

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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Next Deadline: October 15, 2013

Specialist

By Haruko Kataoka

Newsletter, Special Issue No. 19

July 22, 2013

Translated by Chisa Aoki and

Teri Paradero

Edited by Karen Hagberg

Recently people have been talking about a TV show on the business of growing rice.

This year our summer was a cool and rainy. The rice harvest was a calamity. The rice crop in Aomori Prefecture was one of the worst cases. Rice was not ripening in rice paddies in that area with the exception of one farm where the rice plants were splendidly laden with heavy, golden-colored heads.

When asked about the reason for this huge difference in successful yield, the farmer replied, "It is my business to grow rice, it is my specialty. I have to grow rice regardless of unseasonable weather or unfavorable environmental changes."

When asked why the other rice paddies failed, he explained that the other rice paddies are tended by laborers who don't adjust to any environmental changes that may occur. They are merely there to work to just grow rice year after year after year.

When asked about this, the so-called laborers said that because they are only part-time they could not devote the kind of bothersome care that the other farmer utilized.

Back to the successful farmer, when asked how he obtained his success crop and if he were tired as a result of such painstaking care, he responded, "First, before I plant the seedlings, I carefully prepare the soil. I do not use any chemical fertilizers. When the seedlings are planted, I make sure that the weeds do not take over so the rice plants have a chance to grow strong. I do not use any herbicides. When the air temperature is low, I add warm water to the rice paddies. When it is hot, I add cold water. I may have to do this many times during a 24-hour period. I feed the seedlings organic fertilizer according to their development and growth. Do I get tired? I find joy in my work and look forward every day to see how the seedlings are growing so I am never tired."

I pondered how growing rice and education are the same thing. No matter how dreadful a student's condition, the job of a genuine educator is to be able to teach such a student to become a fine piano player: not only to have a handful of students who can play well, but to nurture every

student, any kind of student. Only then can we call ourselves specialists in education.

Analogous to not blaming the environment – the lack of sunshine, the cold rain, too much wind, etc., as in the case of growing rice – it does not matter what personality or what kind of family situation, we have to be able to pour our hearts into educating our students, to nurture them with love, to develop their expertise, and to accommodate and adapt to all their differences.

In the case of rice, results are obvious within a year. Based on these results, ways to improve growing methods can be determined. This is not so with education and therein lies the difficulty. It takes approximately ten years to see results. Because of this extended time requirement, the teacher runs the risk of becoming lackadaisical and, in rice terms, producing seedlings that are fruitless. Just as the farmer attended to adjusting the temperature of the water throughout the day, it is important always to teach tenaciously the same, simple but basic techniques diligently. Good work always depends on whether you attend to small details or not.

Although piano education takes ten long years, when accomplished, the satisfaction and joy of the achievement is that much more powerful and gratifying. I feel that if there are no true educators in any field, there is no hope for a good world.

Please, teachers and parents, adjust yourselves and choose according the children's individual needs and do not become stuck adhering to a routine manual like the laborers; but let us devote our utmost efforts when we are nurturing children. We must endeavor to be true educators when we bring up children.



Directory Update:

Sheila Ruffatto

Keiko Ogiwara: Address after the International Friendship Concert

Rochester, New York 8/4/13

I am so happy to be here again. Japan has many trees, so it is very green there, but the beauty of Rochester's large, luscious lawns and magnificent forests has healed us from our long trip here.



Ogiwara Sensei (R) with interpreter Teri Paradero delivering speech after the International Friendship Concert in Rochester, New York on August 4, 2013. Photo by Gary Prosserman.

In Matsumoto, we hosted the Suzuki International Conference in March followed by the 17th 10-Piano Concert in April. Although it was an extremely busy time, it proved to be very fulfilling.

People from thirty-five countries, a total of five thousand, four hundred people, from all over the world were represented at the International

Conference. The streets were filled with so many people from different cultures.

Although it has been three years since our last 10-Piano Concert, this year we were able to welcome many students and teachers from the United States.

Through the study of music, for so many people from so many different cultures to come together was such a wonderful experience.

In our life journey, human beings experience many ups and downs. When life does bring sadness, music heals our hearts and souls and helps us to move on.

Today, so many students practiced so hard so they could perform for us. Those of you in the audience, did you enjoy listening to the concert?

The study of music develops patience, concentration and social graces . all abilities necessary to lead successful lives.

Mothers and fathers, please nurture your children into wonderful human beings through the study of music. And for all of you students, please continue to study. I look forward to listening to you again.

Thank you!



Teachers attending the International Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop in Rochester, NY, August 2-6, 2013: From L to R Front: Liza Friere, Keiko Kawamura Sensei, Keiko Ogiwara Sensei, Teri Paradero, Elizabeth Sherk, Sofya Bravver. Rear: Michael Jacobsen, Karen Hagberg, Jane Guerin, Chisa Aoki, Bruce Anderson. Photo by Liza Friere.

More from Rochester...



Teachers enjoying an evening meal on the Erie Canal during the Suzuki Piano Basics International Teacher Research Workshop, Rochester, NY, August 2-6, 2013. From L to R: John Sherk (Elizabeth's husband), Suzanne Lichtenstein, Jane Guerin, Karen Hagberg, Michael Jacobsen, Liza Friere, and Elizabeth Sherk.



Michael Jacobsen (Plainsboro, New Jersey) and his student Mina Kanburlar with Senseis Kawamura (L) and Ogiwara (R) after the International Friendship Concert in Rochester, New York, August 4, 2013.



Huge Birthday Cake at the reception after the International Friendship Concert in Rochester, New York on August 4, 2013 for Karen Hagberg's student, Anthony Stefanos, for his 10th birthday. Photo by Elizabeth Sherk.

To Nurture means...

By Keiko Ogiwara

Newsletter, Special Issue No. 19
July 22, 2013
Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

I went for a walk around the neighborhood one day in early summer. The stroll was so enjoyable because of the various flowerbeds full of summer-blooming plants that the residents had planted. At our home, we planted salvia and French marigolds. In other gardens, the flower buds were already starting to bloom, but in our garden, all the buds had been clipped and all we had left was green vegetation.

Disappointed, I said to my husband, "What a waste to cut those precious buds!"+

He explained, "If the plants were allowed to bloom early all the nutrients will go to the blooming process so the young plant itself will not develop. If you remove the buds, the plant itself will grow thick and luxurious. There is still enough time in the season for the plant to go into full bloom."+

Come to think of it, salvia that we planted in front of the piano room last year had quite a bit of dense growth and continued to bloom abundantly into late autumn. In the fall, we had prepared the flowerbeds with organic fertilizer. After planting, we watered the plants faithfully until they started blooming, the result of nurturing with love and care.

We teach, using music as the means, with the goal of nurturing and developing human beings. The late Shinichi Suzuki's famous quote: "All children grow; it depends on how they are raised,"+ describes his wonderful original concept, the foundation for the Suzuki Method.

The 10-Piano Concert held once every two years is especially wonderful because every single student in the Matsumoto area performs in this special event. It is a truly awesome accomplishment that every single student is able to perform splendidly. Through the years they practice the basics steadily over time, nurturing them until those basics become abilities. Then they are able to use those basics to perform with great freedom. It is then, and only then, that the time has come for the flower to open and bloom. Love is required to stay on course throughout this process. To continue faithfully to nurture and preserve the spirit of the child is not an easy task. Although there are times when students are not agreeable, the feeling of joy is overwhelming when the time comes when you can successfully communicate with them.

Flowers, vegetables, people, all things living, please nurture them with patience, perseverance, and love without losing sight of your goal. Large flowers will blossom with certainty.



Meditation on Tone

***By Elizabeth Sherk
Scarborough, Ontario, Canada***

Three families in my studio accompanied me to the International Piano Basics Research Workshop in Rochester, NY at the beginning of August. Three families also accompanied me to the 30th Annual Southwestern Ontario Suzuki Institute at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo in the middle of August. I asked everyone who attended to consider what beautiful tone is. For each reflection on tone sent to me by my students I have added my own commentary. I hope these thoughts serve to sensitize our ears to all the music we will learn, practice, and play this coming year.

Agalya: "Standing at the camp site, I enjoyed swaying to the waltz of Minuet-2, especially the waterfall section (bars 25-28)." *Familiar tones comfort us and help us relax.*

Sanjana 10: "At the International Friendship Concert in Rochester, the girl who played after me, Karen Hagberg's student, Christina Basile, played Gavotte in G Minor by Bach from Book 4. I really liked the way she played first two lines especially, and I can't wait to learn it." *Hearing the beautiful tone that others make motivates us in our own personal journey towards achievement.*

Kavin 8: "I really like the rolling chords in Sonatina in G Major Romance and I practice it slowly with repetitions and only the left hand." *Slow repetitions of each tone in what eventually will be performed as a very rapid glissando ensures that the rolled chord will sound beautiful and clear, not overlapped or noisy.*



Elizabeth Sherk with her students who performed in the International Friendship Concert, Hochstein Performance Hall, Rochester NY, August 4, 2013. Students from L to R: Kavin Dhanasekaran, Sanjana Dhanasekaran, Gabriela Cisneros, Evan Prosserman, Photo by Gary Prosserman

Gabriela 9 & Lei: "No matter what level you play, good tone always goes back to mastering the basic Twinkle techniques which start with good posture, relaxed arms, tall thumb and digging into the keys. Embedded at the very beginning of *The Suzuki Piano School* is the piece to which we may all return again and again in search of the tone quality that will bring our pieces to life. The master teachers from Japan, Senseis Ogiwara & Kawamura, never tire of helping their students find that tone in the Twinkles, and once found, telling them, "Use **that** tone in your piece."

Evan 8: "Move my fingers. Beautiful tone will not be created by poking, pushing, pressing, or punching. Also beautiful tone will not be produced by stiff or slouching bodies or unsupported feet. The care that teachers must take in ensuring that their students are playing from a ready position of poise, balance, & alignment is demonstrated tirelessly & consistently by Senseis Ogiwara & Kawamura and by the students that accompanied them from Japan.

Rachel, 14 "Tone is what makes melody musical. You may have all the right notes, but without TONE it will not sound musical." *Playing the piano might just sound noisy, or percussive, or weak, as I fear it so often does if we do not listen well or use our bodies properly.*

Sarah, 12 "Tone is something we musicians search for our whole lives." *Sitting in Teri Paradero's beautiful piano studio in Honeoye Falls, New York with twelve other devoted teachers for four or five hours daily for five days, watching & listening, as the two Senseis helped each player find a brilliant tone quality to add to a small spot in their lesson piece was an experience of searching. There were 38 children ranging in age from 3 to 16 in addition to the twelve teachers who also took their lessons. They represented the USA (including Puerto Rico), Japan, and Canada. The willingness, the interest, and the patience to search in this way arises from love.*

Hannah, 10, "Tone is difficult to describe in words because it involves listening and feeling, not talking." *Piano tone production is a musical art, not a spoken or a written art. It is also a physical art, requiring poise, balance, nimbleness, strength, energy, and heart. "Let there be life in sound, Let there be heart in sound." "Every tone has a living soul."*

Piano Basics Foundation ***Upcoming Workshops/Events***

October 18-20, 2014

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop with Bruce Boiney
Contact Carole Mayers 610-354-0637
mayerssuzukipiano@verizon.net

February 6-10, 2014

Phoenix, Arizona

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Gloria Elliott 623-466-7447
gelliott50@aol.com

January 17-20, 2014

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop with Leah Brammer
Contact Carole Mayers 610-354-0637
mayerssuzukipiano@verizon.net

August 1-16, 2014

Sacramento, California

International 10-Piano Concert
Contact Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

January 31-February 3, 2014

Atlanta, Georgia

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Pam Smith 770-457-5144
pamelaspianostudio@gmail.com

April 2015

Matsumoto, Japan

International 10-Piano Concert
Contact Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490
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, 585-244-0490).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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