

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
Essential
for
Every Child***

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
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Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

No, I am not talking about the education children will receive in school. I am referring to the education of children from birth to the time they go to kindergarten or to any other formal schooling.

Having taught piano to children for many years, my observations have brought me to the strong conclusion that all human beings are equally endowed from the heavens with a variety of abilities. They have the ability to put forth great effort, patience, concentration, love, and they have a

body that is natural. Of course, there are plenty other abilities, such as the ability to breathe and the ability for the heart to beat continuously: in other words, the abilities that sustain life.

The mere presence of all these abilities, however, does not guarantee that we can lead a successful life. God is very clever. In order to prevent humans from indolence, God made it so that, in order to keep these abilities, they must be practiced, or used, again and again. In other words, use it or you lose it.

Practicing the use of these abilities is absolutely imperative. The result of neglecting a human being at birth is that he or she will not develop into a decent, whole human being. It is important for parents, and all those adults around children, to make sure that children are practicing the use of these abilities over and over again every day.

Lately, since World War II, adults have become increasingly less aware of this. There seems to be a prevalent misunderstanding that it is okay to bring up children in a fun way without discipline. Furthermore, if their children have good grades in school, parents seem to feel that nothing else matters. They are lazily shirking their responsibility as adults to truly educate their children.

For example, I watched a program on TV about two young prisoners who were convicted of murder. When they were both about eighteen years old, one of them killed four innocent people and the other had killed two. The murders were so atrocious and cold-blooded that, after they were arrested and tried, they were sentenced to death. However, they would be imprisoned for many years before their capital punishment.

In prison, they had been given the opportunity to receive an education for the first time in their lives. Surprisingly, in contrast to their past heinous criminal lives, they became transformed into unimaginably and genuinely good human beings.

One of them studied 'tanka' (a 31-syllable Japanese poem, a genre of classical Japanese poetry and one

of the major genres of Japanese literature) and composed many beautiful poems. The second young man wrote several books. They both reflected on their acts of violence as acts born out of ignorance and poverty. The author awarded in his will the royalties from his book to impoverished children in the slums of Peru.

From birth until age eighteen, they had experienced an appalling childhood, in which not even once did their parents, or anyone else, show them any kind of love or affection. They grew up being told constantly that they were lousy, 'no good' human beings.

The essence, the true nature, of human beings is to be good. However, if the environment in which a human being is born and grows up is bad, people like these two young men can result. As the lives of these two men so evidently prove, if human beings do not practice how to love in childhood, there is no chance that they would learn how to love another person as adults.

Born with all the best abilities, but because there was no one to educate and develop these abilities, human beings can grow up to commit such terrible crimes and face the death penalty. To have a soul go through such sadness fills me with tears of unbearable sorrow. The defect is not in them but in those around them. It is their environment that let them down.

These days we are witness to the inconceivably bad behavior of Japanese middle and high school children, to those crimes involving guns in the United States, and to students or parents who are victimized by such conduct. Being victimized is bad enough but it is equally bad for the children who had to grow up in an environment that had forsaken them. For some unknown or unforeseen reasons in the lives of the children accused of wrongdoing, their hearts were exposed to a life and to an environment of pain and abuse. As the voice of one adult, it pains my heart and I truly grieve for them

We adults who are well adjusted were surrounded by parents and adults in our childhood who educated and guided us toward our present life. It is because of this nurturing environment of adults (and of course our parents, too) that we can claim our happiness. We cannot forget foremost to be always grateful for their nurturing and secondly, to

never neglect our duty to continue this education of nurturing the abilities of the next generations of children who will be living in future. We must roll up our sleeves and seize the moment without ever becoming lackadaisical. We must continually educate children who truly need to learn and practice the repetition requisite in life.

Enrich Your Teaching at a Summer Workshop

The Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert has concluded, and now we look forward to the 10-Piano Concert in Sacramento in August 2014. All students who will perform are encouraged to have a lesson with a teacher from Japan before next summer. Those teachers who have attended rehearsals in the past and who have not yet brought students may consider doing so.

So come to a workshop. Bring students. Students may perform in a spectacular Friendship Concert along with students from Japan and from around the country. Take the energy from the workshop back to your studio for a year filled with motivation and enthusiasm. We look forward to seeing you here!

To receive registration materials for Rochester, New York, August 1-5, contact Karen Hagberg hagberg-drake@juno.com, and for Sacramento, California, August 8-12, contact Linda Nakagawa g.nakagawa@comcast.net.

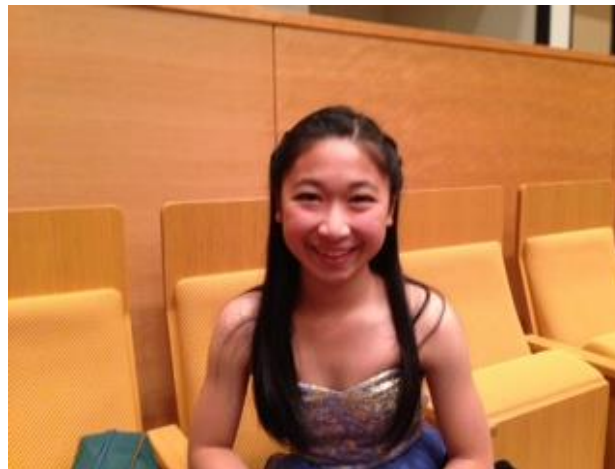
2013 Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert Reports from Students

Julia Burns, 18 student of Rita Burns, Sacramento, California

My time in Japan has been incredible. Its beauty far exceeded my expectations. I loved that we were surrounded by mountains and that the *sakura* (cherry blossoms) were in bloom. Culturally it's very different from America which made it a great learning experience for me. The Toba's, my homestay family, were wonderful. They let me try so many new things and took me to so many great places, all while still leaving me lots of time for practicing the piano. Altogether it was wonderful and I'm very grateful I was able to come and to experience it all.



Julia Burns. Photo by Linda Nakagawa



Annie Uichanco. Photo by Linda Nakagawa

Annie Uichanco, 15, student of Bruce Anderson, St. Petersburg Beach, Florida

Coming off the plane from Houston, I certainly couldn't have even fathomed the amount of fun I've had these past two weeks in Japan. I liked especially how it's not as Americanized (despite the occasional McDonalds sighting) as other countries. For example, the food: my taste buds' horizons have definitely expanded by sampling food such as *natto*, fermented soy beans. Also, the toilets (well, most....) are a lot nicer! They have heated seats, remote controls, and some even play music! Although I could not possibly write down all of my experiences, this trip will always be one of my favorite memories.

Refer to the hard copy for the following Phone Email Address/NumberChanges:

Linda Carrier, Kathleen Clayton, and Kathie Sheeley

Late Renewal:

Naomi Wysong

Blog from Matsumoto 10-Piano Rehearsals

April 20, 2013

By Ben Smith

I am sitting in a tatami room at my host family's home thinking over the past week of 10-Piano observations and coaching here in Matsumoto.

There are several observations that immediately come to mind.

In many ways I want to tell the fun stories of our journey here and the beautiful experiences that have been stacking up on top of each other since arriving. But, I will save those for another time.

The *chi-ban* (number 1) observation that I have is a combined one that I share with several other teachers here this past week.

Number 1: The Big Observation (Are you ready for this?!!)

Our focus must be on problems *and* on clear solutions to the problems. (No surprises here)

The follow-up to that observation is that the solution to any piano problem of tone, rhythm, memory, and/or technique can be solved with a simple set of Piano Basics exercises (again, no surprises):

- a) Down-Ups, for tone and body control
- b) Slow Practice with the metronome, for memory and technique
- c) Rhythm Practice (or Stop-Go), for rhythm and technique
- d) Twinkles, for tone and technique.

These solutions are applied both hands alone and hands together.

Another follow-up observation is that all of the section/spot work is immediately implemented into the piece after practicing it. This is done in rehearsal, where, after the spot is worked on, the section is then restarted to include the spot.

This is not new information for Suzuki Piano Basics teachers, parents and students. However, I think it is very interesting that here, at the peak of our experience as coaches, students and parents, the very same principles apply as at home. The difference between this environment (here in

Matsumoto) and home is that here everyone is highly motivated to put in the extra time and effort to immerse themselves into the intense practice culture of the rehearsals; and because of this, team spirit and friendships develop over the 2.5 weeks of rehearsing and practicing. My student Sierra is cheerfully practicing 4 hours every day after walking about one mile from her homestay to a studio with a grand piano.



View from my window in Matsumoto. Photo by Ben

I believe that one of the most motivating aspects of the rehearsals is when each student plays individually though a difficult spot in front of their team. Each student who has done this (even just once) improves their tone and technique by the next rehearsal; it is very obvious to me. This is an ingenious way to build a *cliff hanger* mentality that encourages being extremely prepared; very similar to Karate *kumite* sparring. All of the basic training in the choreographed movements of karate (kata) are put to the test in the free flowing environment of sparring (*kumite*). When I had my basics down as a karate student, I survived with lessons learned. When I didn't practice my basics, I got a bruised ego (and sometimes other bruises as well).

Piano is a non-violent art, so this form of peer pressure, with nine teammates counting on your contribution and a room full of high level teachers listening (and giving tips and correction), are the *Kumite* of Suzuki Piano in my opinion. I could go on with the analogy but I need to prepare to walk into town for the next rehearsal.

I believe as a teacher I need to focus on finding the problem, applying the Basics to it, and then

reinserting the spot into the piece and practicing the transition. This is Suzuki Piano Basics practice.

Also, we must all search for highly motivating environments for our children/students and get them into these; their piano playing will improve, but more importantly, they will surpass their own self-imposed limitations and develop their hearts and minds in ways that will help them for the rest of their lives.

New Revelations and Memories from Matsumoto

By Rae Kate Shen

This was my sixth visit to Matsumoto, Japan. I recall that my most vivid impression after the first several visits was Tone: how full and rich the tone Japanese students could play compared to my students. While tone remains an impressionable memory from this most recent visit, more have been added.



Morning after a nighttime snowfall in Matsumoto. Photo by Rae Kate Shen

This time, the amount of refinement in phrasing to achieve musical playing, from Twinkles to the most advanced piece on the program, was my lasting impression. (This, of course was done side by side with the Basics.) Carefully observing the work done by my own student, who performed Debussy's

Golliwog's Cakewalk, really clarified for me what is meant by a time signature, and the meaning of "up" sounds. But, as always, it never fails to amaze me how all the students can rise to the occasion and really work hard to improve at each and every rehearsal, right up to concert.

Other memorable events included the opportunity to conduct a piece "10-Piano . rehearsal style" with the ten other visiting teachers playing together during teacher research time. One and a half hours of "practicing" never went by so fast! There was also the special visit to pay our respects at Kataoka Sensei's gravesite on a blustery, rainy day, followed by a wonderful buffet lunch. A great big thank you to the Matsumoto teachers for this delicious, gourmet treat! Another memory was snow during our stay. For this Southern Californian, definitely a cold, and rare, event! I guess another memory was the nerve-racking opportunity to do footstools and adjustable benches at one of the two concerts. Always a learning experience, but more so in a language other than English!

In conclusion, this visit to Matsumoto probably rates as one of the best for me. It was wonderful meeting up again with old acquaintances, including my homestay hosts, as well as getting better acquainted with new ones. Please consider planning now and coming to the next Matsumoto 10-Piano event. It is an experience that is well worth your time. I hope to see you there!

Thoughts

By Linda Nakagawa

Good sound requires good technique. It takes a long time to develop good technique.

Rehearsing for the 10-piano concert is not the time to try to develop good technique, it is the time to enjoy what has been learned in the past two years.

In order to make a good musical sound, the body and mind must be open, ready, secure and confident. How can this happen? I feel the answer is only through repetition and constant listening to the recording. Therefore, to prepare for a performance, one must put in the daily practice time that is required. A performer must be ten times more prepared to participate in a successful 10-piano concert than a solo concert.



Overheard

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

Student: I've learned the concerto!

Harmony I
Photo by L

Dr. Suzuki: Good. Let's hear the first note.

Student plays it.

Dr. Suzuki: Again. TONE.

Student plays it.

Dr. Suzuki: Again.

Student (*still playing it over and over for nearly an hour*): My lesson's almost over and I'm still on the first note?!

Dr. Suzuki: Again. TONE.

Piano Basics Foundation

Upcoming Workshops/Events

July 22-26, 2013

Louisville, Kentucky

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

August 8-12, 2013

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 26-29, 2013

Tacoma, Washington

Suzuki Piano Basics Festival with Rita Burns
University of Puget Sound
Contact: Jacki Block 253-759-7213
jblock@ups.edu

January 30-February 3, 2014

Atlanta, Georgia

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Pam Smith 770-457-5144
pamelaspianostudio@gmail.com

August 1-5, 2013

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

February 6-10, 2014

Phoenix, Arizona

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Gloria Elliott 623-466-7447
gelliott50@aol.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>