

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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Don't Treat Them
Like Babies:
Let's Honor Our Promises

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
Vol. 9 No. 2, July 5, 1999
Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

All infants are aware of what is happening around them from the moment of birth. However, they do not yet have the knowledge to express their wishes. It is possible that even before birth, while in the womb, they are aware of their environment. Even though people from the past did not have the benefit of scientific validation about such things, they sensed that awareness was present before birth.

Someone from the United States told me about a young music student who was studying to conduct Schumann's Cello Concerto, a piece that he had never heard with orchestra. He was studying the score. Although he had never studied this concerto before, he realized in amazement that he was strangely familiar with everything about the piece. When he visited his parents' home, he mentioned this curious familiarity with his mother. His mother recalled that, while she was pregnant, she was practicing that particular concerto every day.

The majority of adults think that infants and children are inferior because they do not possess the knowledge necessary for living. Certainly newborns must undergo physiological growth to reach adulthood. They have developed neither the physical strength of adults nor wisdom for everyday life. Consequently, we adults assume our own superiority simply because of our age.

What I am trying to say is that what matters is not consciousness or awareness, but the essence of the heart and soul, or truth. If we as adults can communicate with our children genuinely without thinking of them as childish and without failing to regard them as equal human beings, we can begin to understand one another. Because we adults deal with the responsibilities of daily life, we have a tendency to view everything in terms of loss or gain, of having advantage or disadvantage. As a result, it is difficult for us to be genuinely open-minded or pure-minded. In other words, paradoxically, we are the ones who are inferior. Fortunately for me, many years of teaching have allowed me to be around children so that I may often witness their sincerity. In turn, I have learned so much from them.

Whether we consider newborns or five- even ten-years-olds, children will respond or react to someone who patiently and sincerely communicates with face-to-face, solid eye contact.

I have always learned so much from children during rehearsals of the 10-Piano Concert.

Compared to a teacher who kindly asks ten children to, "Try it this way," a teacher who does not talk down to the students and yet is able seriously to communicate, "You know you can do this," succeeds in getting an unimaginably great performance right then and there. The result differs according to how one communicates. Feeble communication results in no change and furthermore, children are blamed for being incompetent and they eventually learn not to listen. Needless to say, there really is no need to listen to anyone who is only halfhearted.

In our world, when promises are honored a relationship of mutual trust is created, resulting in social growth and development.

As I wrote in the previous newsletter, the parents of Ichiro, the professional baseball player, insisted, early in their children's upbringing, on teaching the discipline of honoring promises made by both parents and children.

From the time they were very young, I brought up my own children mutually to keep our promises. Once something was established as wrong, there was no retracting it later. Even young children understand what 'no' means and that there will be no arguing once established. Mutual trust is kindled as an outcome of learning to keep promises and results in a strong lasting bond between human beings. You must not break your promise just because you are dealing with mere children.

Could it be that the problems caused by middle- and high-school students in recent years is a result of their never having practiced keeping promises and gaining mutual trust in their formative years as human beings?

Please let us rethink how we must look at our children. Who is more advanced or superior is not the point. We must consider both adults and children equally as human beings who possess a truly pure and genuine heart and soul.

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Let's Watch a Hundred Times a Year!

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
Vol. 9 No. 2, July 5, 1999
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This year I was invited by the American teachers to the United States, and so I traveled again in June. The first research workshop was held at the University of Louisville. I had brought the highly anticipated video of our now-famous Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert held this past May 2nd.

Many of the teachers told me that they were moved to tears while listening to the children's performances. No matter what language you speak, may it be Japanese or English, it is so heartening to me that people can sense the children's pure and genuine hearts as they perform with utmost effort. One teacher enjoyed the concert video so many times that afterwards (by then it was about seven o'clock in the evening) she could not get Chopin's *Andante Spianato* out of her head right up to bedtime.

In the United States, each concert video costs \$100.00. This is considered very expensive. One clever teacher who owned the video of a previous concert calculated

that if you watch the video every third day for an entire year, it costs only \$1.00 per viewing and thus concluded that the video was actually a great value for the money. As a result, everyone's mantra became, "Let's watch one hundred times a year!"

It is true for human beings, whether you are a child or an adult, there are abilities that require repetition to gain proficiency. With CDs, only hearing is involved, but with videos there is the additional visual component. As you are watching, over time, you are learning finger technique, how to use the body, and how music is expressed. (Children internalize this information even when they are not fully paying attention.)

Let's heed the example of the American teachers and teachers from other countries. When you receive the 10-Piano Concert video, don't just put it away after you watch it once, but please watch it as much as possible until the recording wears out. This is a very efficient way to study piano.

Thoughts on hosting visiting students

By Juliette Luong, parent in studio of Linda Nakagawa

Four years ago, we began hosting students from out of town who were here to play in the 10-Piano or Friendship concert. We thought it would be fun for our children to have new friends to play with and also to learn about their culture. Each year, we have had the pleasure of hosting students from Japan. It has been a wonderful experience getting to know each of these students, their families, their interests, and their culture as well. They are so eager and excited to learn English and our culture. They all loved American food, especially pizza, hamburger, steak, and ice cream! Each year, we make many visits to the mall, Old Sacramento, and other local sights. In-and-Out Burger has become a must restaurant for visiting Japanese students!

Most of these students speak minimal English and are older than our children but they have no trouble playing and interacting together. We always worry that our children are too rowdy and rambunctious



Yuto Kobayashi and Yukiya Sato with Parker and Dylan Van Ostrand, Sacramento, August 2011 . Photo by Eric Van Ostrand

but the students are more comfortable and relaxed in that environment. It does not take long for them to warm up to us. There's always a lot of laughter. Sometimes they don't even know what they are laughing about. The students are all very respectful, responsible and polite. They are great examples for our children.

The two weeks of rehearsals leading up to the 10-Piano concert is a busy time for everyone participating in the event. We thought hosting two students would make our schedule even more hectic but that was not the case. Our children played different pieces so we had to go to the Mondavi Center every day and sometimes stay there for a long period of time. The visiting students made it so much more fun and enjoyable for our children. They looked forward to the long breaks so they could play together. The car rides (sometimes long due to traffic) to the Mondavi Center and back were also more pleasant. Instead of constant fighting and arguing, our children played and laughed with their new friends.

Four years later, we have learned what a rewarding experience hosting visiting students truly is. We have kept in touch with many of the students who have stayed with us and consider them true friends. Last month our son Parker traveled to Japan and had the opportunity to visit many of these same students. These visits were the highlight of his trip. Even though these students stayed with us for only 1 or 2 weeks they were so eager and excited to see him. They played together as if they've been friends for years. He was very sad to leave. It was also wonderful to meet their families. They were all so welcoming and kind. We believe this is what the 10-piano concert is about, learning from each other and developing lifelong friendships.

Looking back over the past four years of hosting, many wonderful memories come to mind. We look forward to hosting more students in the coming years and cherish the opportunity to make new friends as well.

Why Go to Sacramento? International 10-Piano Concert, August 1-16, 2014

By Karen Hagberg

There is no doubt that Ten-Piano Concerts are thrilling for the performing students. Many of them travel to participate in these events, and their experience is enriched with cultural exchange, as are the students whose families provide homestay for visitors for the two-week duration of rehearsals.

But let us not lose sight of the fact that the principal reason for the existence of these concerts is *teacher research*. The rehearsal of ten students at once, playing exactly the same piece, constitute a clear and immediate lesson on how to teach the piece to an individual student back in our home studios. Never, in any other context, is the process of Dr. Kataoka's Suzuki Piano Basics Method made so crystal clear. This is also the reason that the programs of these concerts typically span the entire Suzuki Method, and feature pieces considered to constitute the foundation of piano technique. Where else could a teacher get such education in just two weeks?

Fully to take advantage of what is offered during these rehearsals requires a great deal of stamina to observe the rehearsals with concentration for many hours a day, but what a wonderful gift to bring home to our students.

Even if you do not have students performing, please consider attending these rehearsals for the sake of *all* your students. Come prepared to sit, to observe, to concentrate on sound, to learn how to teach Suzuki Piano Basics. The deadline to register as an observing teacher is July 20.

The following teachers and their students (number in parentheses) will participate in this year's event:

California

Wakako Brewster (16)
Chiung-Hwa Bryce (14)
Rita Burns (25)
Marsha Cook (3)
Mei Ihara (3)
Fumi Kawasaki (2)
Karolyn McGladdery (1)
Suzanne Murray (8)
Linda Nakagawa (43)
Shirlee Rickman (40)
Rae Kate Shen (3)

Florida

Carmen Geisler/Bruce Anderson (1)

Kentucky

Bruce Boiney (2)

New York

Karen Hagberg (2)
Teri Paradero (2)

Oregon

Jill Austin (2)
Connie Snyder (2)

Washington

Renee Eckis (5)
Ben Smith (6)

Canada

Chisa Aoki (2)

Japan

Ayako Fujiwara (1)
Keiko Kawamura (4)
Keiko Nozawa (3)
Keiko Ogiwara (2)
Yoshida Sensei (1)

2014 Sacramento International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert Program

1. Melodious Exercises for 4 hands Op. 149 No. 6 (Diabelli)
 2. The Bow
 3. Twinkles A and D
 4. Lightly Row
 5. Chant Arabe
 6. Musette
 7. Ecosaise (Hummel)
8. The Happy Farmer (Schumann)
 9. Minuet 3 (Bach)
 10. Minuet in g minor (Bach)
11. Sonatina, *Moderato* (Beethoven)
12. Sonatina, Op. 36 No. 1, *Allegro* (Clementi)
13. Sonatina, Op. 55 No. 1, *Allegro* (Kuhlau)
 14. Rondo (Mozart)
15. Partita no.1, 2 *Minuets* (Bach)
16. Partita no.1, *Gigue* (J.S. Bach)
17. Sonata, No. 48, *Rondo, Finale* (Haydn)
 18. Für Elise (Beethoven)
19. Sonata, K. 330 in C major, *Allegretto* (Mozart)
20. Sonata, K. 331 in A Major , *Rondo, alla turca* (Mozart)
 21. Six Ecosaises (Beethoven)
 22. Clair de Lune (Debussy)
23. Variations Brilliantes, Op. 12 (Chopin)



Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation General Membership Meeting 2014

Meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 6, at 12:30 p.m. in Room 143 of the Music Building at California State University, Sacramento during the rehearsals of the Sacramento International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert. Please send agenda items to our Secretary, Hannah Hall correctthecause@gmail.com. We welcome comments and suggestions from all members.

Present officers of the Foundation are running for re-election. Additional names may be entered for consideration by contacting our Nominations chairperson, Ann Taylor ann@anntaylorstudio.net.

In Search of Good Tone

By Linda Nakagawa

What is good tone? It is very difficult to describe. However, we know what it is when we hear it. When I was in elementary school, my friend and I played the flute. I always thought that she had a better sound than mine. The instructor said it was because she had big lips and big lungs. Well, she may have had bigger lips, but I don't think her lungs were any bigger because I could scream louder than anyone around me and I could swim the length of the pool under water. This curiosity stays with me and it still haunts me to this day.

While I was in college, the professors would complain that the pianos were not good and that was the reason for their lackluster performance. Some even said that Horowitz's sound was good only because he traveled with his own piano. Did this mean that the only way we could perform well is if the piano was in perfect shape? And what about the acoustics of the room? There are many excuses. I don't want excuses. I want to know how to produce a good tone. I want to know how to help my students produce a better tone.

Then, almost 30 years ago, I attended a Suzuki Piano workshop with Dr. Haruko Kataoka. I felt like I had been in a world of darkness into which this person shined a speck of light. Believe me, it was not a fun experience. She proved to me that my body was stiff and unresponsive while playing the piano. The extremely sad part was that when I returned home to my studio, I saw the same weaknesses in my students.

Since that first lesson with Kataoka Sensei, I have attended numerous workshops with her. I remember working with a student on the Paderewsky Minuet and became frustrated because I knew the sound I wanted him to produce, but I just couldn't get him to do it. Kataoka Sensei gave him a lesson on the piece a couple weeks later and in my studio and on my pianos. She demonstrated the sound she wanted and he changed immediately. I was floored. I played the same notes and talked the same language, but the reason my student could change so quickly was because Sensei's sound was so much better than mine. This is a very humbling task we have.

I am so grateful that I can hear the difference sometimes. It is very interesting to hear two people play the same piece on the same piano. There is a huge difference between playing the order of notes and *playing the order of notes with good tone*. I remember listening to students rehearse in Matsumoto for the 10-Piano Concert. The students



Linda Nakagawa having a lesson with Kataoka Sensei, with interpreter Haruko Sakakibara. Photo by Keiko Kawamura.

playing Allegro (Book 1) were all working to practice the Twinkle A variation and the down-ups on the notes in the first measure. I was amazed. They were so in sync. The sound was so awesome and so loud. It blew me away. Later that evening the advanced students came to rehearse *La Campanella* by Liszt. They all could play the notes from the beginning to the end. However, there was a note in the piece in which the teacher asked them to do down ups. It was amazing how inept they were. So she asked them to play Twinkle A on the notes. It got better, and later they were able to do the down ups successfully, yet their sound did not move me the way the sound of the Book 1 students had.

As I share my experiences, as I continue to study, the more I realize my weaknesses. I feel this is a good thing because there is hope for improvement. That is why I continue to attend workshops with the Japanese teachers and 10-Piano Concerts in Matsumoto and Sacramento. Anyone can learn the order of notes if they work hard enough. But not everyone can produce a good tone on any piano. It's a wonderful, humbling, journey to search for good tone. We must improve our ability to play one note beautifully. The best way to achieve this is to have a lesson with the Japanese teachers.

See you at the next Suzuki Piano Basics event with the teachers from Japan!

[Editor's note: Next Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research: Sacramento International 10-Piano Concert, August 1-16, 2014, and Teacher Research Workshop, Orange County, California, February 5-9, 2015. See Upcoming events for contact information.]

Piano Basics Foundation

Upcoming Workshops/Events

July 7-11, 2014

Conway, Arkansas

Suzuki Piano Basics Five Piano
and Chamber Workshop

Contact Pam Werner [501-425-2862](tel:501-425-2862)
info@suzukiprg.org, www.suzukiprg.org

August 1-16, 2014

Sacramento, California

Suzuki Piano Basics
International 10-Piano Concert

Contact Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

July 18-21, 2014

Tacoma, Washington

Suzuki Piano Basics Summer Festival
with Rae Kate Shen

Contact Jacki Block 253-759-7213
Jblock@ups.edu

February 5-9, 2015

Orange County, California

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura

Contact Mei Ihara 714-997-8692
mihara@socal.rr.com

July 21-25, 2014

Louisville, Kentucky

Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Institute
University of Louisville

Contact Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921
boiney@suzukipiano.com
www.suzukipiano.org

April 2015

Matsumoto, Japan

Suzuki Piano Basics
International 10-Piano Concert

Contact Karen Hagberg 585-978-0600
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, 585-978-0600).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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