

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

*Even If It Is Not So Terribly Wrong,
Don't Do It*

By Haruko Kataoka

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Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

This summer a book entitled *Don't Buy This* became quite popular with the general public. Of course, the book caught my curiosity and I purchased my own copy.

Food, drink, detergent, cosmetics, medicine and many other varieties of items were clearly listed by product name and manufacturer. Product ingredients and toxic additives were outlined. Claims in commercials were either confirmed or debunked. Upon reading the book, you really would opt not to buy these products, as the book title says.

When I was younger I had no health issues, but when I reached my forties and fifties I became aware that I had allergies to many chemicals and drugs. The extent of my allergies to each varied in intensity, so I became as careful as I could about what I ate. However, after reading the book, I saw that I was consuming only two or three of the items in it. I did not purchase most of the things presented in the book, so I concluded that I was doing the right things.

Meanwhile, a couple of days later, I was still having nagging feelings about what I read in the book. My concern started to grow.

This book was written as the result of research by four individuals. I cannot claim that

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everything in the book is totally accurate. However, the writing of such a book is a good thing.

People who have read the book may have had no concerns before reading it. They have watched television commercials for the products repeatedly day after day. They must go to stores to buy the products without suspecting anything. After reading the book, everyone would now have to decide, thinking of their own health and the health of their families when they hold those products in their hands, whether or not to purchase them.

Our whole world today has entered the era of busy, fast-paced living. Human life is increasingly robotized and we are losing the time to think in a calm and unhurried way. At a time like this, I am very grateful for something thought-provoking that gives us the opportunity to think. The book makes us consider things other than the products mentioned.

It made me think about issues in children's education. Just like the thoughtless, unmindful buying of toxic items, have we adults been imprudent about education? Even with piano education, have we been overprotective and therefore do we end up spoiling the children or do we, as adults, ever cut corners? Could we be doing something because it's "not so terribly wrong?"

The products contain only a small amount of toxic additives. Because you don't die immediately upon consuming them, the current rationale of the corporations is that the trace amounts are harmless. This is true not only of the corporate world. We are guilty of the same thinking using the excuse that it's only a little wrong: a "no harm done" kind of attitude. By not differentiating between right and wrong (we think that there is no need to

attend to small matters because it's not as if the body is going to malfunction or die), care is not taken and we succumb to laziness.

After my many years of teaching piano, I have come to understand the dreadful results of accumulating a little wrong over ten, or even twenty years. In the method of playing the piano, the use of one finger, the thumb, must be taught to beginners. If such care is omitted, it becomes a tremendous problem in four to five years. In the olden days, people used to say, "Even trash, piled high enough, becomes a mountain."

Whether something is good or bad, if you accumulate it, it becomes something big. There is a difference between first-rate and third-rate. The awareness of even a minute deleterious detail, fixing it, always meticulously attending to those seemingly small but important issues and accumulating good, useful work, regardless of what field we're talking about, is what develops someone into a master, one who is first-rate. Those who accumulate useless or bad things are third-rate.

We don't know what the effect of eating the toxic ingredients in trace amounts in the products listed in *Don't Buy This* will be in twenty to thirty years. That is why it is dangerous. By the time the results are in, it will be too late.

In nurturing our children, we have to research what it is that we should not do. Once we become aware of what that is, let's consistently teach them with patience and perseverance. As a result, they will not suffer from the inadvertent accumulation of bad things, but rather they will be nurtured to become young adults who will be sure to build a wonderful future.

Children Can Do Wonders

***Speech delivered at the Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert
Sacramento, California, August 16, 2014***

By Keiko Ogiwara

***Translated by Haruko Sakakibara
Edited by Karen Hagberg***

Today's performance convinced me that children can do wonders.

To tell you the truth, I was so worried when I first heard the students play at the rehearsal just two weeks ago. But, look: they have changed! It is proof that they can really try and develop themselves. Each one of them has become like a different person.

When children play in a group of ten performers, it is particularly important that they follow directions. For example, they had to be punctual to show up at rehearsals, and they had to practice certain parts as they were assigned: so many times every single day. Making proper dynamics for each piece also required cooperation. Unlike other piano concerts, this style of performance includes the challenge of combining ten hearts into *one* in order to perform a piece together. However, they did it. Having been placed into the situation where they had no choice but to practice parts for hundreds or thousands of times, they must have all realized the difficulty of putting ten sounds into one and the difficulty of playing ten pianos in unison.

In our daily lives, more and more we are surrounded by conveniences that reduce the required amount of our physical effort. The experience of preparing for the concert,



Ogiwara Sensei backstage after concert. Photo by Karen Hagberg.

however, must have taught the children something so valuable: that repetition and spending time with something is the key to success. Having shared these valuable daily experiences for two weeks, each individual student must have developed a sense of trust and bonding with fellow pianists with a resulting sense of fulfillment.

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, the founder of the Suzuki Method, wanted to come up with music education which would enable anyone to learn

how to enjoy music. He also aimed at the method of music education that would help develop good human character.

In Suzuki method, daily practice is so important. It contributes to the children's patience and to their ability to put forth effort, and most important, they will gain the ability to concentrate. Practicing, in the other words, accumulates into a valuable fortune in their bodies. For today's concert, students were told to do the same practice for some parts several hundred or a few thousand times, but just

imagine how this has given them the same amount of precious treasure inside themselves.

Lastly but most importantly, I would like to express my heart-felt appreciation to the host families who graciously provided homes for students and teachers from out of town, and to all the drivers who gave many, many rides for the students to come to the rehearsals on time.

The memory of these two weeks will stay in our hearts like a diamond for a long, long time to come. Thank you so *much* !

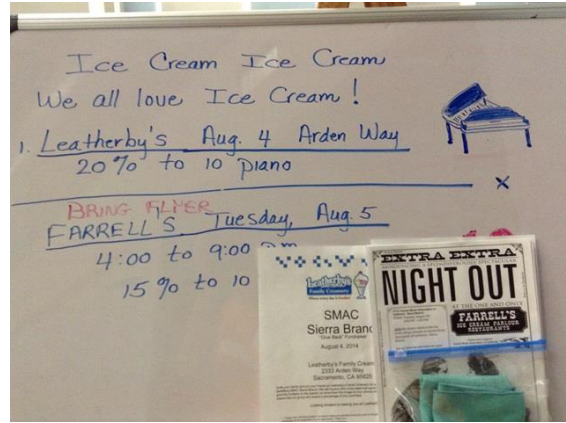
The 8th Sacramento 10 Piano Concert Sacramento Community Center August, 2014



Huib deLeeuw (Utrecht, Netherlands), Teri Paradero (Rochester, New York) and Renee Eckis (Vancouver, Washington) cleaning pianos before concert.
Photo by Karen Hagberg



Suzanne Murray (Sacramento, California) at the sales table selling raffle tickets for the huge quilt she made as a fundraiser.
Photo by Karen Hagberg



One of many fundraising projects. Photo by Karen Hagberg



Ryota Miyoshi (Tokyo, Japan) playing Chopin Variations Brillantes in dress rehearsal at the Sacramento Community Center Theater. Photos by Karen Hagberg



Concert Announcement, Sacramento teacher, Rita Burns, at post-concert banquet. Photo by Karen Hagberg.



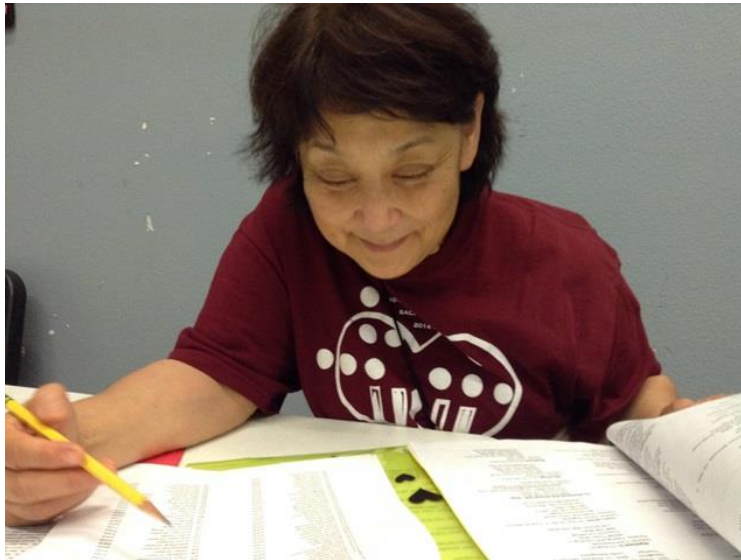
Parker Van Ostrand (Sacramento, California) and Sachi Ohata (Azumino, Nagano, Japan), two performers in the Chopin Variations Brilliantes. Photo by Karen Hagberg.



Keiko Kawamura at post-concert banquet. Photo by Karen Hagberg.



Rehearsing Debussys Clair de Lune at Sacramento State University. Photo by Karen Hagberg



Linda Nakagawa checking and re-checking the program.
Photo by Karen Hagberg



Announcing unscheduled extra rehearsals as the project evolves.
Photo by Karen Hagberg

10-Piano Reflections

By Louis Laniak, age 14, Rochester, New York

I still remember my first viewing of the 2009 Suzuki International 10-Piano Concert DVD at Dr. Hagberg's studio. I was only nine years old at the time and two years prior to that, I had participated in the 3-piano concert held here in Rochester. At the time, I thought how thrilling it would be to attend the 10-piano concert as a performer. Fast forward to today, I couldn't believe that in August, I was actually packing my bags and getting on an airplane to travel to Sacramento, California to play in the

bi-annual 10-piano concert. It was a dream come true.

I would be staying with a host family in Sacramento for two weeks. Before I was dropped off, I was a little nervous, not only about living with another family and being a good house guest, but also about trying to synchronize my piano pieces with nine other students. Despite the apprehension, I was very excited to be a part of this event.

When rehearsals began, it was nothing like what I had imagined. The Japanese teachers were very demanding. But if someone made a mistake, it was the whole group that was corrected. The bottom line is that everything, even from the start, is done as a group except for the many hours of practice done at home as a follow-on to the daily group practices. Even so, it was still the most fun I have ever had practicing my piano.

By Luisa and Andrew Laniak, parents of Louis

As parents travelling to Sacramento, we came to realize that the 10-Piano Concert is a Herculean undertaking – at least for those charged with coordinating and teaching practices, arranging home-stays, procuring practice and performance facilities, providing a myriad of transportation resources, shepherding the care and concern for over 200 students of widely varying ages and providing periodic entertainment off-ramps. Without seeing it firsthand it is easy to underestimate the nature and complexity of the undertaking – and all of it with the focus on getting children to do the best they can do with a fine musical instrument.

Our observation was that the only thing greater than the undertaking itself was the spirit, generosity and commitment exhibited by all those involved with the Sacramento program and particularly by those who opened their homes to visiting guests. Truly the willingness of so many to share with, care for and look out for the well-being of strangers

Finally the day of the performance came. I was scared that we would get lost and stop playing. Thankfully, we did not crash and burn and our sound, I thought, was quite good. This experience gave me a chance to meet people from around the world, make great music, and persevere through long practices with other students. I hope that more students express an interest in playing in this wonderful co

Stands in such stark contrast to much of what we read and see today!

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to all those who have made and continue to make the Sacramento 10-Piano Concert such a success. And, on a personal note, we can't thank Ken and Cindy Tanaka and their children Drew and Nikki enough for being such considerate and generous hosts to our son Louis.



Luisa Laniak with son Charles, 10, who also performed in the 10-Piano Concert, at post-concert reception.
Photo by Karen Hagberg

Things I learned from the 8th 10-Piano Concert in Sacramento

By Linda Nakagawa

As I reflect on the preparations of the past nine months, I think about the many arrangements that needed to be made before giving birth to a concert of this magnitude. Apart from the many necessary logistical arrangements, there were other things that needed to happen. I have come to realize that one has control over very little; so many emotions rush through my heart, soul and brain.

1. The local students need to be very strong and prepared because they are the “engine” that will run this concert.
2. Visiting students need to be cared for so they have a very positive experience away from home with their host families and will want to return.
3. Local teachers need to make this concert a priority: to be open to helping, observing, and learning in any way necessary to make Sacramento the best “host” for this concert.
4. Visiting and local teachers, whether or not they bring students, need to come with an open heart and ready to learn. It is most important that teachers return to their home studios ready to improve and inspire their students.

These thoughts are by no means new or unusual. They are common sense. In my many years of study with the Senseis Kataoka, Ogiwara and Kawamura, I’ve come to realize that these common sense thoughts are universal and cannot be challenged. However,

there are stark differences in how one lives and practices these truths. Dr. Kataoka used to quote Dr. Suzuki, “Oh, teaching the Suzuki Method is so easy because one only has to say the same things over and over.” On the surface it sounds very simplistic, but deep in my heart, and soul, and from my experience, I know it is an extremely profound statement. And one must become a strong human being in order to practice this task daily!

One of the main reasons for working on a 10-Piano concert every other year is the students. The piano is basically a solo instrument. This is an incredible opportunity for students to have fun, work, learn, practice and perform together. And it is 10-fold for the teachers of these students. Throughout the summer, we prepare our students to the highest level we can. Then when the students practice under the guidance of Ogiwara Sensei and Kawamura Sensei, they are taken to a much higher level. We teachers are so lucky to have this learning opportunity. After the concert we all can hardly wait to work, over the next two years, following the way we observed.

The rule for students participating in this concert has always been teachers must accompany participating students. This year I made an exception. I knew that the teacher was very diligent but very busy. I was familiar with the students, and I needed students to fill in for some pieces. However, I realize that I made a big mistake. The students were fine and I think they learned and had fun, but because the teacher was not here observing, everything will be lost. It is the teacher who

learns from the Japanese teachers at workshop lessons and at the 10-Piano rehearsals. ***So the teacher and the students have my deepest apologies!***

I know why teachers must be in attendance for their students at all lessons and rehearsals. This truth is so important. Dr. Kataoka told me many times that this is not a festival. It is a way for students and teachers to learn how to

work hard and raise the ability for all. Of course students can have fun and make new friends. But let's all learn how to work hard so we can really enjoy our accomplishments.

On another topic: I want to congratulate all the teachers who worked to get 100% of the families in their studio to join Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation. It means the entire studio will grow and become stronger together. Congratulations!



Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

**February 5-9, 2015
Orange County, California**
Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Mei Ihara 714-997-8692
mihara14@att.net

**August 2015
Rochester, NY**
(exact dates to be determined)
Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Karen Hagberg 585-978-0600
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com

April 26, 2015
(leave U.S. on 4/9 and return on 4/27)
Matsumoto, Japan
International 10-Piano Concert
Registration deadline October 15, 2014
Contact Karen Hagberg 585-978-0600
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com

**August 2015
Sacramento, California**
(exact dates to be determined)
Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop
with Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
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, 585-978-0600).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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