

PTNA News Letter 2017

Ceremony in 1989 where 400 people played 111 grand pianos together. PTNA also gave the Honorary Award to Tsutomu Hata, the former Prime Minister of Japan and the previous president of PTNA until 2009, for his longtime dedication to PTNA. Furthermore, MTNA (Dr. Gary Ingle, the Executive Director and CEO of the Music Teachers' Association of Japan) gave the International Proclamation, which recognizes PTNA for its 50 years of distinguished leadership and exemplary commitment to music and music teaching.

In the evening, PTNA's 50th anniversary concert was held in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space Concert Hall. Prior to the performances, a short film was displayed to introduce the history of PTNA. Pianists including past Grand Prize winners performed duos and concerti with the PTNA Special Orchestra for 50th Anniversary under the baton of maestro Chikara Iwamura. The concert concluded by singing a song, "Aete Yokattane (So Happy to See You)". All the performers and audience members stood up and sang together. This song, composed by Takashi Obara for the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake, has been sung at the PTNA STEP events across Japan throughout the year 2016.

40 Years of the PTNA Piano Competition-Aiming Higher

-Highest Number of Participants! Shu Katayama Gets Grand Prize



The PTNA Piano Competition has been growing steadily since its establishment in 1977, and this year it had the highest number of participants, with 45,935 in total. The Grand Prize was given to Shu Katayama. He performed Ravel's piano concerto with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra at the final round on August 21st. He was also awarded the audience prize.

Before the awards ceremony on the 22nd, a special master class was held for the finalists and their parents. Dr. Shinichi Furuya talked about the brain and physical training for pianists.

After the ceremony, all the prize winners' performances were uploaded on the PTNA Piano Youtube Channel. As a result, the number of viewers had risen to 2.3 million in August, which hit the highest record since its establishment.

This year, PTNA called for essays that look back on memories during the competition. 53 people applied, and Sota Akiike (8) won the highest prize. He had broken his finger before the competition started, which motivated him to make every effort to reach his best. Among the prize winners, 8 were under teens and 3 were in their 50s.

-Continuous Efforts Make One-self Steadily Improve

Among all the participants, 3,687 have repeatedly participated in the last 5 years in a row, and over 60% of them proceeded to the 2nd stage this year. This rate is nearly 10% higher than

those who participated the last 2 years in a row. It might mean that continuous challenges are well rewarded. One of them, Marie Yamaashi, has taken part in the PTNA Piano Competition for 27 years in a row! She has steadily participated from grade

A2 up to F, 2 years for every grade so as to accomplish her learning at every stage. Those continuous experiences later helped her control her nerve on stage. She still continues taking part in the competition (Grandmuse amateur division).

20 Years of the PTNA Piano STEP-Creating New Trends

-Taking Small Steps For Bigger Goals

This year the number of PTNA Piano STEP venues has reached 580. It has been widely used by various people for various purposes; for instance, as rehearsals of competitions, auditions, music college examinations, concerts, etc. Especially at this time of the year, a large numbers of students are preparing for the entrance exams scheduled early next year. Nanako Onobe, a freshman of Tokyo Music College, makes it a habit to play several smaller stages (STEP) before going on to bigger stages (exams, competitions). Various opinions from advisors enable her to bring personality to her performances, but not to fall into self-satisfaction.

STEP is categorized into the 23 grades STEP (required repertoires, pass/fail system) and the Free STEP. An increasing number of participants prefer to choose their own repertoires, genres, instruments, and consequently the latter has reached 47.1% this year.

Awarding Continuous Learning. 21 People Reached 100!

PTNA awards those who make continuous learning and playing on stage since 2000. In 2017, a total of 7,531 people were awarded for their achievements. 21 of them have already experienced over 100 stage performances. According to the recent inquiries given to the STEP participants, 44% of the GrandMuse participants (amateurs) have played more than 4 times on stage in a year. It seems that learning musical

instruments and playing them in public has become one of their lifelong activities.

-Getting On Stage As A Group

The PTNA Piano STEP allows not only individuals but also groups to apply. In 2017, there is a chorus group that was awarded 10 times for their achievements in STEP. They are amateur musicians who like to sing their favorite songs, but several years ago, they welcomed a professional singing teacher and took on a new challenge to participate in STEP. These days they enjoy singing on stage in big halls.

-STEP Stations Also Invigorate Less Populated Cities and Towns

The STEP Stations have been spread out across the nation, and it has reached 474. It is natural that the bigger the population is, the more number of stations exists. The biggest city in regards to size and population is Yokohama, and there exist 15 stations at the moment. Among the top 100 biggest cities in Japan, only 4 have no STEP stations. Then what about the less populated cities? The Tanegashima Station exists on the tiny island called Tanegashima, a part of Kagoshima Prefecture, where only 3,500 people reside. Owing to the effort and enthusiasm of the station staff and students, STEP has already held 10 events and the latest one gathered 111 participants.

Every station has its own uniqueness. To symbolize those local identities, they have their own icons (designed by the PTNA head office) since 2014. Currently 204 icons are available.

10 years of PTNA Piano Seminars

-Seminars Nationwide, Held By Committees, Branches, Stations

PTNA has been providing piano seminars at its branch offices and satel-



Scenes from the 50th Teachers' Seminar; The welcome speech by the chairperson, Katsuko Kaneko; The panel discussion; and the dialogue with a renowned pianist, Kei Ito.

lite stations throughout the country since 2007. Over the last 10 years, the number of reports submitted by participants exceeded 100,000. There have been various topics offered at seminars. One of the newest one is tuning. E-learning service is also available. Currently it offers 144 programs, that include teaching seminars, teaching demonstration sessions, special intensive seminars, etc. and all of these programs can be watched on smartphone tablets.

-The PTNA Piano Teachers' Seminar Reached Vol.50!

The PTNA Piano Teachers' Seminar Vol.50 and PTNA Piano Teachers' License Demonstration Session were held on April 22nd -23rd in Tokyo, consisting of 30 lecturers and 600 audience members.

The 1st chapter was the lectures by 7 renowned piano teachers (Kyoko Maruyama / Miki Narai / Miki Shigeno / Yoriko Oshiro / Naomi Ishii / Kunio & Keiko Sasaki). Kyoko Maruyama introduced her recent published book. She has been researching piano study materials across the world for over 30 years, and categorized them in regards to types, areas of study, and effective ways of learning, in order to help piano teachers to consider how they could evaluate and use them in their lessons.

Kunio & Keiko Sasaki featured Czerny's 30 Etudes by using an arranged score for duos. This score keeps the

original pieces as the primo part, and adds their accompaniment as the second part. When harmonies are added, one may increase their imagination and consider the sonority carefully, said Sasaki.

The 2nd chapter was a lecture and a panel discussion about the possibilities of music colleges, inviting Takao Ouchi (author) as a lecturer.

The 3rd chapter was a dialogue with Kei Ito, a renowned pianist and professor of the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, Toho Gakuen School of Music (interviewer : Arisa Iida, music writer). When she was a child, her parents always taught her the importance of taking proper processes, and never blamed her for the results. Later she studied with Prof.Hans Leygraf in Salzburg, and learned the importance of exploration of the essence of music. Today, she always keeps in mind that she face music as well as individual students sincerely.

PTNA Grand Prize 2017 Shu Katayama



Born in Hokkaido, Shu Katayama began to play piano at the age of 7. Shu is in his junior year at the Tokyo College of Music (Piano Performance Course "Excellence"), and currently studies under Mari Takeda, Seizo Azuma, and Nobuyuki Hirose.

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Reshape & Renew Music Life Cycles Review Mindsets, Skills, and Environment



Taking the writing exam of the PTNA Teachers' License Exam (above). For preparation of these exams, study sessions have been held voluntarily in several cities (right, above). There are always enthusiasm and smiles at studio visiting tours (right, middle). Japan Bach Music Concours is one of the PTNA affiliated competitions.



learning are the most important things, regardless of age or career status.

-Review & Update Studio Management Skill

On June 6th, a workshop seminar about piano studio management was held in partnership with Ongaku-no-tomo publishing company and the PTNA headquarters, having Takao Ouchi as the lecturer. Ouchi is an author and a former employee of a bank. His workshop encouraged piano teachers to review their studio management skills and reconsider their strong points.

Show Various Career Paths to Young Teachers

-Events and Articles Introducing Young Teachers

PTNA held an event on September 19th for young members up to 35 years old.



26 members attended and talked about their career and life plans, ideas for promotion and management of piano studios, etc. A participant was greatly encouraged to know colleagues from the same generation.

In autumn, a series of articles started to introduce young teachers. The 1st issue featured Haruka Shinoda, who has started to teach piano after graduation from Kunitachi Music College two years ago. She had to shift her mindset, which she had not expected before.

“I realize that youth is not an advantage when I teach piano to someone who is much older than me. I had to face this fact, and began to consider how I should dress and what I should say in order to gain trust from my students. Now I feel that I am not ‘teaching’, rather, I try to increase the number of people who enjoy music and share the pleasant moments with them.”

Promoting Recurrent Study for Piano Teachers

-The Teachers' License Exam Makes Teachers Go Back to Stage and Study

The PTNA Teachers' License, previously called the PTNA Piano Teachers' Exam, had 548 examinees this year. It has been executed since the spring of 2015, and an increasing number of teachers has taken part in it. Among the 1,261 examinees in the last 3 years, about two-thirds of them are in their 40s -50s. The number of those in their 20s is still small (72 examinees in 2017), though it has been steadily increasing. This license program is composed of 4 categories (teaching demonstration, performance exam, writing (theory)exam, essay), and examinees can apply one by one. Those who apply for the teaching demonstration and the writing exam have increased by 2.5 times and twice respectively since 2015.

For the preparation of the writing exam, study sessions have been held voluntarily in several cities. For

the performance exam, 64% of the 149 successful examinees took part in the STEP (as of November 2017) as rehearsal. Madoka Ohno, one of the examinees, took part in the STEP several times before the performance exam. After listening to the recordings, she found several issues to be solved which she had not been aware of before. She regards that the stage performance is truly her own ability as it reveals everything. It seems that teachers become more introspective and motivated to improve themselves.

-Lesson Observation Program

The PTNA Lesson Observation Program offers opportunities for piano teachers to visit studios and see lessons of senior teachers. In 2017, 484 participants visited 49 studios in total. 172 applied for this program for the first time. Among them, there were student members who want to be piano teachers after graduation from college. There were even experienced teachers who already served as competition adjudicators or representatives of STEP Stations. Curiosity and motivation for

-Experiencing 'The Dual Career' As An Intern

PTNA called for interns for the following three programs; A) administration and publicity assistants of the PTNA Piano Competition, B) 1 day internship program, C) hands-on learning program as a dual-career staff member.

Dual career staff members are employees who are able to work at the PTNA headquarters 3 days a week, and 2-3 days as piano teachers. One of the current staff members, Moe Toyota, has been working for a year at To-on Kikaku. She is getting efficient day by day at work, and at the same time, she teaches more than 20 students at her piano studio. She believes that working as a dual career staff member could uplift herself in various ways as a member of society. Another member, Yuriko Matsumoto, learns the basics and ethics of working. She is also impressed with teachers' passions and professional mindsets, which accelerates her sense of independence and responsibility.

The Affiliated Competitions Envision Various Goals

The PTNA Piano Affiliated Competition Network welcomes 6 new competitions this year. These are not only for piano, but also for strings,

brass, woodwinds, voice, chamber music, etc., and some are targeted to popular music lovers. 11,147 people have participated in 2017, increase of 144.6% over last year.

This network has been established and widened since 2010. The number of affiliated competitions has become 26, and the venues has reached 474 in total. Their characteristics and purposes vary. The Burgmüller Competition is frequently used as the first step toward competition experience, while the Sonata Competition is regarded as to learning the sonata form in classical period in depth.

Do Family Members Renew Learning Environment?

The PTNA Family membership started a year ago, and over 450 people have joined since then (a total of 1,701 family members as of Dec.2017). Some statistics of the PTNA piano competition and the PTNA STEP show that the number of stage performances by the participants whose parents are family members are twice as much as that of non-members.

Kanae Morita, a family member with two kids, is pleased to see them playing piano with joy and excitement as they get involved in competitions

and the STEP. Now she enjoys reading the quarterly journals 'OUR MUSIC', especially the commentaries of competition repertoires including living Japanese composers' messages and ideas, and helps children understand them. After the competition, she discovered her children's names on the journal's special edition, and that brought a sense of accomplishment to the whole family.

At the piano studio of Masayo Sato, almost all the students are enrolled in PTNA. She understands the importance of information (PTNA website, journals, etc.) that expands one's perspective and insight on music. "I want my students to know how the music world changes, not just come to the studio and play. Family support is essential for motivating children to practice and play on stage. Eventually, they love piano much more and are encouraged to improve their performances."



PTNA began to publish a journal "Family Press" this year. Topics include family ensemble, an article about the brain function during the piano performance.

Multiple Career Paths To Become A Professional Piano Teacher

Ayumi Iguchi (the representative of Oto-no-Hibiki Kanazawa Station) experienced studying and teaching at the same time. She started teaching piano when she was a student of a graduate college. At first, she opened her website, distributed leaflets of her piano studio, and performed at kids'/ family concerts at local cafes and public squares. In the following year, she moved back to her hometown, and went to the college once a week from Kanazawa to Aichi. "There was a lot of awareness and discovery through these studying-teaching experiences", says Iguchi. It encouraged her to realize the necessity of time management. And her teaching

experiences enabled her to reexamine how to learn effectively at piano lessons.

Junko Emoto (the representative of Matsudo-Koalano-Mori Station) began teaching when she was a senior in music college, at a local music shop first and at home after marriage. After giving birth at the age of 28, it became difficult for her to take students in the evenings. The number of students decreased a little, but on the positive side, she obtained time for local activities and then established a PTNA Piano Station in her town. 2 years later, she decided to study further at a graduate college, where she took lessons and had respectful friends. Now she is teaching temporarily at the Senzoku Gakuen College of Music in the mornings. She keeps working while raising two children.