

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

Let's Practice

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
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Next Deadline: December 15, 2018

Let's practice individual parts and short sections every day. After spending most of the practice time on repetitions of short sections, it is ok to play a piece from beginning to end, but playing through a piece should be kept to a minimum.

Many of you thoughtlessly do the reverse. If this is the case, it is such a pity. Although you may be playing the piano every day, your playing will eventually get worse. Just because you may be moving on to Book 5 or Book 6 is no guarantee that you are playing well. There are those who misunderstand: those who equate moving along in the repertoire with playing well. It is important to memorize new pieces, but there is a difference between being able to play all the notes from memory and being able to perform a piece well. Memorizing a piece is the easiest task and everyone is able to do it.

Part practice is analogous to saving money. Whether you do one repetition, two, three, or one hundred, if you practice well correctly it is like putting money in your savings account every single day. Just like a savings account

showing you how much you are saving whether it's a thousand yen, five thousand, or ten thousand, you will be accumulating a wealth of good habits.

Performance, then, is akin to spending the money you have saved. It is so much fun to take this money and go shopping! However, trying to buy something you want but not having saved enough money for it is disappointing. When a performance does not go well on stage, look to the savings analogy. Practicing many good repetitions allows you to perform on stage with confidence.

This is why it is necessary to practice good, correct repetitions daily at home. Please practice many repetitions of those difficult passages that your teacher taught you or important technique correctly. Your savings will increase and you will be able

to play well soon. This is your shortcut to playing the piano well.

Because repetitions are the currency for savings in piano, patience and effort take precedence over spending. If you refuse to practice and just want to spend, then you will end up with a deficit. Conversely, your savings of the repetitions that you practiced with perseverance, effort, and concentration will result in your ability to enjoy shopping for quality goods: in other words, to enjoy producing a quality performance. This ability as the result of focused, hard work is one that will be a part of you for your lifetime, a precious, wonderful, permanent treasure (unlike material goods that can deteriorate over time).

Please, all members of the Piano Department, let's practice a lot this year.

Orange County California in February!

Greetings Everyone,

We are pleased to host the Japanese Teachers for a Piano Basics Workshop, February 14-18, 2019 in Orange County, California.

Attached is general information. All registration and payment is now to be done online at <http://www.smac-oc.org>. Click on the Piano Basics Workshop link at the top. Teachers are suggested to use Airbnb along with Uber and Lyft for reasonably-priced lodging and transportation. Costco also has a good rental car program. For more information on housing, please contact Mei Ihara <mhungihara44@gmail.com>.

We hope you will all consider coming. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn and be revitalized in your teaching. Please encourage new teachers to attend. Teacher Scholarships are available through Piano Basics Foundation, (contact Hannah Hall, Chairperson, at correctthecause@gmail.com).

There is a \$425 Early Bird fee deadline of November 15, 2018. After that, workshop fees increase. Final registration deadline is December 15, 2018 for all teachers and students wishing a lesson as well as students wishing to participate in the Friendship Concert.

*(A reminder: According to the Piano Basics Organization, Teacher and Student participation in a Piano Basics Workshop requires teachers and families to be members of Piano Basics Foundation.)

We look forward to seeing you in Orange County!
Rae Kate Shen



Teachers! Please Do Not Forget to Renew!

As you all must know by now, our memberships run for the calendar year, January-December. In order to create our 2019 Directory we ask our members to renew their memberships now, and not wait until the new year has begun.

Piano Basics Foundation has always trusted its members to be diligent about renewing. We do not send out reminders other than the ones you will see in this newsletter. **Please note that the earlier deadline is NEW in order that you may receive the 2019 Directory early in the New Year.** We all want you and your families to appear in it!

New memberships and renewals received by November 30 will appear in our 2019 Directory.

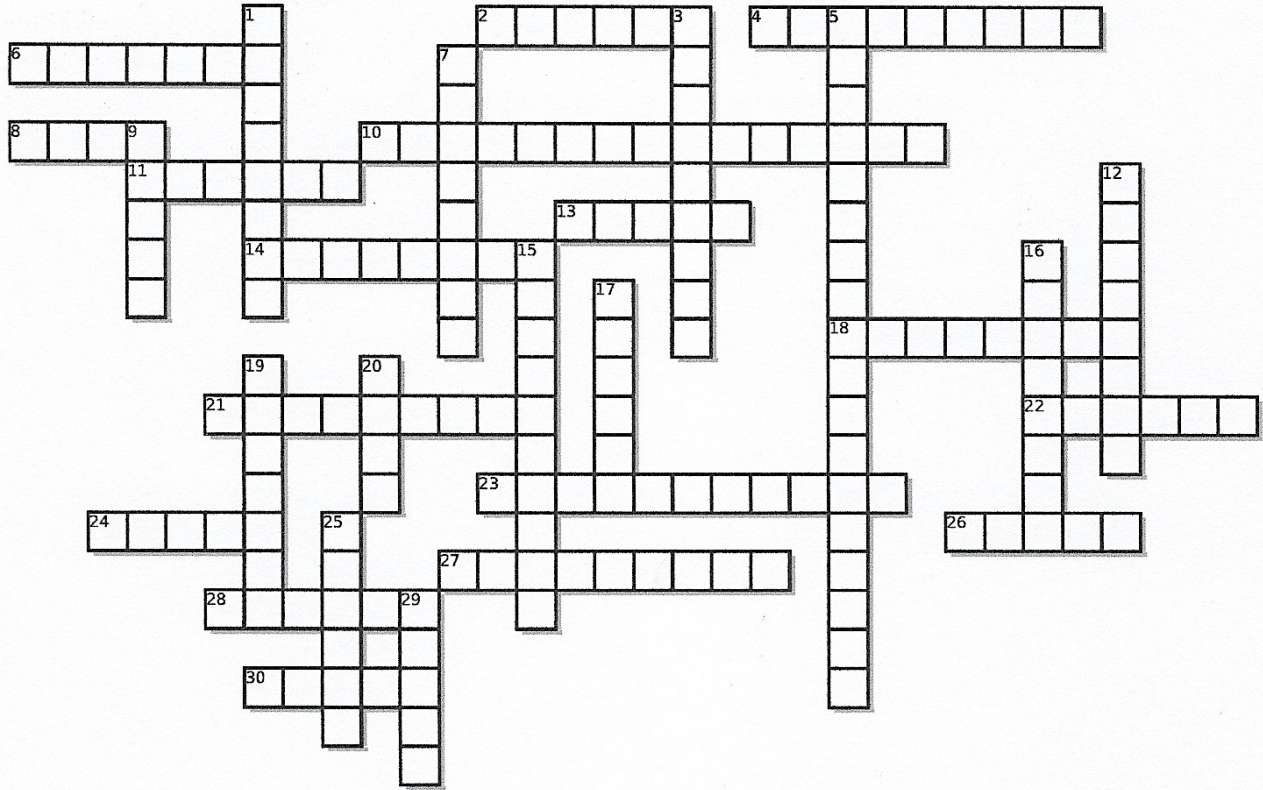
To families reading this: Please add your thoughts to our publication. There are other families out there who can be inspired by your words, whether they be reporting success or frustration. Community and encouragement are important in this process of nurturing our children. We want to hear about your experiences! Articles and/or photos may be sent to Karen Hagberg khagberg1943@gmail.com for consideration. The Suzuki Piano Basics community welcomes your input!

Teachers: let's all encourage at least one colleague who is not yet a member to join our Foundation. There is another 10-Piano Concert in Japan coming up in April, and exciting workshops scheduled for next year. Take advantage of our Scholarship Program (Contact Hannah Hall correctthecause@gmail.com) as you plan ahead for these events.

Send in your membership materials today! Your support allows Dr. Kataoka's teaching to be sustained for the wonderful children of this newest generation.

Suzuki Piano Basics

Crossword Challenge



ACROSS

- 2 Piano rim material
- 4 Composer of 100's of piano sonatas
- 6 Suzuki Piano Basics founder
- 8 "Piano is the ____ of instruments."
Haruko Kataoka
- 10 Suzuki Piano Basics extravaganza
- 11 Composer of 100's of piano etudes
- 13 Loud
- 14 Soft pedal
- 18 "If you can play Book 1, you can play
_____" Haruko Kataoka
- 21 More important than practicing
- 22 Both Kataoka successors
- 23 "_____" and Education." Kataoka
book
- 24 Piano made in Japan
- 26 Liebestraum composer

- 27 Suzuki Method city of origin
- 28 Italian Concerto composer
- 30 Banned piano keytop material

DOWN

- 1 Mrs. Suzuki
- 3 Talent _____ Institute
- 5 Fast, but not too fast
- 7 Solo with orchestra
- 9 RH locator
- 12 Broken chord
- 15 Quick and light
- 16 First piece
- 17 A grand piano has three
- 19 Suzuki family factory product
- 20 Piano hammer material
- 25 Happy Farmer key
- 29 Composer featured in Book 5

Answers will be provided in the next issue.

Practicing Can Be Dangerous

**By Karen Hagberg
Matsumoto News, July 1989**

In college, working on a Beethoven Sonata, I gave myself a case of tendonitis so severe that my right hand was in a cast for four months. In those days, nobody understood musical injuries. It did not occur to three doctors, my piano teacher, or to me that I had hurt myself practicing incorrectly. It was not until the cast came off and I attempted that same difficult passage in the Sonata causing a sharp pain to shoot up my arm, that I realized what I had done and how I had done it.

Practicing is dangerous. Now we are beginning to understand the various ways musicians are susceptible to injury. But this is not the only danger. Short of injury, incorrect practice does the opposite of what practice is intended to do: it teaches us to get better at playing incorrectly. I somehow instinctively knew this and did not practice for a number of years because it was making my playing worse. Sometimes I wondered if I were not just being lazy, so it was a great relief when I heard Kataoka Sensei confirm my suspicion that, indeed, one can become a worse pianist by practicing badly. It only stands to reason. I wondered why everyone did not seem to know this.

If you sit at the piano with a stiff body, you are practicing being stiff; if you move your fingers in awkward ways, you are improving your ability to move unnaturally; if you fall onto the piano when using your thumb, you are learning to lose your

balance; if you hold onto the keys when you play, your fingers will become crippled; if you play with harsh tone or with weak tone, your tone will become always harsher or weaker; if you practice without concentration you are increasing your ability to play absent-mindedly. We become whatever it is that we practice.

Furthermore, Kataoka Sensei says that a bad habit takes twice as long to correct as it took to be developed. Every hour of bad practice, therefore, results in a habit which takes two hours to change. *(Continued on page 6)*
Ten years of bad habits take twenty years to correct. Consequently, **no** practice is always preferable to incorrect practice.

What is good practice? I am learning here in Japan that to play the piano well one's body needs to be able to do what one's mind already understands. It is easy to intellectualize about music, but only with correct practice can the body be nurtured to the point where it can actually **do** something. If you want to play the piano, intellectual understanding will not help you. Physical training alone is what allows you to play well with ease and with good tone.

Because it is dangerous for the body to move in incorrect ways, good practice consists of the body's moving in only correct ways. In Suzuki Piano Basics Method, the definition of good practice is repetition of what can be done well, so as to give the body the habit of moving

correctly. If you can do something well, repeat it 10,000 times. This is why we trainees spend so much time in Book 1: we are teaching our bodies to do automatically that which our intellect already easily understands. Traditional thinking says that we should practice what we cannot do, but Suzuki Piano Basics Method believes the opposite. It teaches us that practicing what we cannot do is dangerous.

Kataoka Sensei tells us to make only **the best tone in the world** when we practice. I used to have the idea that I would learn the notes of a piece and **then** I would consider how they sounded. Well, of course by then it was too late. I had already practiced the piece with insensitivity to tone, so it was impossible to re-learn it now **with** tone. Tone is, after all, produced by a body movement, so from the very beginning we must play with “the best tone in the world” to ensure correct body movements and to get into the habit of listening to our own tone with concentration. Practicing without producing good tone, the best tone in the world, is dangerous.

Kataoka Sensei also has said that one is not really practicing unless the neighbors are wondering what you are doing. If you sound as if you are playing the piano, you are not really practicing. Playing and practicing are not the same thing; they are opposite things. If practicing is repeating what we can do well, with the best tone in the world, practicing can never consist of playing through entire pieces. Everybody can play a short passage slowly, hands alone, with better tone and technique than they can produce in entire pieces, up-to-tempo, hands together. Tone can be constantly improved with slow, hands-alone practice in short sections. Playing through entire pieces without doing good practice will cause technique gradually to

deteriorate. It is dangerous. Kataoka Sensei suggests practicing hands alone 80% of the time.

Whether we call it practice or not, every move made at the piano is teaching us something. After months of seriously practicing only simple basic movements in the most natural way with the best tone we can produce, most of us trainees have noticed a quick return to old bad habits if we play through pieces we learned when our technique was not as good as it has now become or if we agree to accompany a recital and try to learn too much new music in too short a time. Allowing ourselves to play in former ways is dangerous.

As teachers interested in how to play the piano and how to teach playing the piano, we are concerned with changing our bad habits to good ones so that we can best demonstrate good technique to our students. It is difficult to make these changes. I often wonder if I will live long enough to correct my years of bad habits. This is the reason we must begin now to practice only what we can do correctly. Yes, it is difficult, but the rewards are great.

As for young students, they are lucky if they have teachers who can teach them how to practice correctly from the beginning. Teaching piano is teaching how to practice. Kataoka Sensei's students play so effortless because they have been taught never to practice incorrectly. Parents learn to supervise correct practice, consisting of good posture and balance, natural movement of the body, the best possible tone, and repetition of what can be done well. Something which cannot be executed easily at first, a trill or a 16th-note passage for example, is practiced at a

tempo slow enough to play perfectly, with relaxation, good tone, balance, precise note values, and in good rhythm. The Twinkle A rhythm is sometimes used on each note of a passage to help train the body to keep balance and the fingers to work independently. Sometimes, simply playing one tone repeatedly and listening to it is a week's assignment.

There are other techniques a good teacher will utilize in teaching how to practice in order to teach the body to move naturally and the ear to listen for the best possible sound. Parents and students must be taught to understand that, contrary to reason, slow practice does not take longer than fast practice; that, in fact, this is the only way to learn music quickly and securely with good technique. We also must teach parents and students that the most important element of good practice is tone production, for without good tone everything else is worthless.

In order to teach how to practice well, we encourage ourselves to be diligent researchers into what constitutes good practice. We as teachers wish constantly to improve our own practice. Kataoka Sensei reminds us that teachers are lucky in that we get paid to practice all day long while teaching and demonstrating during lessons. A second piano is, of course, a necessity for teaching in this way, but we who know the dangers of practicing from bitter experience cannot afford to teach any other way. Some may wonder what we learn by attending frequent Suzuki Piano

Basics Workshops where we consider over-and-over, year-after-year, the state of our ability to play the Twinkle Variations. We do this because this is the way to learn how to practice so that our practice, and the way we teach it, is not dangerous.

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Matsumoto News Republication: From September 1988 through January 1992, Karen Hagberg lived and studied in Matsumoto with Dr. Haruko Kataoka, the co-Founder of the Suzuki Piano Method and the founder of the Suzuki Piano Basics Method. During that time she published a newsletter with nine issues annually that was distributed to Suzuki piano teachers in North America and Europe. In addition to news of upcoming workshops and multi-piano concerts, each issue contained an article intended to share what it was like as a foreigner to live in Japan and to study with Dr. Kataoka and Dr. Suzuki.

Nearly twenty years have elapsed since the first issue of Matsumoto News: an entire generation. By popular demand we are re-publishing the articles here. They have been edited from the original, but they remain under copyright and may not be reproduced without written permission from the author.

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

February 14-18, 2019

Orange County, California

Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop

With Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura

Contact Rae Kate Shen, 909-794-9461

raekshen@ymail.com

April 28, 2019

Matsumoto, Japan 10-Piano Concert

Leave April 11; Return April 29

Teacher registration deadline: November 25

Contact Karen Hagberg, 585-978-0600

khagberg1943@gmail.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 (khagberg1943@gmail.com, 585-978-0600).

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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