

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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Next Deadline: April 15, 2021

Education is Necessary for Children!

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
January 27, 1992
Reprinted in the Newsletter, Special Issue No. 6
July 7, 2008

Translated by Chisa Aoki and
Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg

What is education? Why is there such a thing as education? Whenever education is mentioned, people automatically think of academic studies at school. Academic education is but a fraction of all education.

Reading and writing come first. In our society today, it is largely the responsibility of schools to teach these things. Learning these skills enable us to be able to convey

our own ideas on paper and to learn about myriad other subjects: Japanese, arithmetic, science, social studies, foreign languages. We are taught the tools that enable us to express our thought processes.

Secondly, we learn the discipline that is important for human betterment—to help our society that consists of a large number of people functioning smoothly. We learn the very important basics of manners to live within society from elders such as parents or grandparents.

Another aspect of education, important and necessary in people's lives, is learning how to express through the arts (music, dance, painting, sculpture, etc). Piano practice fits in this category. Strengthening and training the body in sports is the same.

There is one more thing that is important. It is the issue of developing our heart and soul, our ability to love. This is something we start learning from our environment since birth and nurture and develop one step at a time.

Let's pause for a moment and think carefully. Ultimately, what

is most important is that we nurture in one human being, the very own, individual, special qualities with which he/she was born. That is what I consider the *best education*. Bad education is one that can ruin what is special in an individual or one that just neglects to teaching anything. It results in the tragedy of a human being born with treasures that rot from disuse, who lives an entire life without realizing what he/she could have blossomed into. I would like you all to be more aware of this problem. There is no development or nurturing in negligence.

Coincidentally, in the latter part of last year, I was shown a fantastic videotape. It was a research video released by the late professor of Tokyo University Hachizo Umezu, husband of Miyoko Umezu, a Suzuki teacher in Kanagawa Prefecture. This was a documentary about the education of two children, a boy and a girl, who suffer from three major handicaps. They are blind, deaf and mute like the famous, Helen Keller. There are many afflicted in this way.

I believe the children were both about seven years old. They were taken from their parents in the countryside and placed in a dorm in Tokyo. Dr. Umezu, together with his brilliant staff members at Tokyo University, taught the children manners necessary for effective day-to-day living. They would patiently spell words into their palms one at a time (so they could learn language) and then in the evening, the children would practice making sounds with their voice so they would eventually develop the ability to have conversations with people. It is an extremely difficult task to teach deaf children the ability to use their voice. They would use various models to teach how much to

open their mouth as they allowed them to touch and feel how the throat should move. The children were asked to put their hands in the teachers' mouth to let them feel the movement of air flowing in and out of the mouth when speaking. This went on over and over repeatedly with patience and perseverance. Many months later, how they were so incredibly joyous when the children could produce the sound 'Ah' for the first time!

The boy was able to solve difficult math problems at the middle school level. Even though it was very difficult, they persistently practiced walking independently on their own. It was so moving to see them when they finally succeeded.

If these two children had never met such people like Dr. Umezu and his dedicated, brilliant colleagues at the age of seven, it is obvious that they may have spent the rest of their lives like animals. Because of those excellent educators, two children were able to develop their inner capabilities as human beings.

(Before they moved to Tokyo, their family lived in an agricultural community where everyone would leave home for work. The children were tied to a post with a rope for the duration of the workday. They were never toilet-trained.) If they were never educated and instead, neglected, it is clear to anyone what may have happened to these handicapped children.

It is absolutely true that human beings must be given a good education during childhood. Is it possible that adults may think it is fine to teach children who have normal eyesight, hearing and energy any reckless way, unlike the handicapped children. We must take whatever quality is inherently special in a child as vital and significant, and must nurture and develop that specialness without ruining it. Furthermore, it is during childhood that children must be taught uncompromisingly to have patience, perseverance and the ability to exert effort.

Even if our children are born in the midst of plenty and easy satisfaction, we must be careful to not miss the opportunity to educate. From the teacher's perspective, particularly with able children, we cannot think of doing less. We must keep in mind to endeavor to provide the best education.

At the beginning of 1992, we straightened up our act and made our resolution firmly to provide our children a wonderful education with love,

Wisdom from Dr. Suzuki

Reported by Karmalita Bawar, Richmond, Virginia

Here's a nice story from Chip Hewette, a former Dad in my piano studio. Chip's daughters studied piano with me a few years ago. He continues to perform violin in church. I understand he's incredible!

This image was taken in 1968 or thereabouts in Knoxville Tennessee. Dr. Shinichi Suzuki visited our violin program, the first in America, led by Dr. William Starr, who recently passed away at the age of 97. While there, at a recital, they set up a picture line. All the kids wanted to have a picture. Dr. Suzuki was the authority, the leader, and the inspiration for everything we did. My mother had hopes that the picture would be perfect, and she carefully combed my hair and sent me on stage. Dr. Suzuki was smiling for the camera time and time again, as kids walked up, but somehow he had seen my mother comb my hair. Just before the camera shutter clicked, he reached

over and messed up my hair, then put his hand on my shoulder. I think he was giving me a lesson. I think he might have been saying that perfection does not matter, but joy does. I hope we can all be joyful in playing together.



Chip Hewette with Dr. Suzuki, ca.1968, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Newsletter note to Teachers

Teachers please remember to forward this newsletter to all your family members of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation, and to encourage all families to become members. Family membership is \$25/year. Teachers are responsible for collecting family

dues and submitting these in a single check along with family names as they wish to appear in our Directory. Names and dues are to be sent to Treasurer Linda Nakagawa, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento CA 95831. Thanks for your continued support of the work of the Foundation.

From the Editor:

Spring is a time of hope and renewal. Of all the springtimes I've experienced in my long life, this one contains a promise of better days ahead. Here in the northeast, crocus and snowdrops are blooming, and the tips of daffodils, tulips, and hyacinths are emerging from the earth. And, miracle of miracles, the Eastern Bluebird has returned after being invisible in urban areas for over 60 years. I loved them as a child and have been missing them all this time, but this spring they are again

outside my window every day. For me, they have made this springtime truly special. Don't know about all of you, but I'm getting really tired of this pandemic. I can barely recall what life was like before it. Through it all, I continue to receive stories of success, ingenuity, and hope from our members, two of which are presented here in this issue. On behalf of all of us, I thank you. And I invite further input from teachers, parents, and students, even as the pandemic, hopefully, wanes. Happy spring!

Karen Hagberg, Editor



Kataoka Recordings of Books 1-3

Alfred Music has discontinued publication of these recordings that have been so important to Suzuki Piano Basics teachers. Our Foundation still has CD's of her recordings of Books 2 & 3, and these may be ordered from Treasurer Linda Nakagawa for \$14 apiece by sending a check to her at 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento CA 95831.

All three Books of Kataoka recordings are available on Apple Music (which you may download from iTunes), but other recordings are to be found there as well, so make sure you are getting the Kataoka ones.

Our Board is working on having these three recordings available on Spotify as well, and we will announce when this happens.

Note to Members

The Suzuki Piano Basics Board of Directors voted on March 7 to suspend General Membership Meetings until in-person workshops resume. We all hope this will happen soon. Meanwhile, stay well and contact President Renee Eckis (reneeeckis@gmail.com) with any questions or concerns.

COVID SNAPSHOTS

One Year Check In: How Remote Lessons Are Going

By Laura Kauppi, Buffalo, New York

As we near the one-year mark of virtual lessons, I have taken time to mull over the changes this last year has brought about and to go over student progress records to see what students have accomplished.

I was surprised to find that all students who took off fewer than three months during the transition did as well or better with virtual lessons.

The students who took longer than three months off (a group of about 5 students) are also progressing and doing fine with virtual lessons, but as in all things requiring muscle memory, it has taken some time to build back the coordination lost.

Students who started virtually are actually learning faster (perhaps because the parent is required to be more hands-on, literally), and many students practiced more, especially during the beginning of the pandemic when online school was shorter.

I do find that people seem to have a bias against all things remote. I've heard the same thing from kids and adults (adults saying "he didn't learn as much," when the child learned five pieces this year versus three last year! And one child said "I miss playing games because we do virtual now," when she is, in fact, at the end of Book One, when she wouldn't have had time to play games and prep for



Saint Patrick's Day virtual mini recital in Laura Kauppi's studio.

the book recital, virtual or not).

Now, this bias may originate from one of two reasons (or a mix of both). First, we all may associate remote learning with the pandemic and feel icky with anything and everything that we have associated from this time. I know I dislike a specific walking route near my house, because at

the beginning of the pandemic, I walked it many times a day. I've lost the walking route to this association.

The other reason is that during times of stress, it is human nature to place blame more quickly than normal and virtual learning is an easy target. For example, if a family practices less for a few weeks and is struggling, it's easier to say "It's these virtual lessons!" instead of taking responsibility. While placing blame may allow you

to feel better short term, it's a trap that can, long term, leave you feeling powerless and frustrated.

To summarize, I think virtual lessons have worked extremely well, even though it may be easier to blame them for small issues. There is one great advantage, however: it places the focus more on the parents and on practice during the week and does require the parents to be more hands-on. I have been very impressed with how much all students have learned during the pandemic!

COVID SNAPSHOTS (cont'd)

Holiday Get-Together

By Lydia Kurniawan, age 8, student of Carole Mayers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

In December, me, my sister, Elisa, and my friends, Neela, River, Rishi and Ms. Carole, had a meet-up. My teacher, Ms. Carole, called it a holiday get-together. It was fun. It was also pandemic time, so we had to wear masks inside the house. Inside the house, I played my recital piece, Clementi, Allegro, which everyone liked. Neela played "A Short Story" and Rishi played a bit of his new piece. Outside, we played tag and kickball. Ms. Carole brought us

nutcrackers and holiday pencils, which were the presents. We all sat by the fire while the parents were talking. Me and my family stayed for a while before we went home. I had a fun time with my friends at our December meet-up.



Carole Mayers with students at Holiday Get-Together, December, 2021. Photo by J. Ker

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

July 19-23, 2021

St. Louis, MO

St. Louis Suzuki Piano Teachers' Association

Piano Basics Workshop

With Rae Kate Shen and Karmalita Bawar

Contact Patty Eversole (314) 496-3520

paeversole@yahoo.com

<http://stlsuzukipiano.tripod.com>

NOTE: The re-scheduled Tokyo Olympics and uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 virus will prevent the Japanese teachers from coming to the United States this summer. We will hope that they will be able to return for workshops in February 2022. Updates will follow.

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).
