

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 and Ability

*By Haruko Kataoka*

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter

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Translated by Chisa Aoki and

Teri Paradero

Edited by Karen Hagberg

In April with the start of the new academic year for school, home visits were made by grade school teachers. My grandson's third grade teacher came to see us in our home. After discussions pertaining to school matters were over, the teacher, noticing that there was a piano in the room, asked my grandson to play for her. He decided to play the first movement of the Beethoven Sonata, a piece he was working on at the time. The teacher was so surprised to see such wonderful posture. She asked him to make sure his posture continued to be great even at school.

Whenever they broadcast any coverage of school classrooms on TV, I am troubled by the students' posture. Almost all students sit at their desks with rounded backs. Furthermore they write with their faces bent over close to their desks with the worst possible posture

Posture is the most important thing for human beings. A hundred years ago, people in Japan maintained good posture by living their lives on *tatami* mats [sitting on the floor]. Nowadays, that has all changed, and bad posture is the norm. All this is happening while research has finally proven that good posture has a positive effect on health.

We live within the Universe on a planet called Earth. It makes so much sense to adhere to the laws of nature, and conversely if you go against the

laws of nature things cannot go well. To go against the laws of the Universe, in other words to depart from the laws of nature, would understandably be deleterious not only to our health but to everything else.

It is important for us to figure out for each and every human all over this planet what kind of posture would be effortless without undue stress on the body. The result would be a wonderful life where all of us can accomplish great work.

Simply put, good posture means that our blood can flow smoothly and effortlessly, unencumbered, throughout our bodies. Furthermore, as a result of opening up the chest, breathing is greatly enhanced, and we are able to inhale a lot of oxygen. The body of a human with good posture results in the ability to conduct life in great physical condition. Posture becomes the most important subject in any field of endeavor.

Presently, in our world of education, regardless of the field, the most important physical foundation is not taught. In any area of study, whether it be the arts, sports, or academics, the main concern is on achievement only. I wish educators would return to the basics again and really focus on it.

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki always used to say, "Ability is something that must be developed and nurtured. You must continue to teach the same thing over and over repeatedly until it becomes an ability. Education these days consists only of presenting information. It does not nurture true ability. Repetition must be done one hundred thousand times."

Education today truly only covers the material being taught, but lacks any kind of nurturing. Adults, being ambitious and self-motivated to learn, are able to develop ability.

Children on the other hand are a truly different matter. There is no comparison to adults' way of learning. Instead they are able to learn at great speed because they are using their sensibility. However, because they are not motivated, what

they learn on any given day is quickly forgotten. To accomplish the daily, repetitive practice necessary to develop ability, they need parents. It takes love on the part of parents and teachers to do the daily practice necessary to develop childrens' ability.

The teacher's love and care is essential. Children are very sharp, but they need a caring, loving and nurturing person to "turn on the switch" on a daily basis. It is impossible for them to do this on their own. This is what a child is all about.

If a child has a good memory, the left-brain absorbs knowledge after hearing something even once or twice. The one hundred thousand repetitions that I have been talking about, however, is the *ability* of the body and mind to be able to do repetitious work. It is my hope that parents and teachers will truly understand this universal principle and patiently repeat the same thing over and over every day to develop and nurture ability.

When my grandson was asked to have good posture in the classroom, he was not able to do it, even though he has good posture at the piano because his piano teacher and parent patiently asked him to sit up about 50,000 times over a period of five years. In order for children to be able to sit with good posture at school, teachers will have to make it a goal to remind students to sit up, from first grade to sixth grade, every day for six years, patiently one hundred thousand times, in order to create this ability. Otherwise, it is impossible.

If children were able to do anything after being told once or twice, there would be no need for the existence of teachers or parents. We have a wonderful mission to nurture the next generation to be human beings with wonderful ability.

So please, patiently and with perseverance, repeat the same thing over and over to the children; give them the gift of ability.

# ***Message from Ogiwara Sensei***

***Translated by Haruko Sakakibara***

***Speech delivered at the Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert  
Davis, California, August 13,***

I am so happy to see such a big audience for our 7<sup>th</sup> 10-Piano Concert in the United States.

The concept of a 10-Piano Concert was originated by the late Dr. Haruko Kataoka, and we just completed the 17<sup>th</sup> 10-Piano Concert in Matsumoto, Japan. Dr. Kataoka was a truly insightful piano teacher for us.

Just as students from Japan are invited to play at this concert, students from the United States, Europe, and other Asian countries are invited to Matsumoto when we have our 10-Piano Concert. It has become a great occasion for international exchange and communication.

We cannot forget how much we owe to Dr. Kataoka for her devotion in researching a method for natural piano technique and then for teaching it to her students.

As I listened to the concert today, I was truly moved by the fact that the performance level is becoming higher every time we hold this concert. Obviously, this is due to the dedicated effort of local piano teachers who are teaching their students.

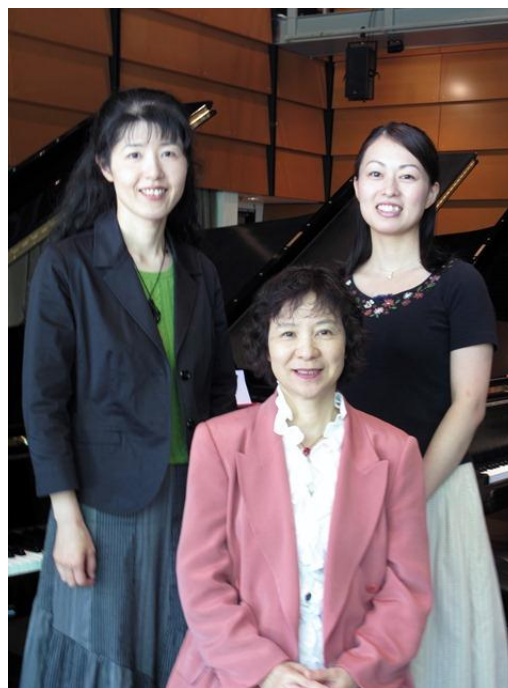
For the last thirteen days in a row, we have been rehearsing here at the Mondavi Center, using these ten pianos. I heard one student say, “I never practiced this much in my life!” During this period, each student was actually asked to practice the same part hundreds or thousands of times in order to make daily improvements. After such intense and difficult practice, a true sense of accomplishment must be very apparent to these students right now on this stage.

I would like to express special appreciation for the local piano families who opened their homes for

homestay, to the parents who gave the loving support for students' daily practice, and to everyone else who has contributed to make this special concert happen.

In the end, I would like to thank you for your generous donations for the disaster in Japan. Your kind gesture touches our hearts.

I am looking forward to seeing you again in two years. Thank you so much



Keiko Kawamura, Keiko Ogiwara (seated), and Manami Tanaka: teachers who came from Japan to direct the 7<sup>th</sup> Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert in Davis, California, August 13, 2011. Photo by Jessica Ng.

# ***Fund-Raising for Japan Relief: Updates***

## ***Fundraising in Sacramento***

This year's 10-Piano Concert was an opportunity for fundraising. Teachers and families were encouraged to donate to Japan relief as they registered for the concert. Those donors were listed in the program and gave a total of \$2,770. Additional donations were solicited at the concert itself, raising another \$1,030, for a total of \$3,800. This amount was given to Ogiwara Sensei to be given to the disaster relief fund of the Talent Education Research Institute (TERI) in Matsumoto.



Anna Marie Ng, age 14, student of Linda Nakagawa, made and sold piano keychains and donated the entire proceeds to Japan Disaster Relief: \$750. Photo by Juan Ng.



Fundraising for Japan disaster relief in the lobby of the Mondavi Center during the 7th International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert in Davis, California, August 13, 2011. Photo by Juan Ng.



Salt Lake City teachers Billie Tuttle and Cleo Brimhall staffing the Japan disaster relief fundraising table in the lobby of the Mondavi Center during the 7th International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert in Davis, California, August 13, 2011. Photo by Juan Ng.



## ***Fundraising in Los Angeles***

***By Kathleen Summerland Heuser***

Received the latest Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation News this past week, and was reminded of the student recitals Rae Kate Shen and I give together every June. A few months ago I read in the Basics News about ways to donate to help with the relief efforts for Japan. I checked the web sites listed in the Basics News and found that the easiest way for us folks in Los Angeles to donate was to use the American Red Cross. I then asked Rae Kate, and she agreed that I could make a request for donations at our joint recitals in June. At the first recital only one family made a small donation. I felt that we could do better, so at the second recital I informed everyone that I would personally match any donation given that afternoon, thus doubling our group donation. This inspired many families to give just a little. \$10 or \$20. but with my matching these small individual donations our joint studio donation totaled \$430.00!

Thank you to Basics News for the reminder that we all owe a debt to the Japanese people for the wonderful gift of teaching music that Dr. Suzuki and Dr. Kataoka have given us. I hope many Piano Basics teachers, if you haven't already, will consider making a studio donation to help the people of Japan.



Fundraising at the 10-Piano Concert. This and other posters designed by Leah Brewster, age 14, student of Linda Nakagawa. Photo by Juan Ng.

*Teachers, please share your fundraising projects with our members by reporting them to the newsletter. Send to Karen Hagberg at [kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com). Donations sent to the Piano Basics Foundation will be sent directly to the Talent Education Research Institute's Disaster Relief Fund. Donations may also be directed to the American or the Japan Red Cross or to another organization of your choice.*



Photo by Juan Ng.

# ***Our First 10-Piano Experience***

***By Marissa Ignacio***

My first reaction when Mrs. Bryce [Chung-Hwa Bryce from Elk Grove, California] asked us if our daughter Isabella would join the 10-Piano Concert was sheer excitement. Isabella, on the other hand, wasn't so sure. The thought of being on a big stage with a large audience is nerve-wracking to an 8-year-old. After some convincing and an incentive (yes, she got a reward at the end of the event), she agreed.

I would be lying if I said the process of preparing for the event was all smooth sailing. Long, daily practices and playing the same piece over and over again made it too tiring for Isabella. At one point, she even regretted that she had agreed to participate in the concert. But another part of her was determined to make it through. She saw other children playing well and was inspired to do her best.

Rehearsals at Vanderhoeff Studio made it more real to her that the concert was getting closer, and the excitement was building even though there were still times when she got nervous and frustrated and couldn't catch up with her peers.

Isabella said that the best rehearsals were the ones on stage at Jackson Hall. Somehow they weren't as nerve-wracking and she felt more confident. (I'm sure it's because she wore her lovely concert shoes the whole week). And she reported that the best part of the whole experience was bowing before the audience and hearing their

applause, knowing that her hard work was all worth it.

I believe that this overall experience has helped my daughter blossom, to become a better person, and to be more self confident. Her technique, finger taking, and posture have greatly improved, and most important, she has learned to be part of a team.

We feel very privileged and honored to be part of this special group of talented pianists. This experience has given my husband an even better appreciation of music. This was an event we will always remember. The girl who at times said she wanted to quit, now says she'll do it again.



Isabella Ignacio, age 8. Photo by Marissa Ignacio.

# ***My 2011 10-Piano Rehearsal Thoughts***

***By Betsy Wieser, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada***

Over all the years I studied with Dr. Kataoka she asked us to listen. I wanted to remember what she taught so took lots of notes. I have kept these notes in a notebook organized according to book and selection. This notebook was in my hands during the 10-Piano Rehearsals this year. NOTHING HAD CHANGED! Therefore, this time I spent more time actually LISTENING. During the first week of rehearsals I was beginning to hear the difference as the pieces progressed. After thirty years I think I am beginning to get it!! Why has it taken me this long?

I was busy analyzing. I wanted to have the details of measure practices, alberti bass stop and go, up/downs, Twinkle practices ..all in the right places and the number of repetitions. Why? So I would be a better teacher. Perhaps I was on the road there but the bottom line is still the quality not quantity. Listen to your sound! Again and again, more and more!! How quickly the ear forgets. I had it all documented but my ear had forgotten.



Betsy Wieser with her student Madeleine Coombs at the 7th Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert, Davis, California, August 13, 2011.

Three and four day workshops are good, but two-week rehearsals are better! Longer rehearsals of the same piece and students give the ear a chance to hear the progress. When I may have thought a piece was +ready+ the Japanese teachers had the students listen more precisely and taught them how to produce even more beautiful tone. It is not about the number of repetitions of a section but about the resulting tone.

I would recommend 10-Piano Rehearsals for every Suzuki Piano teacher. Even if you feel you cannot bring any students. There is more to be gained than I can put into words.

Thank you Sacramento and Japanese teachers for an exceptional experience. Thank you host families for taking care of one Canadian teacher and her students.



Barbara Francis with her student Shailen Smith and his family at the Mondavi Center for the Arts after the 10-Piano Concert, August 13, 2011. Photo by Sahil Shah.

*"As a teacher of Suzuki Piano Basics more grateful to Linda Nakagawa, the Sierra Branch of the Suzuki Music Association of California, the team of Japanese Sensei, and the entire Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation for exemplifying the courage to persevere through every obstacle to make the International 10-Piano Concert happen time and time again. It is truly wonderful to be part of an organization that loves in deed and not in word only. Thanks to my homestay family Annie Dang, and Marsha Cook for transportation. The details of the 10-Piano Concert seem to run like a well-oiled machine. One can only imagine how happy Dr. Kataoka and Dr. Suzuki would feel to know that their legacy is alive and being carried out in excellence."*

*Barbara Francis*

# ***Piano Basics Foundation***

## ***Upcoming Workshops/Events***

**October 7-9, 2011**

**Phoenix, Arizona**

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop  
with Karen Hagberg  
Contact Gloria Elliott 623-466-7447  
[gelliott50@aol.com](mailto:gelliott50@aol.com)

**April 12-29, 2012**

**Matsumoto, Nagano, Japan**

Harmony Hall  
POSTPONED INDEFINITELY DUE TO  
EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE  
International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert  
Contact: Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490  
[kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com)

**October 11-12, 2011**

**Tucson, Arizona**

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop  
with Karen Hagberg  
Contact: Ann Taylor 520-881-5573  
[ann@anntaylorstudio.net](mailto:ann@anntaylorstudio.net)

**June 18-22, 2012**

**Louisville, Kentucky**

Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Institute  
University of Louisville  
Contact Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921  
[boiney@suzukipiano.com](mailto:boiney@suzukipiano.com)  
<http://louisville.edu/music/suzukipiano>

**February 3-7, 2012**

**Salt Lake City, Utah**

Teacher Research Workshop  
with Keiko Ogiwara & Keiko Kawamura  
Contact Nila Ledesma 801-942-5472  
[nilaledesma@msn.com](mailto:nilaledesma@msn.com)

**August, 2-6, 2012**

**Rochester, New York**

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop  
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura  
Friendship Concert featuring students from Japan  
Contact Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490  
[kh@hagbergsuzuki.com](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com)

**February 10-14, 2012**

**Phoenix, Arizona**

Teacher Research Workshop  
with Keiko Ogiwara & Keiko Kawamura  
Contact Gloria Elliott 623-466-7447  
[gelliott50@aol.com](mailto:gelliott50@aol.com)

**August, 9-13, 2012**

**Sacramento, California**

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop  
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura  
Friendship Concert featuring students from Japan  
Contact Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952  
[g.nakagawa@comcast.net](mailto: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](mailto:kh@hagbergsuzuki.com), 585-244-0490).

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

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