

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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# PRACTICE

(PART 2 OF 2)

***By Haruko Kataoka***

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Translated by Chisa Aoki and

Teri Paradero

Edited by Karen Hagberg

Long ago, when my role changed from student to teacher, I naively believed that all students practiced every single day. I had no reason to think otherwise, since I had practiced three hundred sixty-five days a year without a single break when I was a student.

When a student came back a week after a lesson and there was no improvement, I would assume my teaching was at fault. I was determined to work even harder to teach better. However, my efforts did not result in any change. I always heard Dr. Suzuki say, "Every child can learn." I was getting distressed, and knew I had to do something about my teaching. One day in passing, Dr. Suzuki hinted at a resolution to this quandary. He said that if a student does not improve, no matter what you say or do, it is only because he or she is simply not practicing.

Such wonderful wisdom! If one accumulates a lot of good practice every day, anyone can become good. It is an obvious fact but every household comes with differing circumstances, which include finances and various stresses on the family. You must be prepared to accept the reality that not all children will be doing good practice every day.

I have a feeling that God has taught me this lesson throughout my own life. When I started having children, it was my

dream that they would be able to play the piano very well. However, because I was very busy at work, my dream did not coincide with reality.

Through my own various experiences, I have concluded that some things in life cannot be changed no matter what you do, no matter how hard you try. There are households where it is not possible for children to practice every day, and it is not because the parents or the child have bad intentions. There is no reason to rush the learning process on the road to becoming proficient. The most important thing is to practice well even if it is a very short practice. Never give up. Always aim to look far into the future and accept that education is long term. One person, as a single human being, can only do so much in life.

It does not matter how slow one progresses. When a student gets motivated to do something, he can demonstrate amazing ability. It is important to wait for the moment when this happens. During this slow process, the student should be taught by the teacher at every lesson how to build a routine of doing the right practice, even if it is short.

The piano, as I always mention, is not just a single-melody instrument. It does not need accompaniment like other musical instruments. The piano is the king of instruments, where both the accompaniment and the melody are played by one person. This is so wonderful! However, when piano students are able to play both accompaniment and solo together, there are so many notes and so much enjoyment that they forget to practice hands separately. Please make

sure that, at every lesson, you patiently and meticulously develop the ability to be able to do part practice, hands separately. An analogy in everyday life for part practice is putting savings in the bank. To be able to save every day without wasting money takes willingness and effort. The more savings you accumulate, the bigger and better purchases you can make. To play a piece with both hands is analogous to what you can buy with your savings. If you always go shopping, though it may be fun, you will eventually become poor and go in debt.

Let us endeavor to make hands-separate practice a habit from the time students are beginners. Of course it is very difficult to do one hundred percent part practice every day. After saving (hands separate practice) diligently, it is helpful to go shopping a little (play the whole piece through with both hands).

The reward of part practice is the great pleasure of being able to play a piece well from beginning to end with both hands. Successful education of children must always include some aspect of joy and delight.

## Membership Dues

### To Our Members:

Please accept my apology. I mistakenly announced last year that our members voted at our General Membership Meeting in July 2010 voted to raise membership dues to \$45. When we read the minutes of that meeting at this year's meeting, we realized that the vote was to raise the dues to \$40.

All current teacher members have paid \$45 for the calendar year 2011. If any of you feel you would like a refund for your overpayment, please contact Linda Nakagawa [g.nakagawa@comcast.net](mailto:g.nakagawa@comcast.net). Otherwise, your \$5 overpayment will be considered a contribution to the Memorial Fund.

Please be advised that the dues for next year are \$40 for teacher members and remain \$25 for family members. We encourage families to join so they may read Dr. Kataoka's articles at their leisure at home and share them with the parent who does not come to lessons. Families are also eligible to order educational materials from the Foundation free of postage. You may receive a registration form for your families by email by contacting me at [kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com).

Karen Hagberg

# **2011 SUZUKI PIANO BASICS INTERNATIONAL 10-PIANO CONCERT**

***Sponsored by the  
Suzuki Music Association of California-Sierra Branch  
Mondavi Center for the Arts, UC Davis, Davis, California  
Saturday, August 13, 2011***

The 7<sup>th</sup> Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert will open with two duets. *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* by Mozart and *Hungarian Dance No. 5 in F# minor* by Brahms. There will be 20 students performing in unison! The program will continue with *The Bow*, followed by *Twinkles A and D* and twenty-one more pieces ending with *Weber's Rondo Brillante*.

Two groups of ten students will be rehearsing in their own home town. In Omaha, Nebraska, Pam Fusselman's students will play *Arietta* by Mozart. In Southern California, the students of Mei Ihara, Loretta Benson, Christine Price and Rae Kate Shen will play *Sonatina, Op. 55 No. 1 –Allegro* by Kuhlau. These two groups will arrive on Wednesday, August 10<sup>th</sup> to start their rehearsals on stage.

It is most important to observe all of the rehearsals from the beginning of the concert in order to understand how to improve one's teaching. Therefore, we did not want to encourage groups, but we realize that rehearsing one's own group can be an education in itself. So it was decided that groups would be invited to every other 10-Piano Concert. On the off years, of course it is mandatory that those teachers who brought groups attend the entire next 10-piano concert. It is the best education to watch the Japanese teachers conduct the rehearsals.

This year we have a wonderful turnout of teachers and students coming to Sacramento from elsewhere:

## **Arizona**

Ann Taylor, teacher  
1. Leah Korhonen  
2. Joey Hamilton

## **Florida cont'd**

Barbara Ruffalo, teacher  
1. Natalie Babiuch  
2. Kate Babiuch

## **Utah cont'd**

Billie Tuttle, teacher  
1. Jessica Henrie  
2. Justin Kwong.

## **Arkansas**

Pam Werner, teacher  
1. Joey Whisenhunt.

## **North Carolina**

Christine Albro, teacher  
1. Sacha Ghofrani

## **Washington**

Jacqueline Block, teacher  
  
1. Elizabeth Gallagher  
2. Theresa Gallagher  
3. Eliza Block

## **Southern California**

Rae Kate Shen, teacher  
1. Hannah Arnott  
2. Brandon Anzaldi  
3. John Robert Yates  
4. Ashley Wysong

## **Oregon**

Jill Austin, teacher  
1. Katherine Huiskes  
2. Bethany Han  
3. Courtney Vacek  
4. Zsoee Eisel  
5. BreeAna Easel  
6. Harlee Eisel

## **Renee Eckis, teacher**

1. Carinn Ormson  
2. Jack Ormson

Mei Ihara, teacher

1. Angeline Nguyen

Connie Snyder, teacher

1. Kaname Bell  
2. Micah Morgan  
3. Rebekah Morgan

## **British Columbia, CANADA**

Betsy Wieser, teacher  
1. Madeleine Coombes  
2. Deborah Reddy

## **Florida**

Bruce Anderson, teacher  
1. Rachel Knauf  
2. Kelly Doyle  
3. Nicholas Charts  
4. Theodore Charts  
5. Annie Uichanco  
6. Emily Tran

## **Utah**

Cleo Brimhall, teacher  
1. Aaron Romney

## **The NETHERLANDS**

Huub de Leeuw, teacher  
1. Louise Eringaard  
2. Yuka Oshimoto

**2011 SUZUKI PIANO BASICS INTERNATIONAL 10-PIANO CONCERT (Continued)**

**Azumino, JAPAN**

Keiko Ogiwara, teacher  
1. Nano Kobayashi,  
2. Sachi Ohata, and  
3. Yuto Kobayashi.

**Matsumoto, JAPAN**

Keiko Kawamura, teacher  
1. Eri Momose  
2. Eri Nakahara  
3. Sachiko Higuchi  
4. Yukiya Satou  
5. Haurna Yahagi

**Shiojiri, JAPAN**

Keiko Nozawa, teacher  
1. Eruna Shiaishi  
2. Minami Tashita

Teachers attending, but not bringing students:

Gloria Elliott, Arizona  
Shanlei Yates, Southern California,  
Chisa Aoki, Ontario, CANADA  
Clare Sie, Singapore

There are nine local teachers participating:

Wakako Brewster, Rocklin  
Chiung-Hwa Bryce, Elk Grove  
Rita Burns, Carmichael  
Marsha Cook, Carmichael  
Fumi Kawasaki, Sunnyvale  
Karolyn McGladdery, Lodi  
Suzanne Murray, Sacramento  
Shirlee Rickman, Fair Oaks  
Linda Nakagawa, Sacramento

A total of 159 students from the local area have already started rehearsing!

We hope more of you will join us!

## Japan 10-Piano Concert

The 2012 10-Piano Concert in Matsumoto, scheduled for April 29, 2012, has been postponed indefinitely due to damage in Harmony Hall from the June 30 earthquake. Repairs reportedly will take at least a year and a half. Meanwhile the building is condemned.

Though property damage was extensive, there were only a handful of injuries in this quake. Our teacher friends are all ok, though they have suffered damage to their homes.

We continue to encourage our members to raise funds for earthquake relief in Japan. Donations may be made through the Sacramento 10-Piano Concert and donors will be acknowledged in the souvenir program. Members have received this donation form by email. Donations are due by July 30, 2011.

# ***What Can Be Learned from a 10-Piano Concert***

***By Linda Nakagawa***

It is wonderful and fascinating to be learning how to teach piano in the way Dr. Haruko Kataoka taught. This is what Piano Basics Foundation is all about. We are so very fortunate that the Japanese teachers continue to come and help us. We are grateful, but at the same time it is a very humbling experience. It is easy to stay in one's own studio and observe the progress of our own students.

Most of us have been to multiple workshops with Kataoka Sensei, Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura. We think that we know and understand how to teach Basics, because they make it look so easy. Of course it is easy to *talk* Basics, but not so easy to do. This fact is evident when the 10-Piano rehearsals begin. As I observe students rehearsing, if anything goes wrong, my first reaction is to look to my own students. Even if they are doing correctly what is asked of them, I want them to try harder.



Rehearsal of local students for 2011 International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert, Sacramento, California. Photo by Jessica Ng.

This is the only way they can raise their ability. If everyone is satisfied there will be no improvement. And as we know, in art, there is always room for improvement.

In 1994, I took five students to Matsumoto to participate in the Matsumoto 10-Piano concert. I had three students playing the Mozart *Turkish March*. During their first rehearsal, all three of my students stuck out like a sore thumb because they all had their left shoulders raised. I was shocked! It is really true that the students mirror their own teacher. Since that first experience, I have had many more discoveries. I like to think of them as learning experiences. At another 10-Piano concert in Matsumoto, Kataoka Sensei comes running out of the room out of breath, crying or laughing. I didn't know at the time. When she saw that I was standing there she said, "It is really scary how our students look exactly like us!" Since those days, I have come to realize this phenomenon at deeper levels.

There is no question in my mind that all teachers try their best to prepare their students for a 10-Piano concert. Piano is a solo instrument and playing the notes is a relatively easy thing to do. There are so many different dynamics that happen when 10 students are thrown together. If only one student rushes the 16<sup>th</sup> notes even slightly or only takes an eighth rest instead of a quarter rest, the rhythm of the piece is totally compromised. If nine students play a beautiful, gorgeous melody with a nice, soft accompaniment and only one student is unable to control the left hand accompaniment, the poor performance is what we hear.

The responsibility for the ability of the student completely and ultimately rests on their teachers. Of course the student can play the notes. To play the order of notes is certainly not enough. Teachers must pay attention to many details. Kataoka Sensei used to say that how students moved their fingers made a huge difference on whether the group could play together or not. If the posture is not good for one student, it affects all of the students. If nine students play a particular note gently and softly and one student pushes the key, that is the sound that the audience hears. It is not fair, I know, but it is a fact, and it becomes a very interesting learning process for teachers.

This is not a festival. Dr. Kataoka repeatedly would say that working on a 10-Piano Concert was one of the most serious ways of studying. This is not a time for students just to play together. Teachers must work hard preparing students so they can create a wonderful, musical sound together.

When we see our students perform in a group we can observe our weaknesses as teachers. This opportunity gives us things to work on during the entire upcoming year!



Teachers supervising Down-Up Practice during preliminary rehearsals for the 2011 International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert, Sacramento, California. Photo by Jessica Ng.



# ***Piano Basics Foundation***

## ***Upcoming Workshops/Events***

**July 25-29, 2011**

**Saint Louis, Missouri**

Suzuki Piano Basics Institute with  
Joan Krzywicki and Libby Armour  
Contact: Patty Eversole 314-837-1881  
<http://stlsuzukipiano.tripod.com>  
or Jo Anne Westerheide 314-644-0338  
[jmcpianov@yahoo.com](mailto:jmcpianov@yahoo.com)

**February 2012**

Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher  
Research Workshop  
**Time and place  
to be announced**

**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](mailto:g.nakagawa@comcast.net)

**April 12-29, 2012**

**Matsumoto, Nagano, Japan**

Harmony Hall  
POSTPONED INDEFINITELY DUE TO  
EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE  
International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert  
Contact: Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490  
[kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com)

**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](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com), 585-244-0490).

**Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:**

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