

Tributes to Tove Detreköy

1925 – 2018

The founder of the Danish Suzuki Institute, violinist and Suzuki pedagogue, Tove Detreköy, passed away peacefully on December the 21st 2018.

With the death of Tove Detreköy, Danish music life has lost a great and distinguished personality.

Born in 1925 in Aalborg, Tove began playing violin at the age of 6. At that time she was of course not a Suzuki student, however, in a photo where she played her violin, she very much resembled one !

After studies at the Royal Danish Conservatory of Music in Copenhagen with Professor Erling Bloch and others, Tove was assigned to the Conservatory as a teacher following her graduation in 1948. At this time, she also found her love, the Hungarian violinist, Béla Detreköy, and they married in 1950.

From 1959 Tove played in the Danish Royal Orchestra, but when Béla got a professorship in the USA in 1967, the couple and their two sons moved to Bellingham in Washington state. Here Tove experienced a group of violin children, who were taught by the Suzuki Method, and that caught her interest. Tove decided to go to Japan to study with Shinichi Suzuki himself. It became many study trips, and after returning from the USA to Denmark in 1972, Tove began as one of the first in Europe to teach children after Dr. Suzuki's "Mother Tongue Method". With great enthusiasm and determination she started students both in Copenhagen and Aarhus, supported by dedicated parent groups.

With Tove's natural pedagogical skills and her deep understanding of Dr. Suzuki's philosophy the students quickly became very skilled. Five years after coming back to Denmark, Tove and Béla and a group of parents founded the Danish Suzuki Institute in Copenhagen.

When the European Suzuki Association (ESA) was established in 1980, it was quite natural that Tove and Béla were in the founding Committee, approved by Dr. Suzuki himself. And in 1990, when the Danish Suzuki Association (DSA) was founded, Tove and Béla were of course among the founders, too, and Tove was a member of the ESA Board as well as the DSA Board for many years. Later Tove and Béla became Honorary Members of both the ESA and the DSA.

Tove and Béla were very close friends of Dr. Suzuki and his wife, Waltraud. In 1981 Tove invited them to Denmark and organised the second European Suzuki workshop in Elsinore. Here, Dr. Suzuki inspired teachers from all over Europe and Suzuki students. This workshop was of great importance for spreading the Mother Tongue Method in Europe.

Dr. Suzuki was so excited about the highly skilled Danish students, that in 1986 he invited the Institute's chamber orchestra to perform on a tour of Japan.

At the request of Dr. Suzuki Tove started the first Danish Suzuki teacher training course in 1982, and a multitude of teachers from both home and abroad (and hence their students) have benefited from Tove's musical empathy and her huge experience.

Tove was also a pioneer abroad: With her characteristic, tireless energy, she has helped establishing the first Suzuki teacher training courses in Finland, Iceland, Hungary and Poland, and she worked closely together with the other European pioneers in Belgium, England, France, Italy, Germany and Sweden.

At the Danish Suzuki Institute, Tove and Béla had a unique collaboration. Tove started the students as beginners, and Béla took over when the students were typically "out of the books".

The results were so great, that Tove managed to reverse the widespread skepticism, which prevailed in the established music life against the Japanese teaching method, into great recognition and respect.

Over the years, countless Danish Suzuki students have been through Tove's skilled hands, and many of these students have chosen to make their innate musical abilities their profession. Five concertmasters in the Danish Royal Orchestra and the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra are students of Tove, in addition to the many who hold tutti seats in the Danish orchestras.

The students who have chosen other professions can - like the professionals - thank Tove for the great musical gift she has given them for their whole life.

Abroad, Tove was also a highly respected and treasured teacher who was invited to teach everywhere in the world. Like in Denmark she has inspired several generations of Suzuki students abroad and has had tremendous significance for their musical and personal development.

In 2002, Tove and Béla were the first to be awarded the newly established "Danish Music Life Award" - a Grammy - with the justification: "Their importance to the Danish music life simply cannot be overstated". In 2006, the couple received "Emil Holm's Award" as a tribute to their great significance to Danish music life. Most recently, Tove in 2015, well deserved, was granted "the Knight's Cross of the Order of Dannebrog" by Queen Margrethe 2.

When Béla died in September 2017, it was a huge loss for Tove. During the many years of happy marriage they had built up their life's work together, so it was very hard for her to do without her faithful companion.

Dear Tove, like Béla we will miss you so much. But all of us who have known you will never forget your idealistic commitment and your warm enthusiasm in spreading Dr. Suzuki's philosophy. "To teach is to touch a life forever" – these words apply to both children and adults, and you have touched our hearts immensely and changed our lives. We will always be deeply grateful to you for this !

Marianne Rygner