

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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*How to Capture  
the Hearts of Children*  
(Part 2 of 3)

**By Haruko Kataoka**

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from a Lecture delivered at the  
39<sup>th</sup> Chubu Japan Medical Congress of Pediatrics, Matsumoto,  
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Dr. Suzuki's music education is very different from the traditional way of teaching music. The rationale behind this difference is what I had described to you earlier. It is absolutely different from every aspect of traditional music education. Furthermore, education during early childhood is the most important, and this is something that cannot be accomplished unless you start educating children when they are young. Whatever we learn as young children determines how we will continue to live our entire lives. This is the method of education that stresses the importance of learning in early childhood.

I believe this is the truth. Just as I had mentioned earlier, English and German pronunciation is absolutely different when you have been speaking the language since childhood. Why would this be so? As little children, we human beings are made so very delicate, but at the same time we can be awesomely magnificent.

Just recently while in America, I met a college student at a Japanese restaurant who was working there part-time. I was listening to him, impressed by his knowledge of the English language. The American teachers asked him how many years he'd been in America. He replied, "Five years." I was thinking to myself that in five years, one would be able to learn quite a bit. However, his pronunciation made the three American piano teachers doubt that his high level of proficiency could be learned in just five years. Then he revealed that he had lived in England when he was in early grade school. When I heard this, I did detect that he spoke with a somewhat British accent. I don't speak English that well so I didn't totally understand where the conversation went from there, but his fluency prompted the three teachers, especially one of them who also had a doctorate in education, to ask him questions with earnest curiosity.

This is the reason why childhood is so wonderful. Children promptly absorb everything presented to them. Whatever is

absorbed by a human being during childhood, is stored, in its entirety, deep within our minds. What has been absorbed can be retrieved and accessed when the need arises and then stored away again when the need is gone.

There was a time when we traveled to America and our American hosts arranged for us to stay with a third generation Japanese family. The grandfather who was originally from Yamaguchi Prefecture in Japan had immigrated to America. Being third generation, they admitted that they did not speak Japanese. One morning, the family had overslept a bit. When the husband found Ogiwara Sensei in the kitchen preparing breakfast, he told her, "Don't worry, I can do this myself," in Japanese.

This took her by surprise and she said, "I thought you couldn't speak Japanese...what happened?" He was even more dumbfounded that his Japanese came out so fluently and naturally. Another Japanese teacher, a Hiroshima resident who was sitting in the kitchen at the time, observed that not only did he speak Japanese, it was in the dialect from the Yamaguchi district. Whatever human beings absorb early in life truly stays with us for the rest of our lives, until we die. Dr. Suzuki became keenly aware of this fact and incorporated it into music education.

It is actually truly easy to capture the hearts of children. All you have to do is not treat them like children. Children hate to be treated like little children. Adults, unaware of this, inevitably end up treating children like children. That is why children don't listen to us. I learned this from Dr. Suzuki. Before a lesson begins, the student and teacher face each other and bow. Often a parent will insist that their child say, "Please help me," as they are bowing. Dr. Suzuki grew to intensely hate this convention. Help is not a one-way street; teachers receive help too. The bow must be a respectful, mutual request, between two human beings, to help one another. Dr. Suzuki taught this to me in the beginning. Now, I absolutely agree with him.

There are times when, lesson after lesson, I do not mention it, and then there are times when I do mention it, but always during my teaching I am thoroughly cognizant of this mutual help and learning. When you respectfully recognize children as individual human beings, oddly enough they begin to listen to everything you say.

When children are very young, their left-brain knowledge of the world is not developed. But that is precisely what is so wonderful. Their native right-brain sensibility is immediately instinctive, however. It is a seemingly God-like quality. On the other hand, what children do not possess is stamina. We must not forget this. Children are very well equipped in the areas of concentration, patience and the ability to exert effort that are several levels higher than adults. But because they do not have stamina, they do not have the lengthy

attention span necessary to complete tasks. We need to realize this when we approach them; otherwise we will fail.

Young children have not yet learned to deal with issues of everyday life. They cannot differentiate between what is advantageous or disadvantageous, what is loss or gain. That's why they have no motivation or worldly desire. If someone does not push the 'ON' switch, they will not be able to utilize their inherent wonderful ability to concentrate, be patient, or exert any effort. I believe that parents are first in line to turn the switch on. More specifically, it is the mother. This switch is the concrete, visual manifestation for what I believe actually symbolizes love. So if there is no parent who says, "Let's practice," a child will never do it on his own. I use this example often. Let's say you send your child to the supermarket to buy one lemon. I imagine that the child would straight away zoom over to the store, pluck a lemon off the mound of lemons on display, buy it and zoom back home with it. However, if I go to the store, and even though I am not one to shop with any kind of frequency, I would stand in front of the mound of lemons, note the sign with the price of 100 yen per lemon, and as a result, pick out the best lemon available. This is the kind of distinction or knowledge that a child lacks. Please take this developmental difference to heart, and the rest is the exactly the same as adults. The significance of this sameness explains why treating children like children results in their refusal to listen to us.

Please indulge me to boast a little. I have the ability to have children listen to me. It is because I treat them as full-fledged adults. Quite a while ago, right before a group of lessons for very young children, an American teacher forewarned me that there was a child in the group who refused to listen to anyone. I told her, "Yes, it's okay." Within two hours, many children had lessons. When we were finished, I asked which child was the one who wouldn't listen. The teachers looked a little mortified. They were saying that perhaps my English wasn't so good and I therefore I didn't speak so much and that is why the child listened to me. That was not the reason. It was because I seriously and earnestly worked alongside the child. I worked one-on-one with him as a fellow human being. Children are able to sense this. No matter where they come from, whether they are English people or German people or anyone else, they can tell instantly. They understand immediately that you are an equal and that they must properly respond to you as such.

Nowadays, with the passage of time and age, I have come to know one thing that I can ask children to get their attention. Perhaps, you might try this yourself. If a child is just not paying attention to what we are doing, I ask them, "Are you a baby?" I tried this in Japan and one hundred percent of children say that they are not a baby. I also tried this in America and one hundred percent immediately reply with an emphatic 'No!' This is how much children despise being treated like infants or children.

Another case in point, when we music teachers plan for the children's concerts, we are especially careful about what gets printed in the program. Our first biggest concern is that the children's ages are correct. Of course, it is important that the names are correct. Name mistakes upset parents. However, if a child's age is less than their actual age, that child is very angry. If a seven year old is printed in the program as a 6 year old, it is a huge offense. They declare, "I am NOT 6 years old, I am 7 years old. Why did you make this mistake?" You know, on the contrary, 17-, 18-, 20-year-olds do not make mistakes. However, because they don't think of consequences they misjudge situations that involve gain or loss, advantage or disadvantage. Children being truly pure of heart can distinguish good from bad. However, it is very confusing/perplexing for children when they have to make a judgment call which involves loss or gain depending on their course of action or a decision.

Because understanding gain or loss, advantage or disadvantage, is absolutely missing in children, we must take them very seriously. This is true not only in piano lessons. It is relevant in all aspects of daily life, where important issues must be very clearly communicated and explained to children. Furthermore, because children are in such a rush to grow up

prefer having their ages printed younger than they are. However, young children very clearly assert that they despise being treated like a child. No matter what it takes, they would like to be treated with the same regard as adults. So in aging just even a little bit sooner, they are aspiring to be treated like adults.

As I mentioned previously, because children react instinctively, judging all matters with their sensibility, they

they are keenly observant of everything that happens in the home. This means they will emulate what they witness in the home. For instance, if a mother tells me how annoyed she is that her child has bad manners, I respond, "Wait a minute, here, aren't you the one with the bad manners in the first place?"

If we, as adults, do not have this kind of self-reflection of our own behavior, I believe there is no chance for a child to be able to succeed and to develop what is good.



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# *It's My Responsibility*

*by Linda Nakagawa*

How often have we heard the phrase, "Just teach the basics"? How often have we heard that "Ability develops ability"? For over 20 years I have thought about these phrases. I still do not have a handle on them, but here are some of my most current thoughts.

The Piano Basics Foundation mission statement, as stated in every newsletter, is: "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." It sounds like such an easy thing to do. But I have found it is not as simple as it seems. Because we truly believe that every child can learn to play the piano with a good musical tone, we have a great responsibility.

Our students are the proof of our ability to teach. We must work for a 100% success rate.

The most difficult and yet the most rewarding part of learning how to teach in the way of Dr. Haruko Kataoka (pianist), who learned from Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (violinist), is for me to teach myself how to play the piano in the most natural way. Without endless numbers of lessons with Dr. Kataoka and the Japanese teachers, it would have been impossible. I must be able to demonstrate for my students the best musical tone. A fine musical tone is the essence of music. I have listened to many students, including mine, performing all different levels from Twinkles to the most advance pieces and think, "Yes, they can play the notes. I hear the notes, but I do not hear music." At this point, as the teacher, I must be able to communicate the changes I would like them to make in order to make a better musical tone, which is the essence of music. Communicating in words can only go so far. I must be able to demonstrate the exact sound and show them how to make it. There were many times in the past when I knew in my brain exactly what I wanted my students to improve upon. But, because my demonstration was lacking, I could not communicate it well enough for them to do it. Kataoka Sensei and other teachers (more developed than me) would come in and teach my students and my students would immediately be able to do what they asked. I would think, "How

could this be?" They were able to do it because the teacher's demonstration was so wonderful and clear. Children learn through the environment. We are part of their environment. Realizing this, it is great motivation for me to work to improve my own tone.

My tone has improved and hopefully, it will continue to improve. Therefore, I know my students will improve. Let's take responsibility. Let's judge our own ability to teach by our least developed student.

We know what the "basics" are. We must work on them every day with every student. Let's not get depressed when we do not see results immediately. Let's not resort to external gimmicks to try to motivate

them and ourselves. Let's not be impressed or get sidetracked when students can memorize notes so easily and quickly. They can do that without our help. The way we must help all of our students is to make sure that that we continue to demonstrate the basics so that eventually these basics will turn into abilities. In Dr. Kataoka's book, *Sensibility and Education* she writes:

"Patience, effort, concentration, dreams, and good health. You have to have these in order to do a good job."

We are all born with elements of these to some degree, but elements are not full-blown abilities. We need to keep practicing every single day so that we can develop elements into abilities. We are not born with ability. Ability is something we attain with constant daily effort. If you keep accumulating little by little, after some years, you will acquire an ability that can be applied to anything. That is true ability, one that truly belongs to a person."

Isn't this a wonderful gift we can give to our students? Let's try. Let's not get sidetracked or distracted. Let's keep our concentration. If we continue the effort on a daily basis with every student we will begin to see results. It might take 10 years or more. Let's never give up.

**The way we must help all of our students is to make sure that that we continue to demonstrate the basics so that eventually these basics will turn into abilities.**

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# *Water, Music and Us*

*by Aleli Tibay*

In 2003, at one of her teacher lectures about good sound versus bad sound at the 10-piano rehearsals in Matsumoto, Kataoka Sensei referred to a Japanese book containing photographs of snowflakes as they were affected by different music genres. While browsing the internet, I discovered Masaru Emoto's *Messages from Water*, the very book she described, which has since been translated into many different languages.

Masaru Emoto has studied water all his life. Water is the source of all life on this planet; it makes up 70% of the human body. Our brains and muscles are 75% water, blood is composed of 83% water, and even our bones contain 22% water.

Science and medicine show that water:

- regulates body temperature
- removes waste
- protects and cushions joints and vital organs
- carries nutrients and oxygen to cells
- moistens oxygen for breathing

-helps convert food into energy

-helps the body absorb nutrients

Everything that exists vibrates. Vibration is energy. Energy travels through water. Music is vibration. Water has memory and consciousness.

Masaru Emoto has proven that when water is exposed to music, the vibrations cause changes in the water's molecular structure. Good music readjusts the energy distorted by history. He believes music is a form of healing before it is a form of art. Every tone of every instrument, even voice and words retain vibrational information.

Google Masaru Emoto and be enlightened. View photos of water crystals form beautiful hexagonal points as they are exposed to Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*; Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*; Dvorak's *New World Symphony*.

His message to the world is *please keep the environment clean.*

## Attention All

**Our membership dues (\$25) are collected for each calendar year and are now due. There is a renewal form accompanying this newsletter. Please take care of sending in your checks to our treasurer Linda Nakagawa (242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento CA 95831) now in order to appear in our printed membership directory.**

**One reason Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation has been able to hold the membership fee at \$25 is that we do not spend the money to hound our members by mail for renewals. Thanks very much.**

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## ***Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert***

The international exchange for this year's Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert, to be held on Sunday, April 25, 2010, consists of seventeen teachers from the U.S. and Canada and sixteen students from seven states. Here is the program with the guest performers:

1. Mozart: Minuet, 4 hands from Eine Kleine Nachtmusik  
Kelly Margaret Doyle (Florida) Caroline Jaeckel (New York)
2. Brahms: Hungarian Dance No. 1
3. The Bow
4. Twinkles A and D
5. Mary Had a Little Lamb
6. Long, Long Ago
7. Suzuki: Allegro
8. Lichner: A Short Story
9. Schumann: The Happy Farmer
10. Bach: Minuet in G minor
11. Beethoven: Sonatina, G major, *moderato*  
Victoria Stillwagon (Arizona)
12. Clementi: Sonatina, Op. 36 no. 1, *Andante*
13. Kuhlau: Sonatina Op. 55 No. 1, *Vivace*  
Duncan Yeatts (Arizona)
14. Mozart: Rondo
15. Beethoven: Sonata Op. 49 No. 2, *Tempo di Minuetto*  
Jason Zhixin Li (California)
16. Bach: Gigue  
Angeline Nguyen (California), Jeremy Yeatts (Arkansas)
17. Beethoven: Sonatina, F major, *Allegro assai*  
Amelia Carolan Kastelberg (Virginia), Johannah Nielsen (Utah)
18. Beethoven: Für Elise  
Mallory Fields (North Carolina), Rachel Lynn Knauf (Florida)
19. Mozart: Sonata K. 330, *Allegretto*
20. Mozart: Turkish March
21. Chopin: Nocturne No. 2, Eb major, Op. 9 no. 2  
Stephanie Tom (California), Michelle Duong (California)
22. Bartok: Roumanian Folk Dances
23. Beethoven: Turkish March  
Nathan Bramhall (Utah), Nicholas Butler (California)
24. Liszt: La Campanella  
Edward Burns (California)



To add or change items on the Suzuki Piano Basics website, contact  
Karen Hagberg ([kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com), 585-244-0490).

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

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

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