

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***

Editor

Karen Hagberg

Layout

Teri Paradero

Translators

Chisa Aoki
Teri Paradero

Production and Distribution

Linda Nakagawa

Send Articles to:

Piano Basics Foundation

67 Shepard St. Rochester NY 14620
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com
585-244-0490

Memberships / Subscriptions

Linda Nakagawa
242 River Acres Drive
Sacramento, CA 95831
916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

Next Deadline: August 15, 2014

Being Helpful to One Another in Everyday Life

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
Vol. 9 No. 4, September 1, 1999
Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

Lately in our Matsumoto piano department, we have several students who hope to go to the United States during August summer break with our teachers. The trip is about two weeks long and entails not only studying to perform in a piano concert but interacting and exchanging culture with American students.

This year the 10-Piano Concert will be held abroad for the first time in Sacramento, California. The majority of the performers will be from Sacramento and will be joined by students from states all over the U.S., Europe, and Japan. The concert will feature ten students playing together on each piece in the program. The rehearsals began a month in advance for the Sacramento students. All others joined the rehearsals two weeks before the concert.

Finally, the day came for the dress rehearsal and the concert itself. The backstage activity was just like the concert preparations in Matsumoto with teachers and parents lining students up according to the order of the program.

It was then I noticed that whenever there was a piece where there were younger children performing, the older children did a great job taking care of the little ones. Every single group waited for their turn with good manners not talking too much or being unruly. It was very impressive.

Even more extraordinary was a ten-year-old student, Alex, with whose family my son and his family (four members in all) were staying. I was expecting, comparing her to only children in Japanese families, that she would be a little spoiled. Looking at the homestay roster, I wondered how it would work out with a ten-year-old only child and two exclusively Japanese-speaking children, a five- and a six-year-old.

In reality however, to my amazement contrary to my concerns, she took care of both of them from the minute they woke up in the morning until they went to bed at night. She singlehandedly helped them get dressed to swim in their pool, entertained them with a video while breakfast was being prepared and played with them all day long. The parents of the two little ones were present, but reported they were totally relieved of care for their own children. Even without a language in common, the two children were constantly following Alex around, calling out, "Alex! Alex!"

For some reason, it brought back memories from my past, over fifty years ago. It was a time when there were many siblings within families and the older children took good care of the younger ones. When children started grade school, they were asked to help with housework such as cleaning the

entrance to the house or opening or closing the second floor windows and they shared the responsibilities amongst themselves. I wonder what has transpired since then that our children these days have lost their habit for cooperative daily chores.

People thought that having fewer children would advantageously result in high academic achievement. Parents, at the same time, began to have more time on their hands with the convenience of household appliances. This resulted in their having more time to indulge their children, doing any- and everything for them. Could it be said that Japanese children have stopped doing the very things necessary in daily life, the physical things they need to function as human beings?

In the United States children, not only young ten-year-olds but high school students also, look after the very young. Within each family unit, starting with the father, household chores are divided up according to ability of each family member.

They are helpful and work well with one another. Regardless of the kind of status a father has in his profession, he comes home and does his domestic chores. Could it be that historically, since the founding of their nation, Americans to this day have learned that to accomplish anything, one must help one another? Because they help and support each other in their everyday life, I get the feeling that they derive from each other an inner strength.

In Japan, although it is important to do well in school, we must consider that it is just as important to let children help their parents at home. When this kind of daily cooperation is ingrained in their physical being, they have the strength and the knowhow to forge their own life by the time they reach adulthood. This trip to the U.S. made me contemplate such things.

Making a Difference Through Music

By Kathie Sheeley, Atlanta Georgia

My student, Jack Joyce, age 12, is a wonderful young man with a beautiful heart. When he learned that a classmate had Juvenile Diabetes, Jack wanted to do something to raise awareness & funds for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund. He decided to invite some of his Atlanta Suzuki piano friends to join him in a concert on May 10, 2014 at a beautiful baroque chapel with a nice piano. His mom, Stacy, began to help him put together the concert. I suggested pieces that would comprise a well-rounded program & the result was a beautiful concert with seventeen other young pianists. The pieces ranged from Book 2 to the *Italian Concerto* by Bach, *Liebstraume*, by Liszt, and the *Fantasia Impromptu* by Chopin.

Everyone in attendance was moved by the love and goodwill that each student gave as they played their pieces from the heart. Joining students from my studio were other participating students from the piano studios of Pam Smith, Robin Blankenship, Laretta Russell, and Barbara Brown.

Jack raised over \$6,000 for Juvenile Diabetes Research. He is a great example of making a difference through music.



Jack Joyce, Kathie Sheeley, and Stacy Milburn (Jack's mom). Photo by Pam Smith

Congratulations to the 100% Enrolled Studios!

Congratulations to these teachers, 100% of whose families are members of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation:

Arizona:	Ann Taylor
Ontario, Canada:	Chisa Aoki
New York:	Karen Hagberg Teri Paradero
Pennsylvania:	Suzanne Lichtenstein
Puerto Rico:	Liza Friere
Washington	Renee Eckis

Family membership is only \$25 annually. We encourage family membership as an added way for us to maintain Dr. Kataoka's legacy among the parents of our students. It is easier to teach Suzuki Piano Basics when our families have frequent contact with her writings and remain currently informed of the activities between Japan and our studios.

This is the time of year to plan to require families to join. Collect dues with fall tuition and send in your family memberships for the upcoming calendar year. You'll be amazed at the effect it has on your studio.

Listening: Foundation of the Suzuki Method

By Karen Hagberg

The Suzuki Method, developed by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki after World War II in Japan, was a revolutionary approach to violin pedagogy. Dr. Suzuki experienced living as a foreigner when he studied violin in Germany. While there he noticed the awesome ability of young foreign children to learn to speak German fluently, without having had to study the language at all, simply by having been placed in the environment of German speaking for very few months. He compared that to his own study of German as an adult, his inability to speak fluently. One day it dawned on him, "All Japanese children speak Japanese!"

This was the revelation upon which the Suzuki Method was founded: very young children learn an extremely complicated and sophisticated set of skills simply by being placed with adults who are exhibiting those skills. They learn without trying. They learn without study. They learn naturally to speak a language: in the ear, out the mouth. They did not need all the information we adults think we need to learn a language (knowledge of grammar). In fact, they had no idea what a sentence, a noun, or a verb were, but could somehow speak fluently and perfectly. Dr. Suzuki imagined that the ability to play a musical instrument was a similar skill that could be learned in a similar way if the environment were provided early and consistently enough.

It so happened that Dr. Suzuki had these thoughts at the time when recorded sound was being developed. For the first time, people were able to hear performers on recording equipment as well as in the concert hall. It then dawned on him that all children could now be provided with the kind of environment Mozart and Bach had, with wonderful music being played around them all the time. And the Suzuki Method came into being.

In the beginning, in war-torn Japan, most families

... babies and the really young children in the audience were restless during poor performances...

did not own recording equipment. There are stories of Dr. Suzuki's early students coming to his studio frequently to hear the great violinists. In those days, there were very few recordings, and only the greatest performers in the world were recorded.

By the 1960's word had spread around the world of Dr. Suzuki's astonishing results. Music teachers from many countries made pilgrimages to Matsumoto after hearing his students, who now traveled abroad to perform. How was it possible to have so many wonderful students? Dr. Suzuki always told his audiences of teachers that creating an environment full of great musical performances was the key to his success. Although he advocated attending great performances as often as possible, without the advent of recordings that allowed children to be immersed in the sound of such music for many hours every day, the Suzuki Method could not exist.

"All Japanese children speak Japanese!"

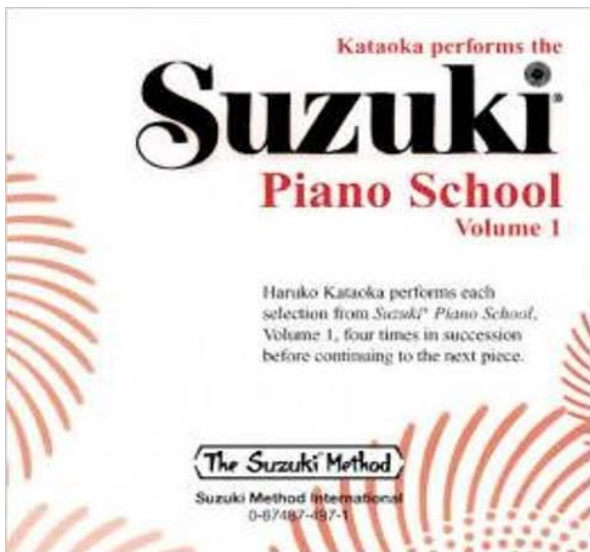
Fortunately, recording equipment and recordings became less expensive as they began to be mass-produced. I remember in my childhood (in the 1940's and 50's) the various types of recordings and equipment that my parents were able to purchase. I still hear Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with the stops between the stack of 45's in the middle of movements. I remember the advent of stereo sound, and long-playing records, and later cassette tapes with the concept of carrying one's music around and listening privately to it. Technology was taking off quickly.

With the boom in technology, as Dr. Kataoka often pointed out, the quality of performances in the available recordings began to drop. Whereas only the great performers made recordings in the beginning, now all kinds of people were making recordings, and these were sold so inexpensively that the average person could afford to purchase many of them.

What did it matter for children listening to these recordings, some teachers and parents thought. All they need is to hear how the piece “goes” so they know how it should “sound” when they study it, right?

On the contrary, Dr. Kataoka would point out that the ability of young children to learn a language does not stop with being able to say words in the correct order. Children’s learning is so complete, so perfect, that they are able to do something most people cannot do at all after the age of ten or so: they can speak a second language really fluently with no foreign accent. Not only that, they will speak it with all of the subtle inflections of the regional accents of the people they are hearing. Think about it. If you or I were to attempt a new language, we would never speak it without a foreign accent, no matter how hard we may try. Children’s natural learning is miraculous.

What does this mean for their music education and the recordings and concerts they experience? You may not be able to tell the difference between a truly great performance and a second-rate one, but children certainly can. Dr. Kataoka required all her families to attend live concerts of various artists as they came through Matsumoto. She was not always familiar with the performer, and of course performers have good days and bad days, so the performances were sometimes exciting and wonderful and sometimes just boring. An important facet of her teaching was the review of the concert at every child’s next lesson. One thing she always pointed out: that babies and really young children in the audience were



restless during poor performances, but very still and quiet during great ones. Children are moved by music that is truly moving: they hear all the subtle nuances that create a great performance.



"...each human being... attached to his or her own electronic device." Alexandra Sciortino, student of Teri Paradero. Photo by Teri Paradero.

So when a child is listening to a recording over and over because he or she is studying the piece, what should they be listening to, a boring performance or a great one? Which recording will interest that child in what they are doing and motivate him or her to work hard at it? Which recording do we want them to emulate, the wonderful one or the mediocre one?

Fast forward to the present day: many things have happened. The electronic explosion has brought us to a point unimaginable fifty years ago. Now we have not only mediocre performers making professional recordings, but various amateurs and students posting their performances on the internet. Recorded sound, which had attained quite a high level on vinyl discs, has been compromised by digitalization. Recorded music has now become noise pollution practically everywhere we go. The student searching the internet to see how the new piece sounds may be, without guidance, listening to really terrible performances of it. Music is everywhere, and it is nowhere.

In the old days parents were told which recordings to purchase and then to play these, very quietly, in the home and in the car almost constantly. Nowadays, the open environment of

the home or car has become compartmentalized, with each human being in that environment attached to his or her own electronic device. Most of my students have their own MP3 device and a hand-held video-game player. I encourage them at this point to make sure they download the recordings I recommend, but adults can no longer easily monitor what their children are listening to when they have earphones on. How often have I had a teenage student remove earphones before a lesson and I catch a brief wave of heavy metal?

In the first decade or so of my teaching after studying in Japan, I know I did a better job of teaching parents to create the environment that Dr. Suzuki discovered was necessary for success. Lately, I feel rather defeated by the soundscape and the internet culture that have taken us all over. I recommend recordings. I assign listening. But I have the gnawing feeling that parents are so overwhelmed with the barrage of electronic sounds and messages surrounding them that they have no room for another one, even if its quality

far surpasses what they have. I can say that I am even a victim of this new reality myself.

I will not give up, however. Parents are hungry for ways to keep intimate connections with their children. Listening to recordings and going to concerts together both create the kind of quality time that is in short supply today. Families can use the internet to get excited about music together. We teachers can search for the really outstanding performances, not only audio but now video, that are available online and recommend them to our students. The tools are there for children's musical environment to be even richer than when recording first became available, but parents need more help than ever sorting through all the mediocrity out there.

I plan to renew my resolve to help my families sort out the huge menu of the internet and to choose the best options for local performances. Let's all make listening a priority.

Suggestions for Family Viewing/Listening

The videos listed below may be found on YouTube by searching as noted. They are all under ten minutes in length. Parents who learn to find such performances exciting will pass this on to their children. Watch your favorites repeatedly. Enjoy!

Martha Argerich: Scarlatti Sonata, d minor, K.141. 3:28+
Search: Argerich Scarlatti (2008)

Vladimir Horowitz: Chopin Ballade no.1, g minor. 9:13+
Search: Horowitz plays Chopin Ballade 1

Maurizio Pollini: Beethoven Appassionata Sonata, 3rd mvt. 9:10+
Search: Pollini Beethoven Appassionata 3

Yuja Wang: Chopin Waltz, Op.64, no.2. 4:14+
Search: Yuja Wang Plays Chopin Waltz

Martha Argerich: Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody no.6. 6:40+
Search: Argerich Hungarian Rhapsody no.6 (1966)

Arkadii Volodos: Sousa Stars and Stripes Forever, arr. Horowitz. 4:50+
Search: Volodos Stars and Stripes

Lili Kraus: Bartok Roumanian Dances 4:39+
Search: Lili Kraus Bartok

Andre Watts: Liszt La Campanella & Arpeggio. 6:52+
Search: Andre Watts Paganini Etudes no.3 and 4

Piano Basics Foundation ***Upcoming Workshops/Events***

February 5-9, 2015
Orange County, California
Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Mei Ihara 714-997-8692
mihara@socal.rr.com

April 2015
(leave U.S. on 4/9 and return on 4/27)
Matsumoto, Japan
Suzuki Piano Basics
International 10-Piano Concert
Contact Karen Hagberg 585-978-0600
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com

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, 585-978-0600).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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