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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

**Unless We Change Our Attitude, Both in
Belief and Action,
Children Will Not Change
for the Better**

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
Vol. 8 No. 11, April 7, 1999
Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

***Piano Basics
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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
585-978-0600

Memberships / Subscriptions

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

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All students who come to learn to play piano are very good children. There isn't a single child who would emulate the bad things that are shown on TV.

Some years back, I viewed misconduct by some juvenile delinquent on television. It was incredulous to me and I assumed that such an occurrence was unique to only a small fraction of the population. However, I am shocked to find out that such occurrences have gradually become worse, spreading to "normal" families. Violence in elementary schools and schoolgirl prostitution for money are just two of the unbelievable issues.

In early 1955, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki visited the juvenile correctional facility in Okada several times. He brought young children to perform for the inmates and gave lectures. When he returned home, he felt that the fault was not in the children, that it was a mistake to detain them, and that parents are the ones who should be behind bars. His strong love and concern for children was very apparent. It made me think hard about the work of educating children and how one must engage in their education with great care.

Children are so precious! Parents cannot help pouring out all their love for them from the very instant they are born. It is obvious that parents do not wish see their very adorable newborns turn into juvenile delinquents. So when and how is it that parents make bad choices in their upbringing? When children misbehave, adults are certain they did everything right and blame the children for misconduct because the children are not doing what they were taught. Then the adults assume unilaterally that the children are bad.

Wait a minute, here. Because parents are older than children, it is necessary carefully to think when and what happened for such an undesirable outcome. Newborns are helpless at birth and the mother must take care of their every need. It is precisely because babies are helpless that parents regard them simply as possessions and end up controlling them any way they like.

However, despite having given birth to this child, the parents must realize that he/she is still a separate human identity with a unique heart and soul. As children grow to adulthood, they naturally develop their independence, their desire to make their own decisions about themselves. This person possesses his or her own individual way of thinking. Parents who cannot understand this end up rearing their children in the direction of bad behavior. Not only are they not doing it with malicious intent, they are self-satisfied knowing they would do anything and be willing to sacrifice their own lives for their children. On the other hand, children are so thoroughly turned off and annoyed with their parents, it is possible that it is precisely because of this kind of blind devotion that they may want to turn away from their parents and

run toward a troubled life, however reluctantly.

Today, fifty years after the war, life is pleasant. The economy has improved greatly. There is abundance and wealth. Finally, there are conveniences in life and time for happiness. However, with such seeming improvement in our living situation, I feel that we have lost the ability to think. It used to be that from infancy to six years of age was the time to teach human beings the basic issues of good and evil, right and wrong. This is the responsibility of the parents.

It is unbelievable that we have come to this as a society. Recently, a political candidate for the Mayor of Tokyo referred to a speech that was made by a top official of China when visiting another country. It was said that in twenty years time the country of Japan will cease to exist or become part of another country.

It distresses me so that such a thing can happen. Before the worst becomes reality, let us earnestly think very hard. The state of juvenile delinquency is really our image reflected back to us. Children grow up witnessing the very society that we create and they are the sum of what we have created. I feel so sorry for those children who are headed that way. If their environment had been good as they were growing up, they would not find themselves in such a state of misconduct. It is not the fault of the children. It is their environment. "We are the children of our environment." (Dr. Shinichi Suzuki)

When you read this, you are bound to wonder what is one human being to do to impact change. When one little human being joins with other human beings, big things can be accomplished. How about this? Can we work on the basics of living by correcting our posture? The physical body and the spiritual being always becomes one and the same. In our daily lives, let us strive to work on good posture around the clock, day and night. With concerted effort to improve our physical posture, we should be able to improve our spiritual posture as well. With our improved posture, whatever the next issue, with concerted effort and thought, we would be able to discover how to solve it. Then children will follow our example.

The method of teaching piano works exactly in the same way. How the Basics of technique are taught to beginners in the first five to six years determines their future.

Posture!

(Please read the book, *No One's Perfect*)

By Haruko Kataoka

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My generation from the Showa era (1926-1989) was raised by parents from the Meiji era (1868-1912). In turn, the Meiji-era generation was raised by parents from the Edo era (1603-1868).

Before the influence of Western culture, people wore kimonos and spent their lives sitting with their legs folded properly on tatami mats.

However for those parents born after 1945 (after World War II), such times ushered in life of sitting on chairs. Many looked upon chairs as being something to relax on and made no effort to maintain proper posture (proper seating on chairs not being part of our culture). In schools, at work, even at the dining table, everybody has forgotten to sit with good posture.

Recently, I found a most wonderful book, something quite unusual these days. It's called *No One's Perfect*, by Hirotada Ototake (available at Amazon.com and at your local library). There is a photo of the author on the front cover. He has no arms and no legs, but what an astonishingly wonderful posture. There is another photo of him on the back cover:

fantastic posture, chest high and proud. When you read the book, you will come to understand him. He lives always looking forward, always assertive, totally aware of his best traits. Using all these strengths to face any difficulty, pushing aside any discouragement, he forged through any endeavor with great effort. Because of his strong powerful posture, his inner spiritual self is magnificent as well.

Reading this book made me feel bad for having arms and legs. I wonder if the more obstacles we have to overcome in our environment, the easier it is to do the right thing.

Reading to the end, there is little mention of the author's parents, but you can sense their strong conviction in his tough but powerful upbringing. From infancy, his parents refused to treat him differently from any other child so he would grow up to be an independent individual. In other words, they nurtured him unwaveringly to become self-reliant. I was so moved to think that to accomplish this, they had to endure ten times more difficulty than one would for an able-bodied child with tremendous patience, perseverance and effort.

I urge everyone, adult and child, to read this book. Amongst all the bad news of our times, this book gives us the chance to contemplate anew how wonderful it is to be alive. It bestows upon us the courage and hope to live our lives fully.

It is not too late. Let's not lose the opportunity to nurture our children endowed with "perfect" bodies. Let's endeavor to work hard!

MULTI-PIANO BENEFIT CONCERT RAISES \$15K FOR LOCAL ORGANIZATION

By Kipp Treu, submitted by Judy Wely, Campbell, California

The ninth installment of the Kids Helping Kids Multi-Piano Benefit Concert series was held at the West Valley College Theater in Saratoga, California on June, 30, 2013, and raised in excess of \$15,000 for Sunday Friends, a local organization bringing educational resources and daily necessities to Bay Area families in need.

The concert, inaugurated over a decade ago and now having grown to feature 14 pianos, a host of string and wind instruments, vocalists, and over 100 performers aged 4 to 26 from various piano studios around the Bay Area, attracted nearly 600 audience members over two performances.

The program featured a variety of compositions ranging from classical to

contemporary pieces, and there were several opportunities for audience participation. Program selections included an arrangement of Kuhlau's Sonatina Op. 55 No. 1, an original vocal arrangement of The Rainbow Connection, Rondo Alla Turca by Mozart and Rachmaninoff's Prelude in g minor. Students raised funds to cover the cost of renting the venue and of moving the many instruments used for the performance.

A silent auction of goods and services contributed by local businesses was held during the concert. In addition, local corporations, including Google, Inc. and Lockheed Martin Corporation have generously matched funds or donated directly to the effort. Proceeds from the silent auction, monetary donations from the audience and from various local corporate sponsors went in their entirety to Sunday Friends. Admission has always been free of charge. Over the years, the concert series has raised more than \$65,000 for various local children's charities. The tenth installment is planned for the spring of 2015.



Kids Helping Kids Multi-Piano Concert, Saratoga, California, June 30, 2013. Photo copyright Tin Nguyen.

Beginners Need the Best Piano

By Karen Hagberg

Conventional wisdom tells us that beginners may start out with any old instrument: grandma's ancient upright, a cheap console, even an electronic keyboard, and if the child shows some affinity for piano study, we might upgrade at some future time.

There are several important basics about music pedagogy that must be recognized, however:

1. Begin at a young age while the child's ability to learn directly through the senses (not using reason and explanations) is still intact.
2. Teach tone production first, since *music is tone*.
3. Producing tone on an inferior instrument is difficult if not impossible, causing frustration for the student (try playing tennis with a wooden racket or fixing a lock with the wrong tool).
4. The ears of young children can hear and appreciate the tone of a wonderful instrument better than we adults can.
5. The return on investment decreases the longer we wait.

These basics are contrary to the ideas in our everyday environment, but we teachers and parents need to remind ourselves of their continued relevance.

A grand piano is a glorious, aesthetic item. How much more seriously will the student take his/her piano study? How pleased with a truly beautiful sound? How motivated to get to the next piece? How much more pleasurable is practice? These things cannot be measured, but we may consider them.

I always tell parents of 3- and 4-year-olds that learning to play the piano takes about ten

years. During such a long time there are bound to be difficult and discouraging times when it is the responsibility of us adults, parents and teacher, to keep the lessons going so that we can all be happy with the end result, and especially that the student will be proud of a very big accomplishment that took a very long time to achieve. During this process the student is learning invaluable life lessons about perseverance, effort, persistence, concentration, and goal-setting. How wonderful it is for a child to acquire a natural technique and a lifelong love and appreciation for music. These are gifts that nobody can ever take away, that will never become obsolete or wear out. These are the best gifts any child can receive in life. These, I believe, are the gifts parents want for their children.

Providing the best possible instrument you can afford from the very beginning enhances this process. If you wait five years, what was impeded during that time, what was lost? How can we measure the effect on the student (and on you) of being unable to produce good sound while practicing?

If you have a good piano for only the last four years of high school the pro-rated annual cost of your investment is so much higher than if it had been spread over an entire childhood. Yet parents get surprised, and sometimes disapproving, responses from friends and family when they announce they've purchased an expensive instrument for their 4-year-old. There is social pressure to do things the old way. In my several decades of teaching, however, I have never had a family say they were sorry they spent money on a piano. Even if the students stop lessons before graduating high school, they do not want their parents to sell the piano, and they continue to enjoy it. Those parents who may be concerned that their child will reject piano lessons altogether after a short time may be assured that there is an active market in pre-owned pianos. You can always get cash back on your investment if things do not work out at all.

Suzuki Method shows us the way for music lessons to succeed, however, by placing the child in an environment where the chances for success become very high. A fine instrument is included in that environment.



Kataoka Sensei's Lessons Available to Observe Online

Our tireless web editor, Ken Wilburn and SPBF member Carol Wunderle have worked over the past few years to make videos of Dr. Kataoka's lessons available to our members online. Recently, Ken provided us with instructions (below) to access this amazing archive which is growing as our members provide Ken with our personal stores of videos from workshops over the years.

Members, when you view this invaluable resource we hope that you will be moved to send your videos, regardless of format, that may be collecting dust in your homes and that are surely on their way to decomposition, to Ken so that they may be preserved on the internet for future research by teachers, parents and students. It is also a good idea to contact the families of former students who may have had lessons with Dr. Kataoka to contribute their videos as well. Please identify, as much as possible, the date and place of the lessons. Teacher lessons will not be included, and students are not identified by name.

Videos may be sent to: Professor Kenneth Wilburn
History Department, Brewster A318
East Carolina University
East Fifth Street
Greenville, North Carolina 27858-4353

How to Access the Web Archive of Dr. Kataoka's teaching: Instructions from Ken Wilburn:

1. use the latest version of Firefox as your browser; others may work but Internet Explorer is not dependable
2. go to: <https://mediasite.ecu.edu/MS/Catalog/catalogs/wilburnk>
3. you will need to create an account; follow the registration instructions and sign in; the password is HKataokaSPBF
4. once you are logged in and the page opens, note that 15 of the videos, organized alphabetically by song title, will display at once; to see the next group you will need to click on the numeral icon located in the upper right hand corner just above the first video screen
5. once you have selected a song-lesson, click on the song title, not the arrow in the small screen
6. you will now be taken to a large screen and the video will now load
7. now look to the bottom left and click on "I" inside the circular icon to the left of 1x on the same line that the progress icon moves rightward; this will activate the script to the lesson
8. in Firefox you can adjust the size of the screen; look up to the upper right of Firefox on your computer screen along the same line as the URL; just to the left of the printer icon are plus and minus icons which will expand and contract the video; if you turned on the script, adjusting the + and - will bring the script and video into the best visual balance; if you do not see the + and - in Firefox, do this: (upper left) View/Toolbars/check Navigation Toolbar
That will turn on the + and - screen capability in the Navigation toolbar over on the upper right
If you cannot see "View" of View/Toolbars/check Navigation Toolbar, first do this: (upper left corner) Firefox/Options/check Menu Bar
9. going back and forth between lessons is best carried out by looking at the tabs of Firefox; when you are finished viewing a lesson, click on Firefox's Haruko Kataoka Suzuki Piano Basics tab; this will return you to the list of lessons
10. be sure to read the help menu over on the bottom right of the toolbar when a video plays; many help topics, such as slowing down/speeding up playback and full screen are discussed
11. have fun!

Now is the Time to Join and Renew

By Karen Hagberg, President, Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation

Membership in Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation is recorded for the calendar year. Therefore, this is the time of year to renew your membership and to encourage your families to join. I encourage each and every member to require their families to join. Family memberships are only \$25/year. You will be happy to experience the feedback you get from parents who read Dr. Kataoka's articles and who are aware of the workshops and 10-Piano Concerts we support, and you are assured that memberships from your studio allow us to continue to bring Japanese teachers to the U.S. and for our students to travel to Japan. Supporting workshops and 10-Piano Concerts directed by the Japanese teachers remains the principal mission of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation, and we thank you all for your continued support.

Calling All Teachers & Families: Feedback, Please

This is a reminder to all of our members: teachers, parents, and even students. This is *your* newsletter. Of course, the newsletter is a vehicle for the Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation to convey information to you and to provide you with articles written by Dr. Kataoka. But in addition, wouldn't you like to hear from each other?

For example, our member Judy Wely contributed an article in this issue about a music project in her area that raises money for children's charities. Possibly this will inspire others of us to use our music to help support worthy causes. What is going on in your area? We would all like to know.

Then there are your thoughts about things we publish here. Are you reading the newsletter? If so, please share your reactions to whatever you may read here. We are happy to publish Letters to the Editor, and our readers would like to know what you think. Don't be shy!

Teachers and parents, please encourage your students to write about their piano study and to submit their writing here. Our work is devoted to these young people, and we all will enjoy hearing from them. Times change. We adults want to know what is on their minds.

Illustrations, photos or drawings, make your submissions come alive, so please consider providing them with your writing. Send all materials to Karen Hagberg, Newsletter Editor, at kh@hagbergsuzuki.com. Thank you all!

Welcome, New Member!

Karen Huffman

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

Friday, July 31-Tuesday, August 4, 2015

Rochester, NY

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 4/16 and return on 4/27)

Matsumoto, Japan

International 10-Piano Concert
Contact Karen Hagberg 585-978-0600
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com

Saturday, August 8-Wednesday, August 12, 2015

Sacramento, California

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>