

Ambassador's Commendation to the UK-Japan Music Society

Distinguished Guests,

Good evening and welcome to the Embassy of Japan.

The UK-Japan Music Society, which was founded by Mr Jonathan Gregory in 1992, has promoted musical exchange between the UK and Japan through numerous concerts over the past 30 years. In recognition of his achievements, the Government of Japan awarded Mr Gregory the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette in 2011, and more than a decade, embracing many splendid accomplishments, has elapsed since then. It is no mean feat to have been able to continue and grow for 30 years.

It cannot have been all plain sailing over this long period. Indeed, getting through the coronavirus pandemic must have been particularly challenging. Nonetheless, that time has almost passed and the Society is clearly in good shape. I would like to take this opportunity to thank its members for their strong commitment, its sponsors for their cooperation and its many friends for their support.

This evening, I feel privileged and delighted to honour the UK-Japan Music Society, with all of you, for their outstanding contribution to deepening cultural relations between Japan and the UK.

Cultural exchange between the UK and Japan takes many forms and is extremely wide-ranging. I am not aware of any organisation in the field of music that has maintained such a long-standing relationship between our two countries as the UK-Japan Music Society. It has introduced young Japanese musicians in the UK and Europe to British society, and has contributed to musical exchange at grassroots level through the UK-Japan Choir. Its extensive repertoire includes both Western and Japanese music. As well as singing carols at its Christmas concerts, the Choir introduces Japanese songs with Japanese lyrics to the British public. This is real musical cultural exchange.

That said, for all my fine words about the achievements of the UK-Japan Music Society, the proof is in the pudding! As soon as the ceremony is over, a commemorative concert awaits us. As you can see from the programme, there are both British and Japanese pieces – a simple but important feature which perfectly symbolises the character and purpose of the Society. I trust you will enjoy the fruits of 30 years of inspired endeavour by the UK-Japan Music Society.

Thank you very much indeed.