

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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Greetings (Words)

By Haruko Kataoka

Newsletter, Special Issue No. 16
February 1, 2012
Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

When I travel from Japan to go to the United States, I am always so impressed by the way Americans greet each other.

Even toward strangers, every morning not only do they greet each other with a "Good Morning," but this is followed by, "How are you this morning?" or something else to continue the conversation. In response, the other person always returns with "I'm fine," "I'm good," or "Thank you, and you?" They are able to continue their verbal exchange with great ease.

When we go to restaurants, the waitresses and waiters always greet us well. I am aware that in the United States, because tipping is expected, there is motivation to be extra nice and serve with a smile. Nevertheless, when you put effort into such actions, the result can only be good. I feel that it contributes to being a kind person. The customers in return always thank the servers for water, their coffee refills or anything else that is done for them. It is a mutual exchange of goodwill.

In contrast, restaurant servers in Japan are practically mute. (In Japan, the service charge is included in the price of what is being served.)

Within American family life, even the smallest positive gesture warrants a "Thank you" from children and between spouses. The phrase "Excuse me" is often used amongst themselves.

It is wonderful that parents treat their children with respect as they would any independent human being. I feel that it is the result of the ability to engage in well-mannered, verbal greetings.

As people enter elevators, eight or nine people out of ten acknowledge each other with a "Hi" or a smile. In small quarters like an elevator, a polite greeting definitely lightens up a cramped space rather than riding in heavy silence. I still remember from a long time ago while walking up a mountain, I passed another individual on the way up and down who greeted me each way. It is quite a memorable experience for me to this day.

I wonder if it is because the English language is so rhythmical that makes it easy to exchange greetings. However, in Japan in the olden days, I feel that neighbors were very friendly and got along very well and children and parents would always greet one another. Did Japan's economical success after the war somehow cause us to lose our heart?

Our youth today do not have the Basics of being human which means to be able to vocalize a proper greeting such as "Hello," "Good-bye," "Thank you very much," or "Excuse me." Whenever I observe the yearly hiring of new employees in major companies, where part of

their training includes practicing greeting out loud, I lament that present-day upbringing in our homes lauds only grades from school. I cannot help but think that parents are forgetting to educate their children in the Basic of human life, which is the greeting.

As I write this article on the return flight home from the United States, I happen to be sitting next to a sixteen-year-old Japanese girl. I helped her when she seemed she needed some help, but she could not say a single "Thank you." Wearing a lovely outfit, the daughter from a respectable family... I worry about the future of Japan.

Words are important. They are the important tools that enable us to convey our hearts. Please let us practice everyday so we can greet well.

The Basics are absolutely important in the study of piano playing. Furthermore, repetition of the Basics is necessary. Likewise, for mankind to build a successful society and to be able to enjoy life and live well, the learning and the repetition of the Basics for any endeavor must be of utmost importance.

First, the Greeting...

By Keiko Ogiwara

Newsletter, Special Issue No. 16

February 1, 2012

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Teri Paradero

Edited by Karen Hagberg

This January 10th marked the eighth year since Dr. Haruko Kataoka passed away. She often said, "When you die, if you want to leave with the words 'Thank you,' but you have not used them every day, it's not something you can say." And just as she said, we are told that before she died she hugged every one in her family and said "Thank you."

So, greetings are not only about such phrases as Good Morning or Hello. Saying, "I'm sorry" if you are late for an appointed time when you promised to meet with someone, or if you bump into someone, being able to say, "Excuse me" is also part of proper greeting manners. Saying it immediately is very important in such instances. Unfortunately, there aren't many high school children these days who are able to do this. Saying it only after being reminded by someone lessens the impact of such words.

I am so impressed by how frequently "Excuse me" is uttered in the United States even when people just slightly touch shoulders. In Japan, when someone bumps into you in a crowd, most often they just keep going without saying anything. Accustomed to such behavior as the norm in Japan,

the American greeting, "Excuse me" comes as a warm welcome to me.

There are greetings that are not spoken. For instance, it is a greeting when you are on stage to perform. In America, parents most often tell their children to smile. They don't say anything about how they should perform, they merely ask them to smile.

During a final bow after a concert in Matsumoto, I saw the students with tightly pursed lips, and all of a sudden I found myself saying, "Let's smile." But alas, their expression did not relax at all. It is obvious that you cannot expect children to smile genuinely if they were not told to do so repeatedly since they were little.

Like the wonderful Japanese saying, "You must have good manners even within the family or with those very close to you." It is important what kind of greetings and manners you encourage in your homes with your family because soon, when they enter adulthood and go out into society, your children have to apply the habits they have acquired at home to conduct the rest of their lives.

Piano Basics Come Alive at the Barrett Reston Suzuki Music Studio – Spring 2012

By Carolyn Barrett

It started with encouragement from Vicki Merley to attend the Phoenix workshop in February 2012. Remembering Linda Nakagawa's admonishment that teachers must continue to study (Jan/Feb 2011 Newsletter) I decided to attend. I had had lessons with Dr. Kataoka in the past so was somewhat prepared for the workshop but truly began to understand why Piano Basics teaches various techniques with this workshop and my lesson with Ogiwara Sensei. I began to recognize the sound the teachers are looking for and got it that I really had to *knuckle down*, literally. This I got from my *Down/Up* session with Ogiwara Sensei. The other teachers at the workshop were very supportive and encouraging. I was glad I attended.

This was followed by a workshop with Karen Hagberg at my studio in April. In preparing students for the workshop I felt as if the whole level of the studio piano work was being raised. I began to hear some of my students getting that bell-like sound Piano Basics seems to be after. In the workshop students learned to go for the big sound needed on certain notes, now adorned with hearts in their score, which was more effective than talking about accent patterns with time signatures and other theoretical considerations. They worked on playing Alberti bass that was evenly spaced, and did not overlap with the first note (even though harmonically that sounded OK). Many of my students had overlapping issues so decided I better watch my own playing very carefully for that. I felt re-energized to maintain high standards and continue asking again and again for the next right thing.

I have one student working on *Gigue* and it was very enlightening to see how to work on hands separate in this piece and especially how to deal with the triplets. This particular student was doing fairly well with the notes, but how to make it musical and beautiful was the challenge.

There was an over-arching theme at the workshop. We had a lot of fun with it, but found it also to be very true and very helpful. In speaking of the observation that my students seemed to all be very intelligent.

When they were asked a question about dynamics or how to play a certain pattern (Alberti bass) or section, they knew the answer. Only problem was . they weren't doing it. As we investigated this further we found that not only were the students very smart but so were their parents and the teachers and even friends who had come. Everyone knew what was supposed to happen but often the students weren't doing it. Turns out they *thought* they were doing it (because they knew so well how they *should* be doing it), but actually were not. This often happens with smart people we were told. This is why we need teachers, video recordings, coaches, parents and more.

We are continuing to examine this phenomenon in the studio as we prepare for our June Recital . making sure that we are actually doing what we know needs to happen. Thanks to Piano Basics for teaching us what it is that needs to happen and for encouraging us to keep on keeping on until it actually is happening.



Carolyn Barrett.

The Importance of Ready Position

From Carole Mayers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

I thought I'd share this message about stillness, taken from a CD entitled *Reiki Meditations for Self-Healing*, by Bronwen Stiene. It relates so beautifully to our Ready Position. Please read it slowly and calmly.

The stillness of holding the hands in one position before beginning a practice creates a pause. And, in this moment, the mind becomes centered, bringing about a state of awareness. Awareness is the foundation for the success of all practices.

Janet Miller, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania writes:

Please listen to the discussion on National Public Radio with the author of a new book: *The Practicing Mind: Developing Focus and Discipline in Your Life*, by Thomas M. Sterner (link below). You will love this book! All my teen students are getting a copy. Really a must-read for all teachers, especially Suzuki teachers! Studio parents should read it, too.

<http://why.org/cms/radiotimes/2012/04/18/the-practicing-mind/>

Overheard

(a new column for which we welcome your contributions!)

Non-Musician Mom: I don't know how I'm going to help my son when he gets to Book 2. I can't read music, and already I have trouble helping him learn the notes.

Teacher: No problem. All you need to do is what you've been doing already: remind him to keep his wrists up and to move his fingertips; put the recording on; make sure he doesn't miss lessons; dress him nicely for recitals; count repetitions as if you're his personal trainer; pay close attention during lessons and compliment him on his accomplishments; provide him with the best instrument you can afford; ask him daily to practice hands alone; check his seating and posture; bring him to concerts; don't let him quit. These are the important things. Learning notes is not so important!

Kataoka Video Project to be Unveiled

Unfortunately, the newsletter has gone to press before we are able to share access to our members of the archives of videos of lessons with Dr. Kataoka over the years. But those of us who have been viewing them can assure teachers that you are about to be the recipients of an invaluable and amazing resource. Our tireless web master, Dr. Kenneth Wilburn, expects to be able to announce access information on the Suzuki-L discussion group before the next newsletter is published.

The videos being put online are collected from attendees and organizers of various workshops

with Dr. Kataoka over the years. If you have videos of her student lessons, we urge you to contribute to this archive by sending them to Dr. Wilburn. They may be in any format. If these videos are to be preserved for future generations of Suzuki Piano Basics teachers, it is imperative that we get them online before they deteriorate. Send videos to:

Professor Kenneth Wilburn
History Department, Brewster A318
East Carolina University
East Fifth Street
Greenville, North Carolina 27858-4353

Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation: Leadership Transitions

At the General Membership Meeting in June in Louisville, Hannah Hall from Louisville, Kentucky was voted Secretary to replace Lori Armstrong, who has served the Foundation in this position for over a decade. Thanks to Lori for her contributions, and welcome Hannah.

Also effective in June is the resignation from the Board of Directors of Cleo Brimhall, a pioneer of the Suzuki Piano Basics organization. Cleo

was the sole organizer, and published the first newsletters for an unincorporated entity for a number of years before the Foundation came into existence, and she has uninterruptedly served on the Board from the very beginning after our incorporation. She will be missed. Earlier this year the Board of Directors appointed Bruce Boiney as its newest member.

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

August, 2-6, 2012

Rochester, NY

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Friendship Concert featuring students from Japan
Contact Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com

February 2013

NOTE: There will be no February workshops with teachers from Japan in the U.S. this month. Students going to the 10-Piano Concert in Japan in April should plan to have lessons at one of the August, 2012 workshops in Rochester, New York or Sacramento, California.

August, 9-13, 2012

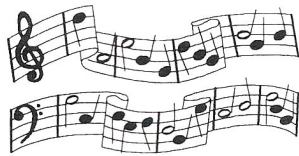
Sacramento, California

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Friendship Concert featuring students from Japan
Contact Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

April 13-28 2013

Matsumoto, Japan

International 10-Piano Concert
Contact: Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com



August 2014

Sacramento, California

International 10-Piano Concert

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).

Matsumoto 2013

The next Japan 10-Piano Concert is scheduled for April 28, 2013. Information and registration materials have been emailed to our members. If you did not receive these materials and want them, contact Karen Hagberg kh@hagbergsuzuki.com. Student applications are due by August 10, 2012 and applications for teachers going without students are due by October 15, 2012.

There will be no February workshops in 2013 due to an International Suzuki Conference in Japan at that time. Students wishing to participate in the concert are asked to attend one of the August workshops this summer (Rochester, New York, August 2-6 and Sacramento, California, August 9-13). See Upcoming events for contact information.