between students from Japan and other countries.

Welcome, Ogiwara Sensei!

August in Rochester

By Pam Fusselman, Omaha, Nebraska

A trip to Rochester has been on my "bucket list" for a few years. I decided that 2010 was the year to take care of that. Even though I can remove that item from the list now, my first visit to Rochester will not be my last.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to have Karen Hagberg meet us at the airport were treated to a talk about the area and its attractions. From her enthusiasm it was evident that one of Karen's favorites would be Wegman's. She was trying to describe what it was like to be there when she finally gave up on words and told us "You just HAVE to go.+I found this to be true. [Editor's note: Wegman's is an enormous and unique grocery chain that began in Rochester.]

Like any workshop with our Japanese mentors, the first day was helpful and inspiring. That evening I composed a long email trying to describe all that was seen and heard. Wishing that my Nebraska colleagues Carol and Ellen had been able to come with me, I was trying to recreate for them the experiences of the day. This exercise was somewhat futile. I am not a word artist, but the problem was more than just not having the right words. In trying to recreate all that one gets from a workshop, words are insufficient. It is always true that "You just HAVE to go there."

Everyone who reads this is already aware of how vital it is for us to do everything we can to get to a workshop at least once a year. Living in the middle of the country is an advantage to me because it is about the same distance and travel time to attend workshops in any of our locations, both east and west. I've been to all of these locations at one time or another and they are all great. You can't go wrong no matter where you decide to go.

However, if you have never been there, this writer would encourage you to add Rochester to *your* list of workshop experiences. Or at least add it to your "bucket list." I was concerned that it cost a little more to travel in that direction, but the local teachers more than made up for that by providing transportation so that I didn't need to rent a car. The whole setup was very nice, with the hotel within two miles of the workshop site. I appreciated being able to walk to almost everything the entire week, and on the few occasions when walking was not possible there was someone offering a ride. There was adequate time and opportunity for teachers to practice, which is also important to me. Our hosts treated us all with a welcome picnic the first night and gave us plenty of opportunity to enjoy the tastes and sights of Rochester during our stay. I could go on about the hospitality, but it seems best just to offer, "You just HAVE to go there."

Announcing *DEEPLY DISCOUNTED* Suzuki Piano Basics Starter Packs

For a limited time, Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation is pleased to offer its members Starter Packs for your students at a price even lower than our usual discounted price for materials. As usual, all materials are sent to Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation Members free of postage. We hope you can take advantage of this unique opportunity.

Starter Pack #1 \$50.00 CD's **Kataoka recordings of Books 1-3**
Books **Nurtured by Love, by Shinichi Suzuki**
Sensibility and Education, by Haruko Kataoka
How to Teach Beginners (Books 1-2), by Haruko Kataoka

Starter Pack #2 \$25.00 Books **Nurtured by Love, by Shinichi Suzuki**
Sensibility and Education, by Haruko Kataoka
How to Teach Beginners (Books 1-2), by Haruko Kataoka

Please use order form enclosed with this newsletter or contact Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, California 95831 g.nakagawa@comcast.net

Order of Pieces for Suzuki Piano Basics Method as taught by Dr. Haruko Kataoka and as presently taught by her followers in Japan

In light of recent changes in the published Suzuki Piano Method, Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura were consulted during the August workshops in Rochester and Sacramento regarding the order of the repertoire as it was taught by Dr. Kataoka and as it continues to be taught by her followers in Japan. They have not adopted changes from the original repertoire. Until Book 6, the repertoire remains the same and in the same order, except that Für Elise is taught at the end of Book 5 and the Daquin Cuckoo is taught as a Book 7 piece. Starting with Book 5, it is considered very important that all movements of multi-movement pieces are studied together. Here are the Books 1-7 repertoire changes and the order of the post-Book 7 pieces as they are currently being taught.

Books 5-7

Book 5: Für Elise taught at the end of the book
Book 6: Little Prelude
K. 330 (all movements)
K. 545 (all movements)
Book 7: Mozart: K.331 (all movements)
Scarlatti: Sonata Pastorale
Daquin: The Cuckoo

Post-Book 7

Mozart: K. 332 (all movements)
Handel: Prelude (in book 7)
Paderewski: Minuet Op. 14 No. 1
Mozart: Fantasy in d minor
Bach: Italian Concerto in F Major (all movements)
Handel: Harmonious Blacksmith
Haydn: Sonata in Eb Major Hob. XVI:49
Beethoven: Rondo, Op. 51 no. 1 in C major
Haydn Concerto in D Major (all movements)
Mozart Concerto (all movements)
(Coronation Concerto, K.537 or Concerto, K. 488)

In Rochester we were reminded that 2-octave scales, as they are printed in the Method Rose (holding the tonic notes for two beats), are practiced at mm72 for the quarter note, once up and down *forte*, and once up and down *pianissimo* until a student is in Book 6. Only after studying scales slowly for this amount of time are students considered ready to play four octaves in eighth and sixteenth notes.

Dr. Kataoka's recordings of Books 1-3 remain the preferred recordings. After Book 3, teachers research the best professional recordings of the pieces for their students to hear. As Dr. Kataoka always taught, we teachers should continuously research recordings and choose the very best for our students.

We were also reminded that teachers hear *Twinkles* and continually improve on them *at every lesson* until a student has completed Minuet 2 in Book 2.

The reading program continues to consist of the *Method Rose*, followed by a series of Czerny Etudes. The list below summarizes the order of the reading pieces.

Method Rose
Czerny: Recreations
Czerny: Op. 599
Czerny: Op. 718 for Left Hand
Czerny: Op. 748
Czerny: Op. 849
Czerny: Op. 299

February Workshops

Teachers from Japan will conduct 5-day workshops in Atlanta, Georgia and in Orange County, California in February 2011. Please see Upcoming Events on page 8 for dates and contact information. We hope you can all consider attending one or both of these events and possibly to bring a student. We all need a week for ourselves to concentrate on the art of teaching once or twice a year. Hope to see you there.

Standing Up to Students and Parents

By Karen Hagberg

Over two decades ago, I had a conversation with Dr. Kataoka about the ability of American teachers to teach Suzuki Piano Basics. At that time, she said that we were getting better at teaching Basics to beginners, but that, as students advanced, the basic skills they were developing as beginners became weak. I asked her why she thought that was, and she said that we apparently stopped teaching Basics after Book 2 or so. Then I asked what she thought we were teaching, and she said, "I guess you're teaching *music* or something like that!" If I look at my own students and the students I teach in workshops, I have to say that Dr. Kataoka's observation unfortunately remains true to this day. Our advanced students have weak technique and often are trying to play pieces that are beyond their ability.

Can we change this?

Dr. Suzuki said that it's easy to be a Suzuki teacher because we only have to say the same few things over and over. But it takes enormous fortitude and conviction to teach this way, and it is not the way we were taught. Teaching Suzuki Method requires that we *completely* change our thinking, not just when we start a 4-year-old beginner, but throughout that student's piano study. It is simply too easy, when a

student gets a little older, old enough to begin thinking like an adult, old enough to be considered ready for traditional lessons, to begin teaching that child as we were taught. We begin to talk about pieces rather than to practice them in lessons. We begin to think that students who learn notes quickly are our better students, and allow them to begin dabbling in repertoire rather than deepening their ability to practice effectively. We begin to teach notes to our slower students, hoping to get them to move more quickly in the repertoire, leaving no time to teach them how to practice. In both cases, we get distracted with other things and stop teaching our students the Basics. At this point whatever technique they were developing in the beginning begins to get lost.

Lately I've been aware of another dynamic at work in this disintegration of students' technique: the misguided desires of student and parents alike, and my inability at times to steer them away from wrong

choices. Students who are quick to learn pieces always want to be getting their hands on the next piece. They tend to think they're finished with a piece before I even think we've begun to work on it. Of course, it's my job to teach them that learning notes is just the beginning of study, but their resistance to staying in a piece and doing the kind and number of repetitions that need to be done is often very strong. Parents complain that if I don't

let them go on their child will lose interest in piano possibly he/she will lose interest in music altogether! It is at times like

these that I need the most conviction, and the most fortitude, to insist that we spend the lesson time doing repetitious practice, not talking but staying focused on the task with concentration.

I am reminded about my questions when I first saw Dr. Kataoka being so hard on her quick students. They would come into a lesson and play a piece up-to-tempo and note-perfect, and then she would tear into every little detail of what needed to be practiced, what needed to be fixed. This was in the days when I didn't even hear what needed to be fixed, so I remember being totally bewildered, wondering why she was telling this obviously wonderful student that everything was wrong. Now

I realize that if I don't do that, the student, and also the parent, will be expecting to move on to the next piece right away, before

bringing good technique into the new piece. This new piece will actually cause the student's technique to begin to disintegrate if I don't roll up my sleeves and insist that we really work on it.

Is this a negative way to teach? I've had parents ask me to be more complimentary to their children, but when I am I instantly begin to lose my grip over the student's progress (I'm still referring to the quick students). Dr. Kataoka cautioned us not to be too complimentary to good students, because it will cause a regression in their technique. Remember that these students, and usually also their parents, move fast in their lives and in their minds. They need to be slowed down enough to do some good work. I've begun to understand that my main task is to slow them down, because everyone else in the world is praising them and encouraging them to forge ahead. It takes every ounce of my strength sometimes to insist that a student not perform the

Is this a negative way to teach?

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newest piece in the next recital, for example. I have to confess that there are times when I relent, but I'm always unhappy with the result.

I've begun to appreciate those of my students who naturally move very slowly. I can truly use the repertoire as a means to an end, rather than the end in itself. My slow students have better technique than my quick students, and they can be complimented without having a regression. I used to wonder why Dr. Kataoka was so kind and complimentary to her slowest students, and now I know. The difficult thing to resist is teaching notes to them. Not only does teaching notes eat up lesson time that would be better spent doing concentrated practice, but it makes the student, and the parent, lazy when it comes to note reading. If a parent knows nothing about music, I take time to teach him/her as much as is needed to help the child learn the notes, but there are times when I relent in this case also, and

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am unhappy with results here too. When it comes to learning notes, there is never any hurry.

It is actually *not* easy at all to teach the same things over and over at every lesson. Dr. Suzuki was being facetious. He had a great sense of humor. The easy thing is to become lackadaisical and to allow students and parents to push us around; to teach them the way they want us to teach and not

the way we know is better. It's always easier to please our students and parents, isn't it? It's easier to hear them tell us what

they want and then to give it to them. It's easier to ignore that little dip that continues to happen in their wrist or the stiff 5th finger after having tried to fix it for months or even years. It's easier to have an entire lesson without ever doing down-ups or rhythm practice or *Twinkles*. It's easier to talk than to practice.

No, it is not easy to teach Suzuki Method.

Piano Basics Foundation General Membership Meeting, Louisville, Kentucky, July 23, 2010

The major change voted at this year's membership meeting, is that, after keeping our dues at \$25 annually for over a decade, they will now be increased to \$45/year for teacher membership beginning January 2011. The following Treasurer's Report was submitted by Treasurer Linda Nakagawa.

Piano Basics Foundation

Upcoming Workshops/Events

July 30-August 13, 2011

Davis, California

Mondavi Center for the Arts
International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert
Contact: Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

The events listed above are for the information of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation members and others. Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation does not endorse, sanction, or sponsor events.

To add or change items on this list and 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>