

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

I Can Read Music

(Part I of 3)

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter

Vol. 2 No 5, October 22, 1992

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Next Deadline: February 15, 2018

The wonderful thing about the Suzuki Method is that when young children begin music lessons they do not read the score, but rather they learn to play by listening to the music. This is the way infants all over the world learn their mother tongue and eventually become able to speak their language. The most important reason, the main reason that the Suzuki Method spread throughout the world, is because of this wonderful way of introducing children to music.

This Method was successful because of the discovery that the ideal way for children to begin learning music is by listening to it. So we have to think of what comes next. Of course, there are many aspects to consider: how to produce musical sound, how to ride the rhythm, how to play legato and staccato, how to read notes, etc. Let's investigate how all this is accomplished.

These concerns of good tone, rhythm, legato and staccato are relevant to the study of all musical instruments. However, we need to be aware that the musical score is a very essential matter to the pianist. I have a feeling that the majority of people think that it is okay not to be too serious with young children and that it is sufficient to deal with reading when students are more advanced. This attitude is the source of huge mistakes. If we wait too long to teach reading, when students are more advanced, although they may be able to understand intellectually it has become too late to learn in a way that develops muscle memory.

Reading music for piano is difficult because we have to contend with playing not only the melody but other voices as well. The pianist's role is akin to that of an orchestra conductor. In addition to conducting, pianists must accomplish the task of making music using just their fingers. (Is this not a seemingly huge task compared to that of a conductor?) Having interpreted exactly what the composer has written, a pianist must simultaneously convert it into sound.

Other instruments (voice, string instruments, wind instruments) involve the melody only, so an accompanist is always necessary. Always having to make music together with others is enjoyable, but there is always the difficulty finding good collaborators. Piano can always be played all by itself, and can also be enjoyed in ensemble with others.

I have always considered the piano to be the king of instruments. However, to name it as king does not mean idly to be happy about it. Being the king means there are responsibilities incidental to such status. One of these big responsibilities is accurately to read music. (Accurate reading of music will be discussed/explained in the next issue.)

Let's think carefully about how a young child should be taught to read music. (This applies to both parents and teachers alike.) Adults make an erroneous assumption when it comes to what the phrase 'reading music'

means. We think that reading music or, more precisely reading the score, means that we use our eyes to look at the score and then make sound with our hands on the piano keys simultaneously while continuing to play. This is what we expect children to do right away. This, however, is impossible.

When students begin Book 2, regardless of their age even if they are three years old, I begin the task of studying how to read music. Even though I call it reading music, I do not make them read music. I also use a dedicated reading book in addition to the Book 2 score. There are no recordings for this reading book.

First I would like to speak directly to parents. When infants become two or three years old, you invariably purchase books for your children. The purpose is not to start teaching them written language, but rather to teach children that there exists such a thing as books. Parents always read to their children. Being read to repeatedly over time, children learn written language little by little. It is the same with reading music. You must not make them read in the beginning. If they are forced to read, they will learn to dislike reading music.

I always tell parents that this is the beginning of the study of music reading, but do not try to get your child actually to read. Instead, you read all the notes for them and help them play from memory [as you have been doing]. But now please make sure to put the reading book on the music stand when you say "let's study reading music." Then point to the piece you are working on, no.1 or no.7 for example, so your child will look at it. Of course, if the child is ten years old or older, they can start to read bit by bit on their own.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this article, the task of reading music is very important in the study of piano. Please teach the Basics very carefully from the beginning so that children become proficient in accurately reading music in the future.

On Patience

By Karen Hagberg

I received my first 100,000-repetition assignment at my second lesson in Matsumoto: the first two notes of the left hand of the Twinkle Variations, C and the C major triad an octave above it. I figured that it would take 48 hours, two full days, to complete. If I practiced the assignment for 35 minutes a day (1,000 repetitions), I could finish the task in three months and ten days. I *assumed* that I was to repeat only these first two sounds 100,000 times. But possibly she meant the whole accompaniment, which would take twenty-four times longer, *i.e.* 48 full days, or, at 35 minutes a day, approximately six years and 7 months. Fearing the answer, I did not ask for clarification.

A studio in which teacher, parents, and students practice patience is a studio in which children's ability may be nurtured and raised.

An American in Japan is soon struck with how patient the Japanese are. This can be observed in all kinds of situations: in lines at the grocery store, in doctors' waiting rooms, on train platforms, at long meetings, and even in piano lessons. In Kataoka Sensei's studio, students and parents are often required to wait for very long periods of time for their lessons.

From the very beginning, I have been impressed by the patience with which these parents and children (often accompanied by very young siblings) wait. There is no sense of exasperation, no tapping of toes or sighing or looking at the clock, no whining children begging to be taken home. Everyone waits peacefully and quietly without anxiety. It is during this waiting time that the observation of other lessons takes place. Patient observers improve the quality of the observation and of the entire atmosphere of the studio.

Kataoka Sensei has said that patience is the most important quality of a good teacher. This does not simply mean to be "nice" however, as she is careful to point out which, she says, makes parents and students lazy. Having patience does not mean to overlook problems or tolerate mediocrity. On the contrary, Kataoka Sensei's patience is demonstrated in her unrelenting belief that all students can and will play well, despite the various limitations imposed on them by a variety of home situations. She has the patience to assign the same thing over and over until it really is correct and the patience to teach the relatively few Basics of piano playing *ad infinitum* until the student can really execute them. Having patience as a teacher is to resist the temptation to give up on a difficult student—not to praise dishonestly or to be content with something less than excellence.

During practice, patience is also essential. At the Talent Education Institute there are no private practice facilities, so we hear other students practicing every

She has the patience to assign the same thing over and over until it really is correct and the patience to teach the relatively few Basics of piano playing *ad infinitum* until the student can really execute them.

day, the violinists in one of two big rooms where we also take cookie breaks, and the pianists in studios with two pianos. We hear the same students performing in Monday Concert every week. It soon becomes apparent that impatient practicing—playing through piece after piece, rushing to finish repetitive work, not taking time to listen carefully to one’s sound—results in poor, insecure performance. The best performers are incredibly patient and concentrated in their practice. As teachers, a very important job, possibly our *most* important job, is to teach students how to practice effectively, with patience. Learning this ourselves is a pre-requisite to teaching it, but our traditional education has often given us little instruction on *how* to practice. Completing an assignment like my present one takes much more patience and concentration than traditional instruction required of me, but it also has produced much more dramatic results. As teachers, we need constantly to rediscover this truth about practice so we can teach it effectively to students.

As teachers a very important job, possibly our *most* important job, is to teach students how to practice effectively, with patience.

How do we begin to impart patience to children in a culture that is impatient? Patience, like everything else, is a learned behavior. Children learn, from those around them, to be either patient or anxious. Teachers should remind parents to *act* patient

as much as possible around their children, even when they do not feel very patient. I have found that acting patient can sometimes actually make me feel patient. When parents and children practice acting and being patient in the piano studio, it is a very important part of piano practice and is *in no way* a waste of time. Western teachers need to help parents understand this concept. A studio in which teacher, parents, and students practice patience is a studio in which children’s ability may be nurtured and raised.

Dr. Suzuki’s famous advice to “hurry up and wait” constantly takes on new layers of meaning for me here in Japan. Waiting does not compromise diligence and achievement—it *allows* these things to happen. To “hurry up” does not imply impatience or rushing, but rather it means to *begin* and then to *persist*. Isn’t this how everything in life is best accomplished?

Matsumoto News Republication: From September 1988 through January 1992, Karen Hagberg lived and studied in Matsumoto with Dr. Haruko Kataoka, the co-Founder of the Suzuki Piano Method and the founder of the Suzuki Piano Basics Method. During that time she published a newsletter with nine issues annually that was distributed to Suzuki piano teachers in North America and Europe. In addition to news of upcoming workshops and multi-piano concerts, each issue contained an article intended to share what it was like as a foreigner to live in Japan and to study with Dr. Kataoka and Dr. Suzuki.

Nearly twenty years have elapsed since the first issue of Matsumoto News: an entire generation. By popular demand we are re-publishing the articles here. They have been edited from the original, but they remain under copyright and may not be reproduced without written permission from the author.

New Year's Message from Board Chair:

Happy 2018 all teacher and family members! We look forward to a New Year of delight in students' progress and personal growth. Our Foundation exists so that teachers, parents, and students may thrive in their work together at the piano.

It is notable that, despite some discouraging trends noted in the details of last summer's General Membership Meeting, our financial condition compared with last year is thriving due largely to the generosity of our members, who are committed to the continuation of our close contact with teachers in Japan who carry on Dr. Kataoka's legacy. Many teachers have contributed to our Scholarship Fund, and we thank Carole Mayers for adding to that fund by creating a memorial to her husband Bert. In addition, so many teachers have understood the value of having the families in their studios

join the Foundation. Our family memberships have grown immensely over the past few years. Consequently, we can be secure in our ability to subsidize the airfares of teachers who come from Japan to conduct research with us. A huge THANK YOU to all who contributed to our financial health.

There are two Teacher Research Workshops scheduled for August this year. If you are a teacher planning to attend, please contact our Scholarship Chair, Hannah Hall or go to our web site:

core.ecu.edu/hist/wilburnk/suzukipianobasics/
to download application forms if you would like to apply for financial help. At long last, we have a viable Scholarship Fund and would be happy to have teachers benefit from it. We especially encourage first-time attendees to apply. If you are an experienced teacher and know someone wanting to get involved with our work, please bring this program to their attention.

Otherwise, teachers and parents, let's roll up our sleeves and take seriously the responsibility we all have to the young people in our care. Childhood is short, and the rest of one's life depends on what happens in it. May it be filled with music and love.

Karen Hagberg, Chair
Suzuki Piano Foundation Board

Piano Basics Foundation – General Meeting August 13, 2017

Sacramento, California

Attending:

Renee Eckis	Shirlee Rickman
Rae Kate Shen	Connie Snyder
Linda Nakagawa	Jill Austin
Patricia Pritchard	Carolyn Barrett
Chiung-Hwa Bryce	Fumi Kawasaki
Rita Burns	Winnie Ling
Naomi Wysong	

Renee Eckis called the meeting to order at 12:14 p.m. Attending members were noted and Rae Kate Shen read the minutes from the 2016 meeting, which had taken place in Sacramento, CA. during the 10-piano event. Patricia Pritchard moved to approve the 2016 minutes and Connie Snyder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Treasurer Linda Nakagawa reported the Piano Basics account has \$7,981.20 and \$585.00 in the Scholarship fund which is less than last year's amount reported.

Nominations

The proposed new slate of officers for 2017/2018 is:

Renee Eckis – President
Jacki Block – Vice President
Linda Nakagawa – Treasurer
Karmalita Bawar – Secretary

Carolyn Barrett moved to accept the proposed slate of 2017/2018 officers. Winnie Ling seconded and the motion was approved.

Old Business

The first old business was a report from the Scholarship chairperson Hannah Hall. Christine Darling received the first award, which paid for the Fall workshop fee to Orange County's Piano Basics Workshop last February, 2017. Hannah questioned why there were no other applicants and wondered whether the September 1st deadline was too early or the Scholarship fund too new to teachers. Word needs to get out about this Scholarship fund. Any questions or suggestions can be directed to Hannah Hall.

The second old business was continued clarifications regarding the Board of Directors and Officers in the Foundation. Karen Hagberg is working on a more thorough explanation of this, to be put in a future newsletter.

The third old business was an update regarding the Piano Basics website. The possibility of a new website was researched and concluded that it would be too costly at this time. The current website was updated about ten years ago. It was discussed that there are enough features on the website to guide newcomers on the site. However, anyone can submit a current video of a Piano Basics Workshop, Friendship Concert, etc. with proper authorization from video participants, and encouraged to do so. Also, the priority at this time should be having funds go toward having the Japanese teachers give workshops in the U.S. Whatever is left over can then be used for other projects, like a new or updated website.

New Business

For the first new business, Renee announced that Connie Snyder and Patricia Pritchard will be new members to the Foundation Board. Karen Hagberg will have more information regarding this in a future newsletter.

The second new business was discussing what family membership offers for families. Several teachers in Piano Basics brought this question up. It was deemed more communication and transparency are needed in the organization. For instance, teachers need to know well ahead of time if families have to be a Family member of Piano Basics in order to participate in a Piano Basics workshop, 10-piano event, etc. If teachers are clear on the benefits Piano Basics membership offers to families, then they may encourage more families to join. The information that was in the most recent Piano Basics newsletter was not enough for many teachers. Therefore, Connie Snyder, who is now on the Foundation Board, kindly volunteered to write an article for the newsletter detailing the benefits of family membership, as she is passionate about this.

The third new business was to discuss how to promote Piano Basics to new teachers and families outside of our membership. Besides endorsing it in person, it was once again encouraged that teachers who have attended a recent Piano Basics Workshop send in video clips from the workshop to Ken Wilburn, provided there is proper authorization from any participants in the video clips. The website already has a calendar of upcoming events, a membership directory, past newsletters and videos of Dr. Kataoka teaching. (10-piano videos can easily be accessed via a YouTube search.) Current videos might interest new

teachers and families to join membership as well as participate in future Piano Basics events.

Other Business

There was an inquiry on how membership fees are used. Linda Nakagawa mentioned membership fees mainly pay for printing the newsletter, which many members enjoy having hard copies of (it costs \$270 per printing times six newsletters per year), and paying the balance beyond \$1800 (paid by the host organization) to have the Japanese teachers come to the U.S. to teach workshops and 10-piano events. More family memberships would help increase funding for these purposes. Also, Linda clarified that member fees are not used for the Scholarship Fund or The Kataoka Memorial Fund. The latter is presently a back up fund to cover any over draft funds for the Basics Foundation.

Future Winter workshops and 10-piano Sacramento are pending at the present time due to lack of advanced students for 10-Piano and indirectly, funds because of fewer participants.

Finally, regarding attracting new members one more time, Renee read a letter from Karen Hagberg, (which will be printed in a future newsletter). The continuation and growth of Piano Basics will depend on many factors, including:

1. Members taking action.
2. Asking families to support it by becoming members.
3. Members supporting the work of the Foundation by contributing to the Scholarship funds, Kataoka's Memorial Fund and attending Piano Basics Workshops.

Carolyn Barrett motioned to adjourn the meeting and it was second by Jill Austin. The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m. These minutes approved by:

Renee Eckis

Patricia Pritchard

Respectfully submitted by Rae Kate Shen

August 13, 2017

Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation: The People

Here is a list of persons responsible for the various workings of our organization. Please feel free to contact any of us with your questions and concerns or to volunteer your help. We always welcome written input from any and all of our members to share in this newsletter. What is on your mind? Don't put off writing that article!

Board of Directors:

Karen Hagberg, Chair
Patricia Pritchard, Recording Secretary
Hannah Hall
Connie Snyder
Bruce Boiney
Linda Nakagawa
Keiko Ogiwara, Honorary Life Member

Officers:

Renee Eckis, President
Jacki Block, Vice President
Karmalita Bawar, Secretary
Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer

Nominations Committee:

Ann Taylor, Chair

Scholarship Committee:

Hannah Hall, Chair

Newsletter:

Karen Hagberg, Editor
Teri Paradero, Design & Layout
Teri Paradero & Chisa Aoki, Translation
Linda Nakagawa, Printing and Mailing

Membership Services:

Linda Nakagawa, Directory Editor
Linda Nakagawa, Educational Materials Order Fulfillment Manager

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site:

Prof. Kenneth Wilburn, Web Master
Carol Wunderle, Content Editor

If you would like to assume responsibility for any part of the workings of the Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation, or if you know someone who would, please contact our Nominations Committee Chairperson, Ann Taylor, before June 15. Current contact information for all persons listed above may be found in our directory.

Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation 2017 Annual Report

January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017

Starting Balance:	\$5,903.11
Income:	+\$29,871.95
<u>Expenses:</u>	<u>-\$19,329.80</u>
Ending Balance:	\$16,445.26

Expenses

Legal/Accounting	\$690.00
Supplies	\$76.99
Postage	\$1,977.59
Printing	\$1,972.51
Travel	\$5,895.51
Compensations	\$4,200.00
<u>Matsumoto 10-Piano</u>	<u>\$4,365.00</u>
Total	\$19,329.80

Income

Dues	\$16,190.00
Donations	\$1,525.00
Matsumoto 10-Piano	\$4,200.00
Workshops	\$4,630.00
Memorial Fund	\$860.00
Scholarship Fund	\$850.00
Bert Mayers Memorial	\$470.00
<u>Materials</u>	<u>\$1,146.95</u>
Total	\$29,871.95

Respectfully submitted by Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer

My Studio Values Family Memberships

The Piano Basics Foundation Members from my studio have once again renewed their membership along with their other required Fall fees. A few years ago they became aware that PBF funds the travel expenses for the Japanese teachers to come to the United States twice a year to teach us. They appreciate so much how that instruction reaches them, even those who are unable to attend the workshops themselves. The newsletter is an added aid in their instruction. My families consider \$25 an inexpensive and necessary enhancement for their piano study. Their annual dues are collected by a January deadline included in their fall statement.

As a studio, we highly value the input we receive from the Japanese teachers!

Connie Snyder

Corrections to the Directory:

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khagberg1943@gmail.com

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USA 951-897-8666
nwysong@yahoo.com

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

June 11-15, 2018

Louisville, Kentucky

Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Institute

Contact Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921

boiney@suzukipiano.com

www.suzukipiano.org

August 2-6, 2018

Louisville, Kentucky

Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop

With Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura

Contact Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921

boiney@suzukipiano.com

www.suzukipiano.org

August 9-13, 2018

Sacramento, California

Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop

With Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura

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 (khagberg1943@gmail.com, 585-978-0600).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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