

Korean music legend Chung Soon-mi wins Norwegian hearts

First overseas Korean to be awarded Order of St. Olav by king of Norway



Korean Norwegian Chung Soon-mi, a music legend, a professor at the Barratt Due Institute of Music and the first Korean to be awarded the prestigious Order of St. Olav

Korean Norwegian musician Chung Soon-mi, a professor at the Barratt Due Institute of Music, has become the first Korean to be awarded the Order of St. Olav by the king of Norway. The ceremony was held in Oslo on May 25 and was an event to honor contributions to Norwegian society and culture and art.

The Order of St. Olav is Norway's most prestigious state honor and is equivalent to a first-class knighthood, awarded to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to society and the state. As a violinist and violist, Chung has contributed to the development of Norwegian music for decades, raising the profile of Korean music.

Making mark on Norwegian music scene through violin

After enrolling at the Seoul National University's Music Department, Chung studied abroad in France at the age of 17,

where she gained a solid musical foundation. She settled in Norway in 1981, when she married violinist Stephan Barratt-Due, a member of a prestigious Norwegian musical family.

She became a professor at the Barratt-Due Institute of Music, Norway's premier music education institution, where she continues to foster her students. Since making her debut as a soloist with the Norwegian Symphony Orchestra in 1982, she has performed extensively throughout Europe, Asia, South America and the United States, and has been honored with tributes from major Norwegian composers.

In particular, a viola concerto written for her by composer Olav Anton Thommessen was premiered in 1995 at the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra's 75th anniversary concert and caused a great sensation. Chung also made several recordings with her husband, and they appear regularly on Norwegian national television and radio, and are widely recognized as a husband-and-wife artist duo.

Establishing herself as iconic figure in Korea-Norway cultural exchanges

Chung has also played a leading role in fostering the next generation of musicians and cultural exchange, founding the youth orchestra Young Strings and performing at Norwegian royal events and Nobel Prize celebrations. Her work has been recognized with numerous awards. In addition to the Oslo City Culture Award, the Lindeman Prize and the Arts Council Norway Honorary Award, she was jointly awarded Norway's highest honor, the Anders Jahres Culture Prize, with her husband in 2010.

As a mother of three sons, Chung leads by example both at home and in society, and has become an iconic figure for cultural exchanges between Korea and Norway.

"Beyond being a personal honor for me, this medal is a testament to how deeply rooted Korean culture and music have become in Norwegian society," she said of her award.

Dr. Chung's blossoming on the Norwegian stage with the artistic spirit of Korea will go down in history as a prime example of how culture and music can provide inspiration across borders. 🇳🇴