

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*

*How to Capture
the Hearts of Children*

(Part 2a of 3)

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano
Newsletter Vol. 13 No. 9, March 14, 2004
from a Lecture delivered at the
39th Chubu Japan Medical Congress of
Pediatrics, Matsumoto, August 24, 2003
(4 months before Sensei's death in January,
2004) Translated by Chisa Aoki and Teri
Paradero, Edited by Karen Hagberg

***Piano Basics
Foundation News***

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Dr. Suzuki's music education is very different from the traditional way of teaching music. The rationale behind this difference is what I had described to you earlier. It is absolutely different from every aspect of traditional music education. Furthermore, education during early childhood is the most important, and this is something that cannot be accomplished unless you start educating children when they are young. Whatever we learn as young children determines how we will continue to live our entire lives. This is the method of education that stresses the importance of learning in early childhood.

I believe this is the truth. Just as I had mentioned earlier, English and German pronunciation is absolutely different when you have been speaking the language since childhood. Why would this be so? As little children, we human beings are made so very delicate, but at the same time we can be awesomely magnificent.

Just recently while in America, I met a college student at a Japanese restaurant who was working there part-time. I was listening to him, impressed by his knowledge of the English language. The American teachers asked him how many years he'd been in America. He replied, "Five years." I was thinking to myself that in five years, one would be able to learn quite a bit. However, his pronunciation made the three American piano teachers doubt that his high level of proficiency could be learned in just five years. Then he revealed that he had lived in England when he was in early grade school. When I heard this, I did detect that he spoke with a somewhat British accent. I don't speak English that well so I didn't totally understand where the conversation went from there, but his fluency prompted the three teachers, especially one of them who also had a doctorate in education, to ask him questions with earnest curiosity.

This is the reason why childhood is so wonderful. Children promptly absorb everything presented to them. Whatever is absorbed by a human being during childhood, is stored, in its entirety, deep within our minds. What has been absorbed can be retrieved and accessed

when the need arises and then stored away again when the need is gone.

There was a time when we traveled to America and our American hosts arranged for us to stay with a third generation Japanese family. The grandfather who was originally from Yamaguchi Prefecture in Japan had immigrated to America. Being third generation, they admitted that they did not speak Japanese. One morning, the family had overslept a bit. When the husband found Ogiwara Sensei in the kitchen preparing breakfast, he told her, "Don't worry, I can do this myself," in Japanese.

This took her by surprise and she said, "I thought you couldn't speak Japanese...what happened?" He was even more dumbfounded that his Japanese came out so fluently and naturally. Another Japanese teacher, a Hiroshima resident who was sitting in the kitchen at the time, observed that not only did he speak Japanese, it was in the dialect from the Yamaguchi district. Whatever human beings absorb early in life truly stays with us for the rest of our lives, until we die. Dr. Suzuki became keenly aware of this fact and incorporated it into music education.

It is actually truly easy to capture the hearts of children. All you have to do is not treat them like children. Children hate to be treated like little children. Adults, unaware of this, inevitably end up treating children like children. That is why children don't listen to us. I learned

this from Dr. Suzuki. Before a lesson begins, the student and teacher face each other and bow. Often a parent will insist that their child say, "Please help me," as they are bowing. Dr. Suzuki grew to intensely hate this convention. Help is not a one-way street; teachers receive help too. The bow must be a respectful, mutual request, between two human beings, to help one another. Dr. Suzuki

taught this to me in the beginning. Now, I absolutely agree with him.

There are times when, lesson after lesson, I do not mention it, and then there are times when I do mention it, but always during my teaching I am thoroughly cognizant of this mutual help and learning. When you respectfully recognize children as individual human beings, oddly enough they begin to listen to everything you say.

Message from Keiko Kawamura Sensei

From Matsumoto, 1/17/22

Translated by Ken Matsuda

Dear Suzuki Piano Basics Friends,

Happy New Year! I wish you a year that brings endless hopes and dreams. I pray for your health more than anything.

It has already been two years since COVID-19 was discovered. It was February of 2020 when I visited the States the last time. Before then, I used to step on American soil twice every year. However, I haven't been able to come to the States even once since early 2020. It is a very sad thing. At first, we were frightened since we didn't know much about what kind of virus COVID-19 was. We experienced lock-down. We were not able to see people, let alone hug or eat meals with family members or those who were not living in the same house as ourselves. Now, there is the Omicron variant, and in Japan we are experiencing a steep rise in the number of carriers this month. We are not

sure where this situation will bring us in the future.

In Matsumoto for the past two years, most of the time, we were able to do lessons in person. According to the public health situation at the time, student concerts were approached with a case-by-case basis. Some concerts were canceled and others were performed with an adjusted number of audience to 20% of house capacity for the concerts. It is hard work to do a concert under those circumstances, but students looked forward to performing.

In these two years, we have gotten used to protocols such as wearing masks, washing hands, disinfecting, and maintaining social distance. I can only pray for researchers of pharmaceutical companies that they find a wonder drug.

Not everything was bad, though. Japan is not a huge country, but it still takes time and money to attend meetings for teachers who

live in faraway places. Online meetings helped everyone save time and money



Sacramento 10-Piano Concert, August 16, 2014. Photo by Karen Hagberg.

tremendously. Teachers and students recalled the value of in-person lessons.

Sudden suspension of everyday routine activities was inconvenient, but it gave us wisdom and made us appreciate others. I suppose there will always be people who only care for themselves. But, we who live with music, especially in a time like now, we should be thoughtful of others and be creative in our everyday life to enjoy it. Moreover, let us keep our hopes high for the future with the assurance that we, colleagues of Suzuki Piano Basics, always have each other, and everyone is doing their best.

I pray for the health of you and your families. I look forward to seeing you all someday.

From the Editor:

Who is reading this? In our last newsletter I sent out a challenge to all members which read:

“I invite you, until workshops start up again, to use this newsletter as a forum for communication with each other. What are your questions? What are your solutions? What pearls of wisdom have you gleaned from your students or from your parents? What creative opportunities are you giving your students amid Covid restrictions? What would you like to share with teachers you only see at workshops and whom you are missing?

So here’s a CHALLENGE: I would like to hear from EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU to send me a bit of news from your neck of the woods. It may be as short as a sentence or

one photograph (with a caption). Let’s have the next newsletter filled with shares from ALL OUR MEMBERS!!

(Please send submissions to me at khagberg1943@gmail.com BY DECEMBER 15, and THANK YOU!!”

I received only one response, from Carol Novak in Omaha, Nebraska whose submission is printed below. It’s nice to hear from her in this time when we have been unable to meet in person, don’t we think? We would like to hear from YOU TOO!! The above challenge still stands.

Happy New Year 2022!

Karen Hagberg, editor

KLL

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS: 2022 DIRECTORY

Included in this mailing is our 2022 Directory that we are sending out for additions/corrections before your hard copy is printed. Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation members will soon receive a hard copy of the 2022 Directory in the mail. You will also receive an email copy for distribution to family members who may want it.

If your name, or the name of your family, does not appear in the Directory and you believe that you have renewed your membership, please contact Treasurer Linda Nakagawa at nakagawalinda@gmail.com at your earliest convenience and renew with the forms provided. This will be the last mailing you will receive from Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation if you are not listed in the Directory. We truly hate to see you go, however, and hope that your omission is simply an oversight.

Onward to 2022!!

kLLm

Greetings from Nebraska

From Carol Novak

I have been so thankful that many of us were able to gather and study with the Sensei in February 2020. At that time we had no idea how our lives and our teaching would be changing in so many ways!

I started teaching my lessons online on March 17, 2020. All of my students and their families were so understanding and faithful, continuing lessons during the entire time. I learned a few things about teaching and hopefully improved some of my techniques while doing it virtually. For example, how to teach overlapped pedal when you can't see the student's foot! After our family was fully vaccinated (in mid-April 2021), I resumed lessons in my studio asking everyone to wear masks, especially if the student is not fully vaccinated. We've had a few recitals where we are socially distanced and wearing masks. I think we appreciate being together, even if it is with some restrictions.

One of the advantages of virtual lessons is that I can be anywhere (that has internet) and teach my students. In the fall of 2020,

my husband, daughter, and I drove to New Hampshire and stayed with a daughter and son-in-law for two weeks. While we were visiting them, Jon and I both taught our students who were here in Omaha. I was able to teach while seated at my old 1920 Steinway grand piano that we brought to Tara's house for her 40th birthday. Fortunately, there is a Steinway specialist in the area who loves giving the old piano some special care. It is playing and sounding better than ever!



Carol Novak with student Nolan Dunlop at Omaha Music Teachers Association Young Artist Competition, February 2021.

I was especially excited about our family's Thanksgiving dinner this year. It would have been our first time hosting an indoor dinner since March 15, 2020. But on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, our 11-year-old grandson Sam tested positive for Covid, and our family creatively had to share our food without being together. Since our entire family is now fully vaccinated (many with booster shots), we are hoping to celebrate Christmas together.

May you have a Happy Christmas and a New Year filled with good health and hope!

In Memoriam Barbara Meixner (1942-2021)

Barbara was a long-time member and supporter of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation. Her full obituary may be found on Google: Barbara Meixner Obituary. Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation gratefully acknowledges the gift of \$140.00 in her memory generously donated by Gloria Elliott.

Please Try Hard

By Karen Hagberg

From Matsumoto News, Vol.3, no.2, September 1990

In Japan, whenever someone is facing a difficult challenge such as a musical performance, for example, people do not encourage them by saying "Good luck," as we in the West would say. Instead, they say, "Ganbatte," which means essentially, "Try hard," or "Do your best." They usually add the word "kudasai," which means "Please."

"Ganbatte," which means ... "Try hard," or "Do your best." ... "kudasai," which means "Please."

I have been fascinated with this shift of emphasis in this simple message of support and encouragement, because I have come to realize that it embodies an attitude in Japan which, possibly above all other things, has helped me, personally, to accomplish things here I could not have accomplished in any other place; and if people in other parts of the world could adopt this attitude in challenging situations I think that most of our crippling fear of failure could be managed, and that our children could more easily and happily realize their potential and goals in all situations.

What is meant by "Good luck?" It has all sorts of implications that I realize have weighed heavily on me in the past. It implies that one is about to embark on a task whose outcome is at the mercy of outside forces. If there is, indeed, good luck at one's side, there will be success. If, on the other hand, bad luck intervenes, the result could be miserable failure. It is as if, in the endeavors most

What is meant by "Good luck?"... The phrase makes us focus on the outcome itself: good luck means we win; bad luck means we lose.

important to us, we are at the mercy of a roll of the dice, or the cutting of a deck of cards. The phrase makes us focus on the outcome itself: good luck means we win; bad luck means we lose. We are stepping into a situation beyond our control, and we cannot know the outcome beforehand. For anyone, the unknown is always a frightening thing.

We go further with this idea, describing someone in a difficult situation as "down on their luck," a victim of circumstance. This psychology of victimization has plagued recent generations of Americans in

countless damaging ways. In music, the people with the good luck are “talented,” and those without it are destined to the ranks of the second-rate, no matter what we do or how much we may want success. Lately, I hear the words *Good Luck* not only as meaningless, but even as negative. After all, we only say it to someone who *needs* it—to someone who somehow cannot succeed without it. I hear “Good luck (you’ll *need* it)” as if there is real doubt in the speaker’s mind concerning my ability to face this challenge at all. I do not imagine anyone saying “Good luck” to Alicia DeLarocha before she walks out on stage. It is a phrase reserved for the “inferior” among us, not for those who we trust will do well. It always reminds me of my inferiority in the eyes of others, the absolute reverse of the message the well-intended speaker is hoping to convey.

The message in Japanese is completely different: “Please try hard.” This message focuses on the process of meeting a challenge, and not on its outcome. It encourages the person facing the challenge not to falter or give up, but to persist through difficulty, to do their best, to overcome weakness, to meet the challenge head-on. The *trying* itself is the value. After all, trying as hard as one can is *all* one can do, and we all somehow know that *not* trying hard devalues us personally, demoralizes us. Everybody wants to be in a constant state of trying as hard as we can because this, very simply, feels better. It is an enormous help to have those around us encouraging us, reminding us, to keep trying.

The addition of the word *Please* adds another dimension to the statement. We say “please” when we want someone to do something *for* us. When someone around us is trying hard, this person becomes an inspiration to everyone else. People are themselves encouraged by the person who, despite handicaps or shortcomings, makes great effort to achieve a goal. Trying hard is infectious. *Please try hard* means that we are asking for our own sakes, and for the sake of everyone else, that someone not give up or succumb to discouragement. It says, “If you try hard, we are all elevated as human beings.” In this sense, one’s own personal effort is raised in importance. Others, after all, are depending on our effort to muster the strength necessary to apply their own effort. “Please, for the rest of us, try as hard as you possibly can.” This is a plea which is hard to ignore.

It becomes a responsibility, but one which is easily carried out, for nobody expects us to do any more than is possible, but simply by trying to be an inspiration to others.

Trying hard is a cohesive force in the lives of people, whereas the concept of good luck can be fairly divisive. We sense that there is a limited amount of good luck in the world, and therefore we tend not to wish it for everyone else (after all, there may be none left over for ourselves). Rather, we reserve this wish for family or close friends, and we tend to hope that bad luck will be visited upon the “others.” When these others have lots of good luck, we tend to be threatened or diminished by it. On the other hand, nobody is diminished when someone tries hard—there is an unlimited amount of human effort to go around—we can all have it. Those with the most handicaps have the potential for becoming the highest inspiration. They are the heroes in our lives. Little inspiration, by comparison, is had from those who appear to have achieved their goals easily.

The essence of this Japanese attitude was captured in a story I recently read in the monthly *Nihongo Journal*. It was a description of the art of making fireworks, an art form that requires great effort on the part of the artists, and that is then seen in only a brief instant. A fireworks competition was held in Japan, and one of the entrants spent a year ahead of time painstakingly applying gunpowder to vegetable seeds, then drying them in the sun in order to create a firework that would portray a butterfly in the sky. The process of working with gunpowder was dangerous, and there was always the risk of having rain ruin the entire project.

The artist in the story failed to win a prize despite his great effort. Yet, on the day after the contest the article focused on this artist, working on his vegetable seeds, applying gunpowder to them, beginning his long process over again for next year’s competition. The story ends with, “Bent over his work the artist’s appearance was moving indeed.”

I could not help but think that the same story from an American’s point of view would have featured the winners and would probably have overlooked the value of the person who failed to win a prize, the person whose efforts feel universally uplifting.

Teachers are in the business of inspiring students. If there is only winning and losing, good luck and bad, talent and the lack of it, most students will fail or quit or learn to approach their work with ambivalence. If challenged to inspire others with their best effort however, all students can experience what it means to succeed.



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.

Over thirty 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.

***Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation
Treasurer's Report
January 1 - December 31, 2021***

Starting Balance:	\$18,283.26
Income:	+\$ 6,265.12
Expenses:	<u>-\$4,311.07</u>
Ending Balance:	\$20,237.31

Expenses

Legal/Accounting	\$405.00
Bank Fees	\$10.00
Supplies	

Taxes/License	\$54.00
Compensations	<u>\$3,500.00</u>
Total	\$4,311.07

Income

Donations	\$555.0
Dues	\$4,190.00
Postage	\$205.84
Printing	\$0.00
Refund	\$0.00

Donations	\$555.0
Materials	\$755.12
Memorial	\$330.00
Bert Mayers Memorial	\$85.00
<u>Foundation Scholarship</u>	<u>\$350.00</u>
Total	\$6,265.12

Current Fund Balances

General:	\$6,458.35
Donations:	\$6,326.41
Kataoka Memorial	\$4,337.55
General Scholarship	\$2,057.50
<u>Bert Mayers Scholarship</u>	<u>\$1,057.50</u>
Total:	\$20,237.31

***Respectfully submitted by Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer
Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation***