

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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*Education is  
Necessary  
for  
Children!*

**By Haruko Kataoka**

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What is education? Why is there such a thing as education? Whenever education is mentioned, people automatically think of academic studies at school. Academic education is but a fraction of all education.

Reading and writing come first. In our society today, it is largely the responsibility of schools to teach these

things. Learning these skills enables us to be able to convey our own ideas on paper and to learn about myriad other subjects: Japanese, arithmetic, science, social studies, foreign languages. We are taught the tools that enable us to express our thought processes.

Secondly, we learn the discipline that is important for human betterment—to help our society that consists of a large number of people functioning smoothly. We learn the very important basics of manners to live within society from elders such as parents or grandparents.

Another aspect of education, important and necessary in people's lives, is learning how to express through the arts (music, dance,

painting, sculpture, etc). Piano practice fits in this category. Strengthening and training the body in sports is the same.

There is one more thing that is important. It is the issue of developing our heart and soul, our ability to love. This is something we start learning from our environment since birth and nurture and develop one step at a time.

Let's pause for a moment and think carefully. Ultimately, what is most important is that we nurture in one human being, the very own, individual, special qualities with which he/she was born. That is what I consider the *best education*. Bad education is one that can ruin what is special in an individual or one that just neglects to teaching anything. It results in the tragedy of a human being born with treasures that rot from disuse, who lives an entire life without realizing what he/she could have blossomed into. I would like you all to be more aware of this problem. There is no development or nurturing in negligence.

Coincidentally, in the latter part of last year, I was shown a fantastic videotape. It was a research video released by the late professor of Tokyo University Hachizo Umezu, husband of Miyoko Umezu, a Suzuki teacher in Kanagawa Prefecture. This was a documentary about the education of two children, a boy and a girl, who suffer from three major handicaps. They are blind, deaf and mute like the famous, Helen Keller. There are many afflicted in this way.

I believe the children were both about seven years old. They were taken from their parents in the countryside and placed in a dorm in Tokyo. Dr. Umezu, together with his brilliant staff members at Tokyo University, taught the children manners necessary for effective day-to-day living. They would patiently spell words into their palms one at a time (so they could learn language) and then in the evening,

the children would practice making sounds with their voice so they would eventually develop the ability to have conversations with people. It is an extremely difficult task to teach deaf children the The ability to use their voice. They would use various models to teach how much to open their mouth as they allowed them to touch and feel how the throat should move. The children were asked to put their hands in the teachers' mouth to let them feel the movement of air flowing in and out of the mouth when speaking. This went on over and over repeatedly with patience and perseverance. Many months later, how they were so incredibly joyous when the children could produce the sound 'Ah' for the first time!

The boy was able to solve difficult math problems at the middle school level. Even though it was very difficult, they persistently practiced walking independently on their own. It was so moving to see them when they finally succeeded.

If these two children had never met such people like Dr. Umezu and his dedicated, brilliant colleagues at the age of seven, it is obvious that they may have spent the rest of their lives like animals. Because of those excellent educators, two children were able to develop their inner capabilities as human beings. (Before they moved to Tokyo, their family lived in an agricultural community where everyone would leave home for work. The children were tied to a post with a rope for the duration of the workday. They were never toilet-trained.) If they were never educated and instead, neglected, it is clear to anyone what may have happened these handicapped children.

It is absolutely true that human beings must be given a good education during childhood. Is it

possible that adults may think it is fine to teach children who have normal eyesight, hearing and energy any reckless way, unlike the handicapped children. We must take whatever quality is inherently special in a child as vital and significant, and must nurture and develop that specialness without ruining it. Furthermore, it is during childhood that children must be taught uncompromisingly to have patience, perseverance and the ability to exert effort.

Even if our children are born in the midst of plenty and easy satisfaction, we must be careful to not miss the opportunity to educate. From the teacher's perspective, particularly with able children, we cannot think of doing less. We must keep in mind to endeavor to provide the best education.

At the beginning of 1992, we straightened up our act and made our resolution firmly to provide our children a wonderful education with love.

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## ***Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert Sacramento, California, August 1-15, 2009***

*by Linda Nakagawa*

**Observation** is essential when learning how to teach the Suzuki Method. We are all familiar with the sayings, "Seeing is believing" and "A picture is worth a thousand words." Understanding a philosophy or method of education is easy. Putting it into action with favorable results is the difficult part. The more I teach, the more I want to observe.

The upcoming Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert is a wonderful opportunity for learning. Three of the Japanese teachers from Matsumoto will help conduct the rehearsals and concert. (Keiko Ogiwara, Keiko Nozawa Keiko Kawamura)

Rehearsals will begin at 8:30 in the morning on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Every piece will have 10 students. Prior to this time, the local students rehearse on several weekends. In the beginning, the results are terrible. Students



Dr. Kataoka conducting at a rehearsal of the 10-Piano rehearsal in Sacramento, August

2003

cannot stay together. Teachers learn how to help the students play together.

Two weeks before the concert everyone arrives to take their places on their assigned pianos. It is very interesting because it is utter chaos again. I always get so depressed because it is as if we haven't achieved anything! Dr. Kataoka would always tell me that if even only **one** student plays with an unnatural body, the entire group is affected. We have a long way to go, but let's keep working together.

It is not necessary to have your own students participate in the 10-Piano concert to learn something. Recently a teacher told me that she learned a lot more when she had her own student participate because she paid more attention.

Let's change our way of thinking and pay attention whether or not we have students. We can be inspired by the students who have developed a high

ability and sympathetic to the students who are struggling. We can learn how to develop ability in our struggling students!

It is fascinating to watch the Japanese teachers pull the students together for a performance. This is the learning part. The teacher has to teach with her whole body and soul. Children use their senses to play together. I hope you will be able to come.

In observing the 10-Piano rehearsals myself, I have learned that ~~it's~~ harder than it looks+and ~~it's~~ easier said than done+. Let's teach with our hearts.

Rehearsals will be at California State University, Sacramento (6000 J Street) in the Capistrano (Music) building from August 1-9th. Monday, August 10th will be a free day, when visiting students will go to Six Flags amusement park. Rehearsals will resume on August 11th at the Mondavi Center for the Arts, (Jackson Hall) on the University of California, Davis campus. Dress Rehearsal is on Friday, August 14th. The concert is Saturday, August 15th at 2:30 p.m. Tickets will go on sale June 1, 2009 through the Mondavi Center (access ticket sales online).

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## *Going to Japan*

*By Samuel Sugimoto, age 14  
Suzuki piano student of  
Fumiko Kawasaki in Sunnyvale, CA*

Right after New Years, Kawasaki Sensei asked me if I wanted to go to Japan to play in the 2008 Suzuki Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert. I asked her to let me think about it for a while. About a week later I told her that I would gladly go to Matsumoto.

As a first timer leaving the country by myself, I was pretty nervous at the airport. I never went anywhere without my mom or dad for more than four days, or stayed at a stranger's house for two and a half weeks. By the time I got on the airplane, I was so hyped-up that I was having one of these ~~low~~ did I get myself into doing this?+moments.

**As a first timer leaving the country by myself, I was pretty nervous at the airport.**

After the plane took off, I can't remember how many times I looked back at the California coast and wished that I could be back home (which at that moment would mean sitting in social studies class listening to the teacher yell at somebody who really ticked him off).

I felt a LOT better after ~~lunch~~ at 3 o'clock California time. For the rest of the flight, I just sat around, did some homework, went to the bathroom, watched the movie, etc. For some reason, ten hours went by really fast and before I knew it,

we were taxing on the runway at Narita Airport in Tokyo, Japan.

Since I was on the first plane arriving at Narita, I

**My performance piece was Sonatina in F, which I had been practicing for a long time.**

had to wait a long time for the rest of the students and teachers to arrive. When we arrived it was 3:30 PM, by the time we got on the bus and started driving towards Matsumoto, it was almost 7:00 PM. I didn't see much of the bus ride due to the fact that I couldn't stay awake anymore. By the time I woke up, we were at the bus stop in Matsumoto. At the time, I failed to notice that it was 11:00 PM already. I was completely lost at the bus lot, due to the fact that I have never been there, and I had absolutely no idea what my host parents or their three sons looked like. I only knew the names of the three sons: Yosuke (18), Seiya (14), and Motoki (11), their last name is Hayashi, and that their house is already full because the Grandma also lives with them, bring the total to 6 people. Not including me or my roommate, Taj Costa.

If there is anyone to stay with on your first trip to Japan, it's got to be Taj Costa. Taj

**The practice that they use in Japan is repetition, which I think creates good results.**

is a really big, tough guy with THE hair. He is the guy that always stands out in the crowd because his hair makes him an extra two

inches taller. But under all that, he is one of the nicest, funniest people around, and a very accomplished musician. He's already made his own song which sounds so professional you would think anybody but Taj composed it. He has a bright future ahead of him. Oh! I want to mention that he is going to study in Japan for one year with Kawamura Sensei on piano performance.

Still lost at the bus stop, I found Kawasaki Sensei to ask for help. But before I could ask her where the Hayashi's were, she was already introducing me to the mother and father.

A few days later, I went to my first rehearsal, which happened to be a private one. My performance piece was Sonatina in F, which I had been practicing for a long time. I didn't think that I played

**The worst part of the trip was the day after the concert. Time to go back home...**

as well as I could have because I was, for some odd reason, scared out of my wits. Although the seas were rough during that lesson, I think that I played better during the rehearsal with the whole group a few days later.

The rehearsals always seemed very short and there wasn't enough time for the teachers to correct whatever needs improvement. Unlike the 10-Piano Concerts in Sacramento, everything is more of a rush here. The days seem shorter in Japan; the sun rises early, hours before you get up and sets early, hours before bedtime. It felt like there was not enough time for each day.

I'm not sure how many rehearsals I went to, somewhere around four or five but there was a lot of practicing to do after each rehearsal. This part one-hundred times, this part two-hundred times, this measure three hundred times, EVERY DAY!!! At the next rehearsal two days later: Please continue doing the repetition practice. (Sigh from the students.) The practice that they use in Japan is repetition, which I think creates good results.

Very soon it was time for the concert. In Japan, the mothers have to help with the preparation and teardown process so that the concert can run

smoothly. I have no idea what the mothers are meant to do, but my host mother had to stay for an hour and clean up after the concert was over. I'm not familiar with Japanese customs but this also means that the mothers can't watch the concert either, which in my point of view is unfortunate. The mothers can't see or hear their children perform.

Harmony Hall itself is small, thus, calling for two concerts: one in the morning, one in the afternoon. Since the concert hall is small, students can't be in the audience. You must stay in a waiting room with a projector and an amplifier watching the concert. (This may be used as reference to see if it's time to go back stage.) The changing room might be more fun because I think that there is a tradition of playing ping pong while waiting to perform, using dress shoes as paddles.

After the afternoon concert, we went to the reception. This was not a boring "Congratulations+reception, but more of a "nice seeing you/hope to see you again+reception, since most of the people attending the reception with the exception of the Japanese teachers are the American students, their host families, and the American teachers.

The worst part of the trip was the day after the concert. Time to go back home, back to the United States of America (with the exception of the few

**I feel that I have gotten more mature and that I am also more independent.**

teachers and students who live in Canada or Singapore). We rose early in the morning. All was quiet in the house; everyone was in a grim mood. The father and mother took us to the bus stop and we said goodbye. It was so heartbreaking to leave someone who took care of you for three weeks and you have just come to know. I think what Taj said in his speech at the reception is right, it's weird that my host Grandmother always asks me if I am homesick. I think that I am more homesick when I leave Japan than when I come to Japan.

Thanks to my teacher and my host parents, I was able to enjoy this trip. I think that I have changed a bit after I came back from Japan. I feel that I have gotten more mature and that I am also more independent. I will never forget this experience.

## ***Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation General Membership Meeting***

This summer our meeting will be held at the home of Linda Nakagawa, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, California, on Friday, July 31 at 7:30 p.m. All members are welcome to attend. Please submit agenda items to Karen Hagberg [kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com) before July 21.

As the Chair of the nominating committee, Ann Taylor from Tucson, Arizona is accepting

nominations from our members for officers of the Foundation until July 15. If you have names you wish to put into nomination, please contact Ann at 520-881-5573 ([ann@anntaylorstudio.net](mailto:ann@anntaylorstudio.net)). Current Officers: President: Karen Hagberg; Vice President: Renee Eckis; Treasurer: Linda Nakagawa; Secretary: Lorie Armstrong.

Look forward to seeing you in Sacramento.

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## **10-Piano Concert, Matsumoto, Japan *Sunday, April 25, 2010***

Plans are underway for next year's International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert in Japan. The group of teachers and students from the United States will leave the U.S. on Thursday, April 8, 2010 to arrive on Friday, April 9 and will return on April 26.

Teachers are welcome to come to Japan to research Suzuki Piano Basics by observing rehearsals. Those Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation members who have attended previous 10-Piano Concerts and who are currently attending Suzuki Piano Basics workshops may apply to bring a student to perform in the concert. Please be aware that the number of visiting students is limited, and that consequently all applicants may not be accepted.



Matsumoto Castle Photo by Malinda Rawls



10-Piano rehearsal at Harmony Hall in Matsumoto.

Students must plan to be accompanied to Japan by their teacher (not parent) and be mature enough to reside for the duration with a Japanese host family. In the interest of creating the richest possible cultural experience for our students, and in order to provide them with the opportunity to become strong and independent and to learn something on their own, they may not be accompanied by parent(s). Teachers, please make this clear to your families before you think about submitting an application for your student. Parents are welcome to come to Matsumoto to hear the performance a day or two in advance, but are asked to have minimal contact

with their children until after the concert. Visiting students will remain with their host family until after the concert.

At the request of the Matsumoto teachers, all arrangements for attendance at, and participation

in, next year's concert, and all homestay in Matsumoto, will be handled through Karen Hagberg. Requests for applications and further information may be directed to her at [kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com) or 585-24

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**Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:**

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