

Speech

Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo

Ambassador of Japan to Australia

**On the occasion of AJS's East Meets West 2022 Concert
at the Ambassador's Residence – Saturday 6th August 2022**

Thank you, Dianne.

Good afternoon and welcome to my official residence.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to my good friends, the Ambassador of Lithuania, His Excellency Mr Darius Degutis and his wife, Mrs Nida Degutiene.

My wife, Kaoru and I have been really looking forward to this event.

For so many of us, we have been deprived of the joy and excitement of live music due to the pandemic.

As we adjust to the new normal, Kaoru and I have been fortunate to attend several of the performances by the Australian Chamber Orchestra here in Canberra.

It has reignited our love for live music.

Kaoru gave me the superb JBL speakers and they are perfect for not only jazz but classical music, too.

But I will admit, nothing beats listening to it live.

Following the ACO concert at Llewellyn Hall in May, I met Ms GOTO Aiko.

Despite her stature, I was captivated by her huge stage presence!

She even brought her famous wooden box to Canberra to stand on!

To my surprise, we have a few things in common.

We both graduated from Toho Gakuen and studied in New York.

And of course, we adore classical music.

Our lives may have even crossed earlier if I had not quit the piano as a little boy.

Like many of my friends at the time, I set my sights on the baseball field!

It is an absolute treat for us to have Aiko-san here today for a solo violin concert.

In this intimate setting, we can immerse ourselves into Aiko-san's world of music.

Before I met Aiko-san, I had the opportunity to meet ACO Artistic Director and Lead Violin, Richard

Tognetti and Principal Violin, Satu Vanska in Sydney.

Like many Aussies, Richard raves about skiing in Japan, particularly in Niseko.

And Satu, who is Finnish, was born in Japan and spent her childhood there with her missionary father.

On a number of occasions, the ACO has even performed in Japan.

No wonder they are very fond of Japan!

I understand this is the 19th East Meets West Charity Concert.

And without the wonderful support of the ACO, this charity concert would not have been possible to continue for as long as it has.

The ACO now has a beautiful home in Sydney's Walsh Bay and we have just attended Richard's concert last Sunday in their new state-of-the-art premises.

In fact, they installed an acoustic condition system from one of the world's leading manufacturers of audio equipment – YAMAHA.

As the Japanese Ambassador, I am delighted they chose a quality, cutting-edge Japanese product to bring their music to their audience here in Australia.

For many years, proceeds from this charity concert helped support the Tohoku Youth Program, which brought young people affected by the 2011 disaster to Australia.

It was an incredibly special initiative, and my deep appreciation goes to AJS for their tremendous effort.

I understand AJS has new projects in the works to continue promoting friendship between Japan and Australia, so I look forward to these new initiatives!

You all look very eager for Aiko-san to begin, so perhaps I have been speaking far too long!

Before I finish, let me just add that today's scrumptious afternoon tea has been prepared by my chef, Chef OGATA.

I've heard that along with Aiko-san, Chef OGATA is a drawcard for this event!

Actually, Chef OGATA made it into The Canberra Times a few weeks ago and now receives more fan letters than me!

So I'm sure his food will not disappoint!

We cannot compete with YAMAHA's acoustics, but please sit back, relax and enjoy what will no doubt be a beautiful afternoon.

Thank you.