

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*

Children Are Mirrors of Their Parents

By Haruko Kataoka

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There is an old saying: One can determine the quality of parenting and upbringing by observing the child. When a child misbehaves, I often hear people say, "I would love to see the parent's face!" As Shinichi Suzuki of the Talent Education Institute always said, "Every child develops, it all depends on the parents."

Good parenting nurtures good children. Likewise, good teaching nurtures good piano performances. From my decades of experience, I am able to tell what a teacher is teaching when I hear their students perform. Just as children are mirrors of their parents, students are mirrors of their teachers. A student's unsuccessful performance is entirely the teacher's responsibility. When a group of teachers gather, you might hear comments like, "This child cannot fix his/her mistakes no matter how many times I repeat myself. It's hopeless!" However, it is the teacher who is making the mistakes. The teacher is not teaching lessons in a way that allows the student to feel motivated to fix mistakes.

Children are quite superior. Being around 3- and 4-year-old children, we can observe them in many situations. Children can instantly sense thoughts and actions of surrounding adults, and therefore, are constantly learning from them. They can see through whatever

adults do: whether parents' actions are sincere or absent-minded, whether teachers are genuinely scolding them or uttering cursory praises. Everything is transparent to them. They are just not yet able to fully verbalize what they see or how they feel.

When my daughter was seven years old as she was leaving for her cello lesson, I thoughtlessly, disparagingly commented,

"Can't believe you're going to lesson. You've not even practiced!"

She responded, "It doesn't matter if I practice or not. It's all the same."

I queried, "Why is that?"

She explained, "That teacher will tell me that my sound improved whether I practiced or not. So it doesn't matter."

I was stunned.

It is a grave mistake to assume it is alright to give indiscriminate praise to children because of their naïveté. It is

wrong to look down on children. Because they base their conclusions about the world using their sensibility, not knowledge, they are never incorrect. When children are told, insincerely, that they have improved without having practiced, they will conclude that the teacher is lying, in other words irresponsible.

Adults live in an absurd world where they can succumb to whatever is convenient. They swagger shamelessly with their heads held high even though they are unfair and guilty of injustices. Children observe, absorb, and learn all of this.

When children do something bad, they are not to blame. They are merely doing what they have observed, and as a result have learned, from the adults around them. In their future, they will become human beings who exactly resemble those adults and they, in turn, will negatively influence the next generation.

Parents and teachers must reflect upon themselves every day and endeavor to think, research, and study as much as they can so as to not make mistakes that influence children in a negative way or direction.

Let us nurture children with conviction and passion. Somehow even if it is just one more person reflecting and contemplating, we must strive for a world of goodness, not just for ourselves but for others, 10 years, 20 years, 100 years into the future.

How I became a Suzuki teacher

By Louise (Marriott) Selle

In 1973 our family left Illinois when my husband accepted a call to become a pastor in Idaho Falls, Idaho. I resumed teaching piano there, in the traditional way, as I had been taught.

In 1977 our six-year-old son, Brian, participated in the summer beginning violin program, offered by the Idaho Falls School District. For initial instruction, the kids brought a cereal box to use as a substitute violin. A flat stick was attached to it and a dowel was used for a bow. After they learned the Twinkle rhythms, they were allowed to rent a small violin from the school, and to play in a concert with more advanced students.

All of the students involved in this concert had memorized the same pieces. The concert began with the most advanced students playing their instruments in unison. Next, the students who played at the previous level joined in, and so on until then another group joined in, and so on, until the stage was filled. Finally, the new younger “Twinkle” students stood at the front. All violinists onstage played with them. They were excited about being onstage, especially with the older ones playing along. Result: the new beginners had a very positive experience at their very first concert. My husband had played violin starting at age 14, and

we were delighted to see this different approach.

That summer Elaine Worley sent me a notice that there was to be a recital of Suzuki piano students in a nearby town. I attended out of curiosity, since I had never heard that the Suzuki approach had been applied to piano. I bought Dr. Suzuki’s book, *Nurtured by Love*. That changed my life!



Louise Marriott Selle. Photo by Laurie Duff

Soon afterward, I decided to teach the Suzuki Way, and I attended workshops and institutes in various locations: Idaho, Utah, California. I had several lessons with Dr. Kataoka. In the year 2000 my students sent me to Japan for the 10-Piano Concert. It was a wonderful experience living with a Japanese family for a month!

Over the years I had to contend with some issues: the death of my first husband, my bouts with cancer and problems with my heart. These concerns interrupted my teaching for a time, but did not put an end to it! I

am now cancer-free. I remarried in 2003, and later found that my husband has Alzheimer's disease. Being his caregiver has its challenges, but still I am able to manage teaching some students, which is so rewarding. I also am teaching at a small private school one morning a week.

Recently one of my former students made contact with me. To my delight, I discovered that he had been a piano

major in college. He finished law school and is working nearby. He has resumed lessons with me and told me that his Suzuki training as a boy was very helpful when he was taking college music classes. Now he is advanced and wishes to take up where he left off.

My son, Brian Marriott, kept up with his violin playing, and is now teaching violin, guitar, and beginning piano at his own studio. His wife, Lara, teaches voice and piano as well. They both are worship leaders at churches in the Palm Springs, California area, using the gifts and talents that God gave them.

Matsumoto Diary

***By Robert Green,
12-year-old piano student of Jacqueline Graham, Augusta, Georgia***



On Thursday, April 11, 2019, my teacher and I flew to Japan so I could participate in the famous 10-Piano Concert in Matsumoto City, located high in the Alps of Japan, in Nagano Prefecture. I stayed with the Lim Family, mother, father, their 13-year-old daughter Hiromi, and their 5-year-old son Koyo. I was surprised and happy to discover that they spoke English. They were so loving and caring throughout my stay.



In addition to many rehearsals, I had a private lesson with Kawamura Sensei.



I was lucky enough to attend classes at a Japanese school. That's me in the green shirt.



My little “brother” Koyo, loved playing with toys. There was one that reminded me of Power Rangers. Here is a photo of us watching ducks and carp in a pond.



After the first week of rehearsals, we were taken on a field trip to Suwa City where we picked huge, delicious strawberries at a strawberry farm and then made our own signature stamps at a glass factory. My homestay mom and Toyo picked strawberries with me

On a beautiful sunny day we visited the cemetery to pay tribute to Dr. Kataoka and Dr. Suzuki. Here I am at Dr. Suzuki's gravesite.



Having to perform with nine others, I learned a lot about having discipline to do good practice. I will definitely use this new skill when I get home. Here is a photo of me (3rd from R) at our dress rehearsal for Mozart's Minuet 1.

Japan is really beautiful. I enjoyed the experience of learning new things. My mind has been opened to new ideas. I highly recommend this experience to other Suzuki piano students.

Learning How to Teach the Suzuki Piano Basics Method Is a Lifelong Journey

By Linda Nakagawa

The Suzuki method is completely different from the traditional method of teaching. The fundamental basic philosophy is based on how human beings learn to walk and to speak their native language. It is important to believe that all human beings have the potential to grow and that “ability” is not inborn.

We also must teach good technique. Technique is the vehicle with which to achieve everything else. We take walking for granted but it is a skill that requires good technique to produce endurance and to avoid wearing down the muscles and tendons. Everything requires good technique.

How does one learn about how to teach this method? The best way is to attend as many workshops with the Japanese teachers as you can. Take lessons; practice your assignment diligently until the next lesson. This is very important

because we are the teachers of our students. They mirror our way of playing. The lifelong goal is to learn how to use our bodies naturally to create the best sound with the greatest of ease. Don’t we want this for our students?

It is not important that teachers play all the notes of a piece from Twinkles to the most advanced classical piano repertoire. But what is important is for us to be able to hear; then demonstrate parts and sections to help our students produce a better sound. Anyone can learn to play the correct notes with the correct rhythm, but our job is to teach how to make the notes come alive; how to make music.

No students like to practice. We have to teach them how to practice.

We welcome you at the Sacramento Piano Basics Teacher Research Workshop with the Japanese teachers from August 2-6, 2019.

For more information contact:
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Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

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

Back to Japan

By Renee Eckis

Returning to Japan after 14 years, I am struck by the importance of observation. Not knowing the language and customs, I relied immensely on observation in daily life. I had to observe how to eat certain foods, how to make the best green tea, and which side of the sidewalk I should walk on. I couldn't rely on language to help me so had to use different senses and observe closely. This is the way children learn language and how their world operates.

In rehearsals I noticed the same thing. The teachers didn't talk about how to get the best tone, they modeled it. Passages were perfected to the smallest detail, and I heard a level of musicality I had not previously experienced. Truly, children can do anything using their senses. I noticed the foreign students watching the Japanese students carefully even though they had a translator beside them. The improvement from one rehearsal to the next was amazing, but always the same Basics were taught; and they were taught by example, not by using words.

I encourage you all—teachers, parents and students—to attend a workshop with the Japanese teachers this summer to continue developing your ability to demonstrate the Basics and to deepen your own powers of observation.



Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

June 15, 2019

Sacramento, California

Deadline for Scholarship Applications for August workshop
Contact Hannah Hall
correctthecause@gmail.com

July 22 - 26, 2019

St. Louis, Missouri

St. Louis Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop
With Rae Kate Shen & Bruce Anderson
Contact Patty Eversole 314-837-1881
paeversole@yahoo.com
<http://stlsuzukipiano.tripod.com/>

August 2-6, 2019

Sacramento, California

Suzuki Piano Basics Teacher Research
Workshop
With Keiko Ogiwara and Keiko Kawamura
Contact Linda Nakagawa, 916-422-2952
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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.

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