



Inaccurate and false statements by American fiddler Mark O'Connor about Shinichi Suzuki

Mainstream media has recently reprinted comments from the blog of Mark O'Connor, a violinist in the United States. In his blog, Mr. O'Connor alleges that Shinichi Suzuki, the founder of the popular music teaching approach named after him, lied about his past and is therefore "the biggest fraud in music history".

To call Shinichi Suzuki "the biggest fraud in music history" is groundless and wrong. The allegations have no factual base and can only be interpreted as an attempt by Mr. O'Connor to manipulate the media.

Shinichi Suzuki had violin lessons with the prominent German violinist Karl Klingler in Berlin in the 1920's. Klingler's daughter, Marianne Klingler, was a strong supporter of Suzuki's teaching principles and became the first chairperson of the European Suzuki Association. Ms. Klingler confirmed many times that Suzuki had indeed studied with her father.

Many honorary doctorates and awards were bestowed upon Shinichi Suzuki during his lifetime. Some of these include: Honorary Doctor of Music, New England Conservatory of Music (1966), Honorary Doctor of Music, University of Louisville (1967), Ysaye Award from Eugene Ysaye Foundation (1969), Order of the Rising Sun, Third Class (circa 1970), Honorary Doctor of Music, University of Rochester Eastman School of Music (1972), 6th Moil Music Award from Japan (1976), Honorary Distinguished Professor, North East Louisiana University (1982), PALMES ACADEMIQUES from France (1982), Japan Foundation Award (1983), Honorary Doctor of Music, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music (1984), Bundesverdienstkreuz 1.Klasse from West Germany (1985), Venezia Award from Italy's Venezia Award Society (1985), Honorary Doctor of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music (1990), Honorary Doctor of Music, University of St. Andrews, Scotland (1990).

How a person uses honorary doctorates (Dr. or Dr. h.c.) follows different traditions in different parts of the world. (In Japan, Shinichi Suzuki was referred to as "Suzuki-sensei.")

Throughout his professional life, Shinichi Suzuki was open to new ideas and development in teaching aimed at improving the learning environment for children studying how to play a musical instrument. He strongly encouraged teachers to develop new ideas and share their ideas with one another. This continues to be central to Suzuki teaching throughout the world, implemented by the many teachers who today apply Suzuki's teaching principles.

One can only speculate as to why Mr. O'Connor, who publishes and sells his own approach to violin playing, is so eager to discredit Shinichi Suzuki and why he has chosen to manipulate media at this time. These may be questions for serious journalists to work on further.

In the end, however, it is not what Shinichi Suzuki did or did not do in the 1920s that is of importance. The important issue is the successful use of his teaching principles which have enriched the lives of students and has positively influenced music education worldwide for the past 70 years.