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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

*Work Akin to
Watering
a desert*

By Haruko Kataoka

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Translated by Chisa Aoki and

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Edited by Karen Hagberg

***Piano Basics
Foundation News***

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Next Deadline: April 15, 2016

A letter arrived from a former piano student who started lessons when he was three years old at the Talent Institute of Matsumoto. He is presently a high school teacher who teaches Japanese. His pleasant and enjoyable letter was in response to having attended a recital by Minoru Nojima on Oct 1st. He began, "I would like to express my gratitude for your invitation to hear Minoru Nojima in concert. The performance truly filled me with so much joy as did the Seizo Azuma concert earlier this year in June. Day after day, I feel the work that I do is akin to watering a desert. Sometimes it makes me wonder what in the world I am doing. But after listening to the wonderful piano performance and meeting with you even for the limited time we had, I know it may sound as if I exaggerate, but I felt revived back to life. I thought the second half of the last movement was the best part. What are your thoughts on that? It has been such a long time since I last attended a real piano performance..."

Dr. Kataoka's response:

You studied piano with me from the time you were three years old until your senior year in high school. Our relationship spans fifteen years. I am well acquainted with your personality. You are quiet and

calm, never the type to rush or to be improper. However, whenever you spoke, you made others happy with your warm humor. You truly have a wonderful disposition. I have never forgotten what your mother shared with me when you entered your senior year in high school. Apparently, she was concerned with college entrance exams looming in the near future and that you had too much going on with piano, drawing (you were very good) and studying. She suggested that you might quit one of them. Your swift response was, "If that's the case, then I'll quit studying." Your retort was so humorous, your mother and I had to hold our bellies from laughing so hard.

I am aware of your kindness toward your parents. When you were a junior in college, it was time for your sister, two years younger than you, to start college. Instead of taking money from your parents, you chose to work part-time to help out. Not only do you play the piano well, to my great delight you have become a genuine lover of music.

I have taken the liberty to use a phrase in your letter as a title for this article, "work akin to watering a desert." It is hard to explain why, but I laughed out loud when I first read it and then experienced a feeling of happiness. I could imagine your teaching really hard with all your heartfelt might in front of apathetic students who do not take anything seriously much less listen in class.

The work as an educator does not yield immediate results, good or otherwise. It requires patience and long, steady effort. It is the same with parents bringing up their children. There is such a difference between the viewpoint of parents versus that of children. No matter how earnestly parents ruminate over what and how to teach or how much they do for their children, the children fail to understand. Furthermore, they rebel against their parents. Understanding the kind of hardships our parents have experienced begins in our twenties when we start working, fend for ourselves, start a home, and become parents. Finally, at this point we are able to empathize with what parents have had to endure.

I, too, feel that over a long period of time I have been watering a desert. Results from my efforts were seemingly lacking and I felt a sense of failure numerous times. However, each time I looked around at the harshness of the desert, I could not help believing that the only way to save our children is to exert effort no matter how hard so that there is progress whether it is one step or even half a step in the right direction to make this world a better place.

The effort of one person is seemingly miniscule but we have to change our thinking and embrace the thinking that no matter how small if you keep accumulating what is good, we will be able to see the greening of a once lifeless desert. I have continued this kind of work spanning many decades.

There are many people who are experts in their chosen fields who have alluded to their work akin to watering a desert. Words from Kenji Miyazawa that I read long ago in my youth still resounds in my heart, "There can be no happiness for the individual until the whole world is happy." Kenji took it upon himself the monumental effort to water the desert, a toll that shortened his life. Despite his untimely death, he has left us with poetry and literary compositions that transform desert into greenery with the richness of life and that will remain in our hearts for eternity.

In any case, when people believe that it is futile to think any one individual can possibly impact the world, they resort to irresponsible conduct.

We can start with just our immediate circle without the need for recognition from anyone. Let us endeavor to do good with all our heart and soul as long as we live. For those of us who are in the position to teach, we are destined to always water the desert.

A practical example is the state of Idaho in the US where rainfall is scarce. However, potatoes are grown

in vast fields that are irrigated through human intervention and effort. Perhaps, all work requires this kind of effort.

Because we appreciate the value of education and if we forge on with conviction, never giving up, then with the passage of years, or decades, the fruits of our labor will no doubt be realized. As a reward for all our efforts, God has bestowed upon us with the wondrous gift of the arts. The arts revive our tired bodies and souls so that we wake up the next day ready to continue our work with renewed effort.

Lastly, please do not forget to reflect on your past. We were all at one time children or students with no motivation or ambitions. We were deserts ourselves as children and someone took the effort to water us.

Don't Give Up, Let's Keep Repeating

By Narumi Yoshida

Kataoka Sensei aptly brought her article to a close with, "We were all at one time children or students with no motivation or ambitions. We were deserts ourselves as children and someone took the effort to water us." It reminded me of a lesson I had with her when I was in music high school. She said, "Finally for the first time, you are hearing what I am saying. No matter how much I repeated before, you were not able to change."

I started piano when I was three years old. As an adult, I began understanding what Sensei was talking about. It was at this time that I

became aware that whatever needed fixing or changing was something I had to do myself.

I wonder how many times Sensei kept repeating what she was telling me. Was it a hundred times, no perhaps many thousand times? She spent decades, month after month, year after year, 'watering' me with quite a lot of water.

I reflect back to my own parenting. Did I bring up my two daughters, 'watering' them diligently?

One daughter was always aloof. I could never tell whether she was listening or not listening. With my other daughter, I would repeat myself over and over but she never seemed to be able to do what I told her to do. It made me wonder if a screw were loose, no

maybe a few screws were loose. At times, I would be overcome with regret and wondered what I could have done differently. To this day, I still want to tell them when something is wrong. However, once children become adults, it is too late to intervene. Furthermore, they have to rely on their own awareness of their own issues.

Today, my daughters are adults and have become members of society. My daughter who was aloof as a child still seems that way, but it seems she may have actually listened to what I had been saying repeatedly all along. Even

my daughter who I thought had a screw loose has left home and is living independently on her own.

Now that I am beyond the parenting years, what I consider 'Eureka!' parenting advice is that you have to keep repeating over and over what is important with conviction. Those of you who are in the midst of parenting must have a mountain of things you want to tell your children. Even if you are thinking of saying this or that, there are possibly things that may never take root. However, please have faith, never give up and continue to give them lots of 'water.'

Because Kataoka Sensei continued to repeat to me, without giving up, I was able to fix things when my awareness was awakened. I am grateful to her for her continued Persistence in "watering" me.

Raising Wonderful Human Beings Through Music

***Speech by Keiko Ogiwara Sensei delivered at workshops
in Phoenix, Arizona and Orange County, California, February 2016***

We Suzuki Piano Basics teachers teach beginners the correct Basics from the very beginning. At first we teach them to stand up correctly, look at the teacher, and bow. When the student is able to do that, he or she will be taught the correct way to sit in the chair. Then they are ready to play notes for the first time. Just like this, we let our students advance to the next step only after each process is completed with great care.

Since playing the piano means performing with your body, you cannot get results in a short period of

time. The body cannot achieve anything unless you repeat the same action over and over. However, the body will never forget actions which are secured by repeating the same Thing thousands of times.

For students, compared to playing a musical piece hands together, repetition of a simple action is a boring thing. But when they overcome that process with patience and effort, they experience the feeling of accomplishment that will lead to confidence. Moreover, things they learn with this kind of process will become assets which cannot be bought with money, and that most definitely will allow them to approach their lives with strength and fortitude.

The founder of the Talent Education, Dr. Shinichi

Suzuki, left us a wonderful educational method that was intended to raise human beings through music, rather than to raise professional musicians.

Let us raise our children to become wonderful human beings through studying the piano.

Thank you.



Teachers at 2016 Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop, Phoenix, February 2016.
Photo by Vicki Merley

Reality of New Scholarship Program Depends on All of Us!

***By Hannah Hall
Board Member, Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation***

With great pleasure and anticipation, the Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation has launched the Kataoka Research Scholarship! This program will provide funds for teachers who wish to attend events featuring Senseis Ogiwara and Kawamura from Japan. As announced in our Nov/Dec. 2015 newsletter, teachers who are in their initial stages

or new to teaching Piano Basics may apply to attend a workshop or Ten-Piano Concert held in the United States. Experienced teachers may also apply for scholarships toward study in Japan or the Matsumoto Ten-Piano Concert. We are now accepting applications **for events taking place in 2017**, with an **application due date of September 1, 2016**. Please submit all inquiries and requests for application materials to

Hannah Hall, Chair of the Scholarship Committee:
correctthecause@gmail.com.

The extent to which this scholarship can award funds is dependent upon donations from *us* – the teachers and parents who love and support the study of Piano Basics. The Kataoka Research Scholarship allows our dollars to build our future! We cultivate our own abilities as well as those of our students by investing our time and energy in piano practice and research. In order to cultivate the next generation of Suzuki Piano Basics teachers, we must also invest financially. Our intent for this scholarship is to foster community, cooperation, momentum, and growth in Piano Basics.

Each one of us can reflect upon how the philosophy of Suzuki Piano Basics has shaped our own lives – whether in relation to teaching piano, building relationships with families and friends, or simply in becoming a better person. The quest for good tone allows the music to become something so beautiful it takes your breath away. It is an infinite depth of learning, continually bettering the student and yourself as a person and pianist.

As a Piano Basics teacher, parent, or student, you experience these thoughts on a daily basis – whether consciously or instinctively. You might even remember the very first time they entered your head. What would your life look like if you had never experienced the



Hannah Hall

study of Piano Basics? Who introduced you to this exploration of sound and beauty? As you fill out your SPBF membership renewal this year, you will find a line marked “Scholarship.” **Please consider making a gift in honor of that person – friend, parent, student, colleague, or former teacher who initially pointed the way for you. Share your story with us!**

We hope that as you open your mind to the possibilities of this scholarship, you won’t limit yourself to that single donation moment. **Open your heart to the prospect of giving toward this scholarship throughout the year.** Dr. Suzuki said, “Beautiful tone, beautiful heart.” It is *this*, along with that “infinite depth of learning,” which drives us, as teachers, parents, and students, to sponsor and attend research workshops and 10-Piano Concerts throughout the years. Dr. Kataoka reminded us that “We must judge our own teaching by our worst student,” not by our “good” ones. (We each have that “worst student’s” name in our minds right now, don’t we?) The same holds true in our community of Piano Basics teachers. Those of us who do not put into practice what we learn, and those who do not (or cannot) attend research workshops, will inevitably become our weakest teachers. They are the ones by whom we must judge our own community. Let us encourage one another to grow and improve! We do

this through our kindness, our time spent with one another, and our generosity.

I am excited about partnering with you and the Board of the SPBF to create a program that will help the least experienced among us become wiser; a program that will allow proficient teachers to become even greater; a program that will

strengthen not only our current teachers and students, but ultimately, the students of the future. So, please, spread the word about the Kataoka Research Scholarship! Any piano teacher may apply; all applications will be reviewed by our Scholarship Committee. Tell your former students who may now be considering teaching piano; tell the traditional piano teacher down the street; encourage your research partner across the city to consider going to Japan... and both of you should not only apply for a Scholarship, but contribute towards it as well!

The greatest journey begins with a single step.

The greatest performance begins with a single note.

The future begins right now.

This scholarship begins today . Right now . with all of us.

Let's make it great.

Let's make it beautiful.

Let's create a legacy for our future.

Donations to the Kataoka Scholarship Fund may be made out to SPBF Scholarship Fund and sent to Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer, Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, California 95831

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To Our Members

If you have not yet paid your membership for 2016 it is now overdue. Please send in your renewal today. Teacher membership is \$40 and Family membership is \$25. All membership in Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation is for a calendar year.

Members whose dues were not received by March 15 may not appear in our 2016 Directory. We do not routinely send out separate bills to individuals, trusting our members to renew in due time. Please make checks (we do not accept credit-card payments) payable to Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation, and send to Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, CA 95831.

Whether or not you have renewed, please also consider a contribution to help launch our new Kataoka Scholarship Program (see page 6), the success of which depends on YOU. Thanks for your continued support of the work of the Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation.

Piano Basics Foundation

Upcoming Workshops/Events

April 19-23, 2016

Salt Lake City, Utah

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop with Bruce Anderson
Contact Nila Ledesma 801-942-5472
nilaledesma@msn.com

June 20-24, 2016

Louisville, Kentucky

Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Institute
with Bruce Anderson, Karmalita Bawar
and Rae Kate Shen
Contact Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921
boiney@suzukipiano.com
www.suzukipiano.org

June 20-24, 2016

Maumelle, Arkansas

Suzuki Piano Basics Festival
Five Piano and Chamber Music
with Rita Burns, Rae Kate Shen
and Michael Jacobsen
Contact Pam Werner 501-425-2862
musicpam@gmail.com

**NOTE: THIS EVENT HAS
BEEN CANCELLED**

July 15-18, 2016

Tacoma, Washington

Suzuki Piano Basics Festival
with Cathy Hargrave
Contact: Jacki Block 253-759-7213
jblock@ups.edu

July 30-August 14, 2016

Sacramento, California

Suzuki Piano Basics International 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, 585-978-0600).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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