

Story 1303 (1988 Tape 8)

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How to Identify a Laz¹ Pianist

There once was a Laz who went to America, where he soon began taking piano lessons. After several years of study he became a successful pianist. In fact, he earned a reputation not only in America but also throughout the entire world as a highly accomplished pianist. He learned to speak English, and he worked so hard to achieve perfect pronunciation that after a while he did not have the slightest trace of a Laz accent. In a final effort to remove all evidence that he was of Laz origin, he had surgery done on his nose to take away its Laz shape.

One night after he had changed in these ways he was to perform at a large concert hall. When he walked across the stage to the piano, everyone applauded, for he was now one of the world's best pianists. After he had finished playing the

¹The Laz people constitute one of the larger ethnic minorities in Turkey. Their exact origins are not definitely known. The largest concentrations of Lazes are in extreme northeastern Turkey along the Black Sea coast. Reputedly stupid, they are made fun of in numerous folk anecdotes about fools. The frequent success of Lazes who move to Istanbul belies the folk image.

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piano, there was even greater applause. As the applause was subsiding, a man in the audience stood up and shouted, "Bravo, Laz!"

Although the Laz was gratified by all of the applause, he could not understand how that one member of the audience knew that he was Laz. Therefore as the other people were leaving the hall, he called to that man. When the man went up to the stage, the Laz asked him, "How did you know that I was Laz? I learned to play the piano--something that very few Lazes have ever done. I learned to speak flawless English And I even had surgery done on my nose to remove the Laz appearance that it might have. How did you know that I was a Laz?"

The man answered, "Every other pianist sits down on the piano bench and then moves the bench slightly, one way or another, to place it correctly for himself. But a Laz sits down and then pushes or pulls the piano itself into its proper position."