

♩

A comparison of Suzuki piano recordings

This is part two of Jenny Macmillan's article comparing piano recordings. For part one, please see the 2011 winter edition of this journal.

	Kataoka	Aide	Lloyd-Watts	Azuma
Tone quality	Harsh, forced RH.	Pleasant tone.	Shallow tone, especially in bk 2.	Excellent tone.
Dynamics	Good; nice echoes, even when not written in the score.	No echoes or dynamic contrasts until near end of book 2.	Almost no echoes or dynamic contrasts.	Narrow dynamic range, contrasts not clear; no unwritten echoes.
Phrasing	Phrases weakly shaped. Monotonous repeated notes in Allegretto 2.	Gently shaped phrases. Sensitive ends of phrases in book 2. Repeated notes lack variety in Allegretto 2.	Good phrasing. No variety in tone of repeated notes in Allegretto 2.	Gently shaped phrases. Bridge passages in Beethoven 1st and 2nd movements lack flexibility.
Balance between hands	Mostly good. Well-blended LH broken chords. Happy Farmer: RH accompaniment too strong.	Accompaniment clearly audible – useful for studying LH. Sometimes a little too strong, eg Short Story, Happy Farmer.	Good.	Excellent.
Legato between repeated notes	Ranging from fairly good to very good.	Good but not excellent.	Very poor in book 1, poor in book 2.	Excellent.
Speeds	Mostly good, but Ecosaise too slow and Twinkle Variations and Minuet 2 rather fast.	Mostly good if on the fast side, but some, especially early book 2, too fast, including Twinkle Variations, Christmas Day Secrets, Short Story and Minuet 2.	Mostly good if on the slow side, but some too slow, eg Twinkle Variations, Allegretto 1, Allegro and Ecosaise.	Lively, energetic. Speeds mostly excellent, but Clair de Lune and Minuet 2 too fast.
Musical endings to pieces	Slight slowing down at ends of pieces.	Slight slowing down at ends of pieces in bk 1. Good variety of <i>ritardandi</i> in bk 2.	Abrupt endings to pieces in book 1. Only slight <i>ritardandi</i> in bk 2.	Excellent musical endings.

	Kataoka	Aide	Lloyd-Watts	Azuma
Rhythm	Tendency to play almost 16th-dotted 8th instead of two equal 8th notes in Allegro, all Bach Minuets and Arietta. Happy Farmer: LH first quaver too long. Beethoven 1st movement: grace notes too loud.	Accurate. Beethoven 1st movement: acciaccatura played before beat instead of on beat.	Accurate. Beethoven 1st movement: acciaccatura played before beat instead of on beat.	Very accurate, rhythmical playing.
Articulation	Christmas Day Secrets: RH first quaver played staccato instead of given its full length. Beethoven 1st movement: slurs not articulated.	Christmas Day Secrets: RH bar 4 last note not played staccato. Inventive articulation in Bach and Mozart Minuets – inappropriate here?	Short Story: RH 3rds not played staccato.	Short Story: RH 3rds not played staccato. Beethoven 1st movement slurs not articulated.
Rests	Rests omitted in Honeybee, Clair de Lune, Cradle Song and Melody. Previous note held too long in Long Long Ago, Minuet 1 and Beethoven 2nd movement. Incorrect final bar in Happy Farmer.	Most rests accurate but previous note held slightly too long in Honeybee, G minor Minuet 1 and Cradle Song.	Rests reasonably accurate but previous note held too long in Clair de Lune, Minuet 1 and G minor Minuet 1. Inaccurate rests in final bar of Long Long Ago, Happy Farmer and Melody.	Rests excellent except in Minuet 1 in which LH crotchets before rests are held too long.
Twinkle variations	RH fast and light with LH accompaniment. Variations 1–3: all about the same speed but too fast at MM82; Variation 2: no dynamic contrast; Twinkle theme: even faster at MM86 but good legato between repeated notes.	RH only. Generally too fast, but speed varies for each variation – Variation 1: MM80; Variation 2: MM72, some dynamic contrast; Variation 3: MM76; Twinkle theme: much too fast at MM92, fairly good legato between repeated notes.	RH and LH two octaves apart. Variations 1–3: slow and ponderous at MM66; Variation 2: no dynamic contrast; Twinkle theme: too fast at MM88, no legato between repeated notes.	All variations in RH, then all in LH. Each variation is too fast and at a different speed (c84, 80, 88) but Theme is beautifully legato at an excellent speed of 72; Variation 2: no dynamic contrast p-f-p.

	Kataoka	Aide	Lloyd-Watts	Azuma
Note accuracy	Good.	Good.	Clair de Lune: two incorrect LH notes.	Good.
Recording quality	Good.	Good. Very clear – every note audible.	Good.	Good, though piano action is just audible.
Summary of good points	Good dynamics; good balance between hands; good legato between repeated notes; mostly good speeds.	Good tone quality; sensitive phrasing; musical endings; mostly good speeds if on the fast side; clear recording quality.	Good phrasing; good balance between hands; mostly good speeds if on the slow side.	Excellent tone; excellent balance between hands, excellent legato between repeated notes; excellent musical endings; accurate, rhythmical, lively, energetic playing.
Summary of bad points	Harsh, forced tone; weakly shaped phrases; disturbing uneven quaver rhythm in places; many rests omitted or inaccurate.	No dynamic contrasts within pieces; some accompaniments quite strong; some pieces too fast, especially at beginning of book 2; inappropriate articulation in Bach and Mozart.	Shallow tone, especially in book 2; little dynamic contrast; very poor legato between repeated notes; some pieces too slow; abrupt endings; rests not always accurate; incorrect LH notes in Clair de Lune.	Dynamic range could be wider and dynamic contrasts clearer; a few pieces too fast; gaps between pieces too long, especially between Beethoven 1st and 2nd movements.

Jenny Macmillan has a thriving teaching practice in Cambridge, UK. She is an ESA teacher trainer. For more information about *Successful Practising: A handbook for pupils, parents and music teachers*, to read sample pages and to order a copy, visit www.jennymacmillan.co.uk.

ADJUSTABLE PIANO FOOTSTOOL



From **\$60.00** each
+ postage and handling

Five adjustable sizes.
Painted black or natural

Please contact:

Jayden Goldsack
Ph: (07) 8493444
sgold49@xtra.co.nz