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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*

**Piano Basics
Foundation News**

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*Being Able
to
Recognize
the
Beautiful
as
Beautiful*

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
Vol. 6 No 6, November 18, 1996
Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

One day, one of the teachers brought a book by Shigeo Haruyama entitled *Brain Revolution*. She explained, "This book states similar things you always say to us." This book was very easy to read and understand.

Simply put, the number one rule is that stress is the worst thing for the body, so do not engage in negative thoughts.

When meditating, visualize something that is beautiful or an activity that gives joy. As a result, the right brain produces endorphins. This in turn improves all body functions. Humans are naturally not prone to disease. Rule number two is to engage in light exercise. Rule number three is to be cognizant of eating fresh foods. Abide by these three rules and the book purports that a human being should be able to live to be one hundred fifty years old.

It is true that life should be lived not only using the left brain's intellectual knowledge. It is through the use of the right brain's sensibility that life can proceed successfully.

Of course, knowledge is important, so having a lot of knowledge is beneficial. However, it is easy to ascertain that the role of the right brain is indispensable in achieving relaxation of the mind and body so that we can live a full and robust life.

What must we do to get in the habit of using the right brain, a habit we are trying to teach our children through piano study? By always being in contact with beautiful music, we must nurture the ability for the mind to recognize what is beautiful as beautiful from the time children are very young.

Primarily for human beings, seeing and listening to nature, smelling scents that invoke well-being, tasting delicious food and touching things that provide pleasant tactile sensation are all things that humans naturally come to know. However, in this day and age, parents and teachers who are in the midst of children must guide them with great care. We are constantly surrounded by many unnatural, bad influences. As in a saying from the olden days, "If you mix with red, you will become red." Before you know it, this innate sensibility that we humans are born with will be damaged and as a result become humans who fail to see and recognize what is beautiful.

With regards to music, provide listening opportunities for performances by the world's best artists to children when they are very young. At our piano school, we believe that piano education is not limited to merely giving piano lessons. In order to provide the kind of education where children feel and be able to discern what is beautiful, we must assure that they are listening to the recordings of the world's best performers and go to concerts of these outstanding musicians. Through music education, we have continued for

several decades to set as our goal to accomplish the bigger picture, the education of the human being.

The results are evident today. Nowadays, if we attend a concert by a supposedly well-known pianist, all the children from Matsumoto, regardless of age, from pre-school to high school, are in total agreement if the performance is bad.

Sometime ago, a mother of a nine year-old-girl asked for advice, "Because she will be learning the Haydn sonata next, I am trying really hard to make sure she is listening to the recording, but she refuses to listen to it. What shall I do?" Upon further discussion, it was revealed that the recording they were listening to was by an inferior pianist.

I understood immediately. Because children listen with their sensibility, they do not need any explanation to know that it is not good performance.

So, I gave them a copy of a recording by the great and famous Lili Kraus. The nine-year-old is enjoying listening every day on her own without even being asked to listen to the recording.

Children are not yet equipped with a lot of left brain intelligence, but are far more adept at using their right brain than adults. When considering all stages of life, they are living in the most splendid stage provided by God (or nature). They are always able to imagine or conjure the most beautiful things. Their ability to emote deeply and passionately will enable them to lead a healthy life in body and mind.

It is my hope that all children be nurtured to be able to recognize the beautiful as beautiful.

Adults Can Be Nurtured Too!

By Haruko Kataoka

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In early November, I got a call from a former student saying, "There's a concert that my father really wants to go to. The tickets are available for purchase starting tomorrow. Do you think there is a chance that they will be sold out? Will we be able to get tickets?"

The concert scheduled for February 2, 1997 was to be performed by Mischa Maisky (cello) and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Of course, we were all thinking that we wanted to go! Because the concert was to be held in February, we thought we did not have to be too concerned about purchasing tickets just yet.

Perhaps, this student's father's desire to go surpassed our hopes to attend the concert. The phone call came when four piano teachers had gathered to meet.

This student is now in college. She started piano lessons when she was three years old. Her father had been listening to the recordings that were played constantly at home in addition to listening to his daughter practice. He accompanied her to concerts by famous performers recommended by her piano teacher. By and by, he had truly come to appreciate classical music. It is so wonderful!

I have another student who is also in college whose mother is the same way. The father had at some point shared this wonderful observation with me, "Because of you, my wife has become high class. When we were first married, she only listened to pop music, but now she is a great fan of the classics." Their two daughters studied piano diligently and are both presently attending music school. The mother humbly claims that she knows absolutely nothing about music. However, if she finds out that a famous pianist will be performing, she is on her way not only for concerts in Matsumoto, but she will even travel to Tokyo or Osaka. Furthermore, her critique of the performance is always spot-on.

We cannot give up on adults either. Even if you are incidentally around music, it is possible that, although unwittingly, you can develop a great affinity to music.

August 2017 Piano Basics Workshop in the City of Brotherly Love

Philadelphia will be the location for the August 3-7, 2017 Basics workshop with Kawamura Sensei and Ogiwara Sensei from Matsumoto, Japan. Please come join us this summer in advance of the school year, for renewed inspiration for yourself and for your students.

Philadelphia is a wonderful place to visit, especially for studio families who might enjoy the many historic sites and attractions the city has to offer as a vacation destination. And, we are just a two-hour trip by bus, car, or train to NYC, and about three hours to Washington, DC (two hours by train). Travel to Philadelphia from around the country is convenient from many areas, with many reasonable direct flights and an abundance of train connections. And, even in our large city, there will be parking for all workshop venues.

If you've been thinking about attending a workshop with the teachers from Japan, or have wanted to bring students but haven't yet, now is the time! The many Suzuki Piano Basics teachers of the Philadelphia region welcome you to visit our city and research with us for the week at the lovely home and studio of Jane Guerin. Summer is a great time for

families to travel, and out-of-town students also have the option of coming just for the weekend, for a master class lesson and/or participation in the Friendship Concert.

Check your email for registration information, and be sure to register by the May 25 deadline for the lowest rates and for your students to have the opportunity to study and perform!

Feel free to have prospective studio families be in touch if they would like more information about getting around the city or ways to explore the region to enjoy day-trips.

Hope to see you there!

Janet Kaido
Workshop Director



Learning How to Live

by Christine Darling

As I reflect on my time at the Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop in Orange County, I am acutely aware that learning is for a lifetime. I grew up as a Suzuki piano student, studied with the best Suzuki teachers and teacher trainers, have traveled to Matsumoto, Japan to study, and now I have the privilege to create a loving and musical environment for my infant daughter, Lucy. Having Lucy with me at the workshop was very special. Every teacher was so kind and excited to have her there. To be in a community of piano teachers that values exposing children to music from birth was very encouraging to me.

At the workshop, the area of the room where I needed to sit with Lucy was not in view of the keyboards. At first I was disappointed that I would not be able to learn as much as I would if I could see the hands of students and teachers, but soon I realized that I was gleaning much more from listening. I heard differences in tone as the students worked on moving their fingers. I heard how the Sensei demonstrated, and the language used to produce desired outcomes. As I returned to my studio the following week, I took care to listen well and persistently to work on a desired goal until it was achieved. Attending workshops reminds me to take a step back, slow down, and build a solid foundation of listening and technique.

Details are important, and musicality is about the small differences. The key to success at the piano, and in life really, is by being intentional with everything you do, whether it is playing Twinkles or fixing your student's dress at a recital. This is what keeps me coming back to the Suzuki Method. There is always another layer of Basics to apply to my playing and teaching that can be carried into everyday life.

Learning to listen and to create an environment of love and learning is a goal I want to achieve as a woman, a parent, and a piano teacher. Slowing down in life and in the studio will produce quality that is needed in our world today.

Christine Darling, first recipient of the Kataoka Research Scholarship granted by the Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation, received funds to attend the Orange County Workshop in February 2017.



Christine Darling and daughter Lucy with Keiko Kawamura (L) and Keiko Ogiwara (R) at the Orange County Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop, February 2017.

***Piano Basics Workshop
Orange County, California
February 2017***



Keiko Ogiwara teaching Rae Kate Shen's student, Ariana Khazaeni, age 6, at the Orange County Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop, February 2017. Photo by Linda Nakagawa.



Keiko Kawamura teaching Brandon Seil's student, Kamyar Saririan, age 11, at the Orange County Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop, February 2017. Photo by Linda Nakagawa.



Teachers at Piano Basics Workshop, Orange County, California, February 2017. Photo by Ken Matsuda.

Making Things Possible That Were Not Possible Before

By Renee Eckis

I have been reading the book PEAK: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise by Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool. It has been fascinating seeing how this research supports both the Suzuki philosophy of “any child can” and the piano basics philosophy of taking one step at a time to improve, not through knowledge, but through skill. He talks a lot about deliberate practice.

“The goal of deliberate practice is to not just reach your potential but to build it, to make things possible that were not possible before. This requires challenging homeostasis, getting out of your comfort zone, and forcing your brain or your body to adapt. Once you do this, learning is no longer just a way of fulfilling some genetic destiny; it

becomes a way of taking control of your destiny and shaping your potential in ways that you choose.”

This applies not only to the student but also to the teacher and parent. As teachers, we must continue to research the best tone and the best way to teach our students. Piano Basics workshops with the Japanese teachers are an excellent way to challenge our own homeostasis. As you take a lesson you are out of your comfort zone and trying to adapt to new ideas physically and mentally. Watching other lessons brings even more focus on tone and ways to teach the best tone, not just the correct notes. As parents, we can observe our child's lesson as well as other student's lessons. It gives us perspective to see the individual focus for each child. It may be quite different, even though they may be studying the same piece our own child is working on at home.

Just as we would not want to go to a surgeon or doctor who is not knowledgeable about the latest research in her/his field, we must apply that same standard to our own teaching. “The best among us in various areas do not occupy that perch because they were born with some innate talent but rather because they have developed their abilities through years of practice, taking advantage of the adaptability of the human body and brain.” We are fortunate to be able to study from some of the best. The teachers from Matsumoto have spent years researching both with Dr. Kataoka and with each other to find the best ways to teach. Keiko Kawamura and Keiko Ogiwara will be teaching in Philadelphia and in Sacramento in August. I urge you to attend and to have a lesson. Bring a student to have a lesson or perform in the friendship concert. It is a wonderful opportunity for growth.

It is also important that our students can see that we are trying to improve and to make the effort to become better teachers. This models the mindset we hope to nurture. This mindset goes far beyond the music lesson; it is a lifelong skill. The most important gifts we can give our children are the confidence in their ability to remake themselves again and again and the tools with which to do that job. They will need to see firsthand, through their own experiences developing abilities that they thought were beyond them, that they control their own destiny. It is a great responsibility we have. We must study deliberately to become the best model possible.



Renee Eckis teaching grandson, Henry Ormson.
Photo by Carinn Ormson.

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

April 30, 2017

Matsumoto, Japan

Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert

Contact Karen Hagberg, 585-978-0600

kh@hagbergsuzuki.com

Deadline for registration has passed.

July 7-10, 2017

Tacoma, Washington

Suzuki Piano Basics Festival

with Rae Kate Shen

Contact: Jacki Block 253-759-7213

jblock@ups.edu

August 3-7, 2017

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Suzuki Piano Basics International Teacher Training Workshop

with Keiko Kawamura and Keiko Ogiwara

Contact: Janet Kaido 267-251-0429

janet@alumni.curtis.edu

August 10-14, 2017

Sacramento, California

Suzuki Piano Basics International Teacher Training Workshop

with Keiko Kawamura and Keiko Ogiwara

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>