

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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Next Deadline: June 1, 2012

Please Study!

By Haruko Kataoka

Newsletter, Special Issue No. 15

October 3, 2011

Translated by Chisa Aoki and

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Edited by Karen Hagberg

The great advantage of Suzuki Method is that, from the very beginning, because of frequent listening to the music, children learn from what they hear instead of what they read. Traditional methods begin with the reading of the score. Because you have to use your eyes constantly in order to read the music, it is very difficult to teach beginners this way.

All children from every country have a wonderful intellect that can effectively learn their native language. It is not surprising that children who hear the music over and over can, as a matter of course, memorize pieces very easily and be able to play them. The child who listens well will *always* memorize well. This very fundamental aspect of the Suzuki Method is easily understood, and therefore the Method has spread all over the world.

So now let's take a look at four learning categories we may use to describe a student:

1. Listens to the recording daily and practices piano daily.
2. Listens to the recording a lot but practices only a little.

3. Practices a lot but listens very little.
4. Does not practice and does not listen, but comes to every lesson.

Of course, Type 1 is the ideal. In life, however, ideal and reality do not often coincide. Even if your family situation prevents you from being Type 1, please do not worry. To go to the other extreme, it is even fine if you are Type 4.

Out of the four types, the most wasteful situation, however, is Type 3. Though this type student expends a lot of effort practicing compared to the little bit of time dedicated to listening to the music, he or she has difficulty memorizing the pieces. Furthermore, the opportunity to work on evoking the musical feeling of a piece is often lacking. However, no matter what the type of student, because the process of education takes so many years, it is good to have a long-range plan of study. Finding a teacher who believes in great education and in doing what works with each family situation is a good step in the right direction. The only thing that you must avoid is giving up. If you quit, there is absolutely nothing to be gained.

Now, to the main point of this article entitled *Please Study!* If you provide many listening opportunities to children, there is no doubt that they will memorize pieces easily and be able to play with note accuracy. It is hard for people who have not studied the Suzuki Method from the beginning to realize how easy it is to memorize pieces by listening.

All is well and good, of course, that memorizing is so easy. However, there is a dark side to this very positive aspect. Many people equate the mere memorization of a piece with being able to play it, and therefore they see no need to continue practicing it. Once memorized, they will not forget the piece. So even if they don't practice a lot, they never have a problem playing the piece through at the lesson. This is why nobody studies after memorizing.

However, true study only really begins after you can play a piece smoothly. A teacher can only begin working with a piece that a student can play comfortably or with ease. This is the point in piano study where you have to break the piece into smaller parts to study how to produce musical sound, how to create rhythm and tempo, how to shape the melody, or how the accompaniment should sound. This is time when teachers can begin to devote lesson time to the question of how these important aspects of music and musical study are to be practiced.

Using architecture as an analogy, when a piece is memorized it is analogous to having the architectural blueprint of a structure. Based on the design of the plans, a strong, wonderful building can be constructed. A solid foundation is laid down first, followed by the framing of the structure without cutting corners. Next the roof is attached to the frame, and when the walls go up, a beautiful interior design can be created. When people feel comfortable living in the building, then the structure can be deemed a good building.

To perform a musical piece well, the performer must go through the same rigorous steps that an architect must follow to build a safe and beautiful building. Therefore, after memorizing a piece the real work begins. Studying to memorize a piece and studying to be able to play the piece well are absolutely two different jobs. Like architecture, patience, great effort, and time are necessary to accomplish the task of performing a piece well.

Please, teachers and parents, understand and recognize this important point. Please do not complain about not advancing ahead in the repertoire, but instead cooperate together until a piece is polished. This is the true, very important study that must be accomplished. Of course, meanwhile, you can continue the study of memorizing the notes of the next piece or pieces, as much as you like!

Reflecting on Linda Nakagawa's Workshop

Rochester, N.Y., March 30 to April 1, 2012

by Elizabeth Sherk

The Suzuki Piano Basics approach to teaching piano intrigues me. So when I received notice of this early spring workshop, I eagerly planned to attend.

There were lessons each day from 10:00 to 12:00 and from 2:00 to 5:00. On Saturday, there was a Potluck Supper & Parent Circle with Linda and teachers from 5:00 to 7:30. The parents' conversation was very animated around the topic of being patient & taking music lessons seriously. I returned to my homestay to practice what I had heard and seen throughout the day.

By noon on Saturday I had observed lessons with six students from the three Piano Basics teachers who collaborate in Rochester: Karen Hagberg, Lisa Cash, and Teri Paradero. Linda gave such organized & inspiring lessons to each child and their closely attentive parents that I could not restrain my impulse to run up to her at the lunch break to congratulate and thank her profusely for such clear teaching. I left lunch early to go back to the piano to process it all. I took each child's lesson from that morning session and worked through all the practice points that Linda had given. It felt great.

I took detailed notes on each lesson throughout the weekend. Now back in my home studio I am typing them up to remind myself of basic details to be rehearsed week-by-week in the carefully graded pieces of the Suzuki Piano School.

Attending teachers used the two morning hours on Sunday to take lessons from Linda and from each other. This was a time of contemplation and careful repetition in which we attended to many aspects of physical balance and beautiful tone production in a completely safe, supportive, and affectionate circle. I learned not to waste effort pulling my arm and dropping my wrist in Twinkle C, and I played part of the Haydn Sonata.

The connection I am making after all these many years is something I have heard from several teachers (Allen Loeb, Karen Hagberg, Linda Nakagawa, Bruce Anderson, Gail Lange, and Maureen McReynolds as well as from various teachers from Japan): embedded in Book 1 are the seeds of all the skills a pianist needs to play the piano beautifully at any level, and it is possible to help students and parents value the practice of going back to these earliest pieces with

curiosity and energy again and again. The technique embedded in the repertoire has been carefully sequenced and, if followed, will build a solid and beautiful technique/skill/ability in the student or teacher who actually practices it in sequence. After playing the first movement of the Haydn sonata for a lesson several years ago, a Japanese teacher worked with me on refining the way I played the LH of Allegretto 1. Playing this same piece at Linda Nakagawa's workshop this year, I finally am making the connection between this piece and the technique in Book 1. It continues to be a calling-forward aspiration in my life to help students and parents see and hear the connection between Czerny's little study in Book 1 and the Haydn Sonata in Book 5 and also to motivate them to work hard so that it doesn't take them forever to reach the skill level that makes playing the Haydn possible. This is a deep aspiration in my life as a Suzuki Piano Teacher.

I look forward to practicing the points I learned this weekend until I meet my colleagues again at the Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop in Rochester on August 2-6 with teachers and students from Japan. Hope to see you there!



Teacher research with Linda Nakagawa in Karen Hagberg's Studio, Rochester, New York, April 1, 2012. Standing L to R: Karen Hagberg, Linda Nakagawa, Lisa Cash, Teri Paradero, Chisa Aoki. Seated: Elizabeth Sherk. Photo by Linda Nakagawa.

Jiro Dreams of Sushi: a Film Review

By Karen Hagberg

Fortunately, I was able to see this new documentary film at the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York soon after its release. It tells the story of Jiro Ito who, at age 85, is considered the greatest sushi chef in the world.



JIRO DREAMS OF SUSHI

"MOUTHWATERING"
- Leslie Felperin, *VARIETY*
"A WORK OF ART"
- David Fear, *TIME OUT NY*
"BREATHAKING"
- Brendan Walsh, *SCREENSCRAPE*
"ELEGANT"
- John Lopez, *VANITY FAIR*

A FILM BY DAVID GELB



INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY ASSOCIATION
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
2011
WWW.SUSHIMOVIE.COM

Throughout, the film reminded me in so many ways of our great teacher, Haruko Kataoka, and her great teacher, Shinichi Suzuki, both of whom, with an almost incomprehensible dedication, spent every day of their lives striving for a new level of excellence in their work. All three did this not by pandering to new tastes (you won't find any Exploding Mt. Fuji rolls or Spicy Dragon rolls in Jiro's restaurant!), but by improving what already exists; by working every day toward the unattainable goal of perfection; by understanding the importance of repetition in creating excellence.

All three have no thoughts of retiring from work that is equated with their very lives. Their accomplishments can be attributed to a relentless singleness of purpose, to strict personal standards, attention to minute detail, and work ethics. All three embody profound humility.

I often ask myself how to become a better teacher for my students, but the answers are simple. I don't have to use new gimmicks or to try to attract people with the latest jargon. Rather, I need to improve the things I already know, the things I already do. How many times have I left a workshop concluding that all I really need to do is to teach the Twinkles thoroughly? (Every time?) I need to go deeper, not wider. I need to take myself seriously, with humility. It is my hope that all of us in the Suzuki Piano Basics community will have the opportunity to see this film and to make the connections between our own wonderful work and the work of this great sushi master. The film is really enjoyable too, and made me hungry. Afterwards I went out for sushi!

Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

Address Change:

Karmalita Bawar

Where are Your Videos? It's Spring: Clean out those closets!!

How many of us have videos of student lessons with Dr. Kataoka fading away in our closets? Please be reminded that our tireless web site editor, Professor Ken Wilburn, has offered to make these available to all our members. We simply need to box them up and send them in to preserve them not only for ourselves, but for new teachers who may never have had the opportunity to see her.

It is important to note that, for the purpose of privacy, no teacher lessons will be put on the internet, and no students' names will be published.

This project has amazing potential, yet our members have not been forthcoming with their videos. *Why not??*

I am told that VHS and Beta tapes will deteriorate to the point of being invisible, and

that DVDs also have a limited useful life. Librarians and archivists all over the world have come to understand the unique value of the internet for preservation purposes. Our members are the keepers of Dr. Kataoka's teaching history in America. If we do not bring our resources together at this time, we are all responsible for the loss of this incredible resource.

So please, everyone, send in your videos now. You need not catalog them. Just label the tape or DVD with a date and place if you can.

We all thank you!

Send to:

Professor Kenneth Wilburn
History Department, Brewster A318
East Carolina University
East Fifth Street
Greenville, North Carolina 27858-4353

Matsumoto 2013

The next Japan 10-Piano Concert is scheduled for April 28, 2013. Information and registration materials have been emailed to our members. If you did not receive these materials and want them, contact Karen Hagberg kh@hagbergsuzuki.com. Student applications are due by August 10, 2012 and applications for teachers going without students are due by October 15, 2012.

There will be no February workshops in 2013 due to an International Suzuki Conference in Japan at that time. Students wishing to participate in the concert are asked to attend one of the August workshops this summer (Rochester, New York, August 2-6 and Sacramento, California, August 9-13). See Upcoming events for contact information.

Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation General Membership Meeting 2012

The meeting will be held during the Louisville Institute, June 18-22, 2012. Members are invited to submit agenda items to President Karen Hagberg whether or not they will be in attendance.

The slate of officers to be voted upon at that meeting are: President, Karen Hagberg; Vice P resident, Renee Eckis; Treasurer, Linda Nakagawa; and Secretary Hannah Hall. Additional nominations for all but the Presidency may be submitted to the Chair of the Nominating Committee, Ann Taylor by June 1: ann@anntaylorstudio.net.

Overheard

***(a new column for which we welcome
your contributions!)***

Teacher inspecting new venue for upcoming recital: When was the piano tuned?

Administrator: Two months ago for a chamber music concert.

T: May I contact your technician and have it tuned a couple days before our recital?

A: Yes, butō I thought this was just for little children?

T: It is, but little children have really good ears you know, better than our own.

A: But will their parents know the difference?

T: After observing their children's lessons with me, I certainly hope so!

*Welcome,
New Members!*

Christina & Riley Bray Family

The VanBanh Family

Piano Basics Foundation

Upcoming Workshops/Events

June 18-22, 2012

Louisville, Kentucky

Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Institute
University of Louisville
Contact Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921
boiney@suzukipiano.com

www.suzukipiano.org NOTE: THIS IS A NEW WEB ADDRESS

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

July 13-16, 2012

Tacoma, Washington

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

February 2013

NOTE: There will be no February workshops with teachers from Japan in the U.S. this month. Students going to the 10-Piano Concert in Japan in April should plan to have lessons at one of the August, 2012 workshops in Rochester, New York or Sacramento, California.

August, 2-6, 2012

Rochester, NY

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

April 13-28 2013

Matsumoto, Japan

International 10-Piano Concert
Contact: Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com



August 2014

Sacramento, California

International 10-Piano Concert

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, 585-244-0490).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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