

Remarks by H.E. Mr Hiroshi Suzuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
on the occasion of the presentation of the
Ambassador's Commendation
to Royal Ballet School

Chair Natasha Kaplinsky
CEO Patrick Harrison,
Mr Kevin O'Hare,
Mr Kinoshita,
Distinguished guests,

Thank you very much for coming to the
Japanese Embassy for this very special
occasion. It is my great pleasure to present the
Ambassador's Commendation to the Royal
Ballet School.

As you all know, this year is a very special year
for the School, as it celebrates its centenary
anniversary.

I am particularly honoured, as Ambassador of Japan, to recognise the School's long and outstanding contribution at this important milestone.

For 100 years, the School has nurtured talented young dancers from around the world and helped them pursue their dreams on the world stage.

While I could not quite go back 100 years to trace the School's entire history, I am delighted to share with you that, over the past 10 years alone, 14 Japanese students, including four this year, have graduated from the School.

They are now performing with prestigious ballet companies, namely the Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet in the UK, as well as companies around the world. Many have gone on to become principals. I am very pleased that some of them are here with us this evening.

I understand that the School holds its Summer Performances every year at the Royal Opera House as well as at Opera Holland Park. One of the best things about living in London is having such close access to so many fantastic cultural institutions. My residence is actually just a short walk from Opera Holland Park, so I am situated in a rather privileged location!

Some of the staff from the embassy were able to attend the Summer Performance this year and were so impressed by the dance students, working so hard away from their families, that they insisted I must attend next year! So I will definitely come to see the show. After all, I really have no excuse — it's practically on my doorstep!

One of the most outstanding graduates is Ms Miyako Yoshida, who became the first Japanese woman to become a principal at The Royal Ballet.

Miyako-san is now Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Japan and bringing about changes in the Japanese ballet world, drawing on what she learned here. Japanese ballet has flourished, in part thanks to the knowledge and experience she gained at your School and in the UK.

I believe this is not unique to Japan, indeed it is no exaggeration to say that your School is helping to shape the future of ballet around the world.

The close connection between The Royal Ballet School and Japan has also been supported for many years by the Kinoshita Group, led by Mr Kinoshita, who is with us this evening. The Group has supported the School for 10 years, helping many young Japanese dancers to pursue their dreams.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Royal Ballet School, the Kinoshita Group, as well as other supporters of the School, the teachers and staff who support students from Japan, and everyone who has helped to build this wonderful connection through ballet between Japan and the UK.

It is therefore my great pleasure to present the Ambassador's Commendation to The Royal Ballet School, in recognition of its long-standing contribution and fantastic partnership with Japan.

I sincerely hope that the friendship which has been built over the years between The Royal Ballet School and Japan will continue to grow and flourish for many more years to come.

Thank you very much.