

From the Pan Pacific Suzuki Association:

Response to Sydney Morning Herald

To the Editor

The Suzuki Associations across Australia would like to have it on record that we find the allegations put forward in this article regarding Dr Suzuki's history both false and misleading.

It has been disappointing to see such one sided journalism appear in our respected media. The opinions from the blog of one critic have been taken as fact. Rather than some research with integrity checking these facts, the opinions in this blog have been published as the whole truth. This leaves the Suzuki Associations with the task of repairing a damaged reputation of our Suzuki founder. The Suzuki Method has been successfully nurturing students and enriching their lives with music for more than sixty years.

Mr O'Connor has a long history of attempting to negate Suzuki's teachings. He has been answered over the years by those of us who teach the Suzuki Method, including people like Lois Shephard who knew Dr Suzuki well and has read widely about his method in both English and Japanese.

In this current article Mr O'Connor continues to offer his opinions as fact. It is disappointing that he does not put his efforts into advocating his own teaching method rather than spending his time trying to discredit the Suzuki Method. There is surely room in this world for more than one method of teaching music.

There is more than enough evidence to support Dr Suzuki's writings about his history. Dr Suzuki was befriended by Einstein as evidenced in Evelyn Hermann's book, Shinichi Suzuki, The Man and His Philosophy. On p.88 there is a photo of a cartoon-card with a friendly message to 'Herr Shinichi Suzuki from Albert Einstein'.

Suzuki did study with Karl Klingler. The above book, on the same page, shows a photo of Suzuki holding his violin while Klingler, next to him, studies the music score. Further, Lois Shephard met Karl Klingler's daughter, Marianne Klingler in Germany years ago. Marianne was the first Chairperson of the European Suzuki Association and had there not be this relationship surely Klingler would have made that known. The Suzuki method had been introduced to the Western World before Klingler died.

Those of us who are familiar with Dr Suzuki have never heard him claim he attended the Berlin school. Suzuki, did in fact, just pass the audition and was to be admitted if there were room in the class. Apparently this was not so which is why he continued to study privately with Professor Klingler - as he always maintained. Before going to Germany, Suzuki studied with Ando KO, a pupil of Joachim.

For those of us who knew him and worked with him there is no doubt about the integrity of Dr Suzuki. The legacy left by him will live on for it has touched so many lives all over the world. He has revolutionised the teaching of music where there are now countless recordings aimed at the young learner. This was not available until Suzuki's methods became more widely known. When parents choose Suzuki method for their children they do so because it works not because of any reference to Einstein or Klingler.

Dr Suzuki realised that all children are born with some musical ability which when nurtured can grow to a high level of musical achievement. The method has produced many professional players. Dr Suzuki's Philosophy centres on a profound belief that all children can grow into worthwhile and happy citizens given a good environment. This is the message the teaching instils in both parent and child and this is still relevant today.

I would like to thank the many teachers, parents and students who have voiced their support for Dr Suzuki as a result of this article. It is most gratifying to have so many members of the community acknowledge the value of the method devised by Dr Suzuki.

We would like to move past this slight and focus on the good that the Suzuki Method does for all involved. Every society can benefit from having happy, fulfilled and capable children, and if this comes about while learning to play a musical instrument then we have more than achieved our goal.

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