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<The Pushkin Medal and Classical Music>

Good afternoon, Sundai E.S.S. alumni, current students of Meiji University E.S.S and all my colleagues and friends!

<The Pushkin Medal>

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to be given an opportunity to make a speech today about the Pushkin Medal and classical music.

Before speaking about the Pushkin Medal, may I ask if you have ever heard of Pushkin or the Pushkin Medal?

As many of you may know, Pushkin was a Russian poet and novelist who lived in the 19th century in Russia.

And the Pushkin Medal is an award given by the Russian government to those who have contributed to the field of arts and culture, or to cultural exchange with Russia.

My company, which is called Japan Arts, has been introducing to Japan many outstanding Russian artists in the field of classical music and the performing arts over the past 40 years. They include the Bolshoi Ballet, the Mariinsky Opera, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra and many other artists and groups from Russia. I understand that the Pushkin Medal was awarded to me in recognition of these achievements. In that sense, I am aware that this medal is not only for me, but that it is shared by all the board directors and members of Japan Arts with whom I have worked over the past four decades. You might say that I just happened to be president of the company at the time that the award was decided. The award ceremony was held at the Russian Embassy in Tokyo on June 14 this year.

Although I know this is a special award which I can be proud of, I do not feel that I have actually done anything so special. In fact, I believe I just did what needed to be done, in the field of classical music and in business, and I was fortunate that in the end this resulted in contributing to the development of cultural exchange between Japan and Russia.

Receiving the Pushkin Medal is something I believe I should also be proud of as a person who graduated from Meiji University, and something that should be shared with all the people of this university.

This is the reason that I came here today to make a report on the Pushkin Medal.

<Classical Music>

Now, let me talk about my second topic for today - classical music, a field in which I have been involved over the past 40 years.

<Brief self-introduction>

First I'd like to tell you briefly how I became involved in this field.

When I was a Meiji University student, I majored in law. I didn't study anything related to classical music. I can neither play any musical instrument nor sing classical songs. I won't go into detail here about why I entered the field of classical music, but to make a long story short, it's a kind of coincidence. When I started working at a news service company more than 40 years ago, I was first assigned to what we call "事業部," the division that organized events including classical music concerts. This division later became independent, and became a classical music and performing arts management company called Japan Arts. That is where I work now.

<Have you ever heard or listened to classical music?>

I'm sure all of you have heard classical music before.

Some of you may not have visited concert halls or theaters. But I'm sure you have heard classical music in one way or the other on many occasions.

Classical music is often used in movies, TV dramas, commercials, weddings, parties and so on. This means classical music is something very familiar and close to us, even if we don't always realize it.

There are a lot of TV programs about classical music. For example, "La-La-La Classic" <ららら・クラシック> on NHK Etele (educational TV) <Eテレ> and "Classic Ongaku-kan" <クラシック音楽館>, also on NHK E-tele, "Daimei-no-nai Ongaku-kai, <題名のない音楽会> Untitled Concert" on TV Asahi, and many other programs on BS TV and AM & FM radio stations.

You can also find references to classical music in books by such popular novelists as Haruki Murakami, Jiro Akagawa and Mariko Hayashi. Last year's <本屋大賞> "Honya-taisho" award winning book, titled "Hitsuji to Hagane no Mori" <羊と鋼の森>, describes the life of piano tuners and the world of classical music. And this year's <直木賞> "Naoki-sho" award and <本屋大賞> "Honya-taisho" award winning book, titled "Mitsubachi to Enrai" <蜜蜂と遠雷>, depicts piano competitions and classical music.

This shows how well and widely classical music has been received by a huge number of people.

<Roles of classical music in our society>

Now, what do you think is the role of classical music in our society?

There might be many answers, but today I'd like to focus on three main roles which I think are very important.

First,

(1) Classical music has the power to heal people's spirits and make them happy

Before focusing on the specific theme of classical music, I'd like to talk about the role

of the arts and culture in general, including classical music.

Do you think art and culture are absolutely necessary elements in the life of human beings? Unfortunately, they are not generally regarded as necessary.

Of course, food, clothing and housing are more essential to our lives than art and culture. Though it may be true that people can live without art and culture, life without them would be very dull, monotonous, and uninteresting. I believe that life with art and culture can enrich people, cheer them up, and make them happy.

Just as we need nutrition and nourishment for our physical body, we need nourishment for our mind and spirit as well.

I believe that the food that nourishes our mind and spirit is the arts and culture—in other words, literature, painting, movies, theater, music and so on. And among all of these arts, music is the one that most directly touches human beings' hearts and feelings—overcoming language barriers and transcending differences of religion, race, nationality, and culture. All over the world, music has common elements and universal appeal.

After the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011, many musicians and artists felt powerless or helpless, thinking that music could not help people who had lost family members and homes and who had an immediate need for food and shelter in order to get through today and tomorrow. Many musicians, however, thought that they could give charity concerts to raise money and donate it to those who needed help in the disaster-hit regions, and in fact they were able to do this. And after several months, when people had their immediate needs for food, clothing and temporary housing taken care of, what they needed next was something to meet the needs of their minds and spirits. The shock and sorrow of having lost their family members and homes could not easily be diminished. This is where the role of music came in, as music can heal people's minds and spirits, encourage them, and bring them joy and happiness, even if it is only for a brief time.

Secondly,

(2) **Music has economic benefits.**

I'm afraid the arts, including music, may generally not be regarded as important to society compared with politics, the economy or social issues. I think many people regard the arts as just a hobby, pastime or entertainment. But I would like to stress the fact that music brings many economic benefits. In terms of employment and expenditure, a lot of people are working and involved in all aspects of the music world—for example, concerts, recordings, music schools and universities, orchestras, choirs, theaters and concert halls, printing and publishing, advertising, food service including restaurants in or near theaters and concert halls, transportation (as people use trains, buses and taxis to go to concerts) and so on.

All the people working or involved in the fields I have just mentioned play a major role in society and the economy.

I would also like to call your attention to the events known as music festivals which are held in many places in Japan. Among these music festivals are PMF—which stands for Pacific Music Festival—in Sapporo, the Kusatsu Music Festival in Gunma Prefecture, the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival in Nagano Prefecture, and the Kirishima

International Music Festival in Kagoshima Prefecture. In the case of the Kirishima Music Festival, which takes place over a two-week period every summer, about 90 musicians and teachers from 12 different countries and over 160 students from 11 different countries visited Kirishima city this year. They stayed for two whole weeks at several hotels, and contributed significantly to the economy by paying for their transportation, accommodations, food, souvenirs and so on. In addition, over 14,000 people from the general public attended the concerts and master classes that took place at various venues, not only in Kirishima but also in many places in Kagoshima Prefecture, including some remote islands.

It is said that there are more than 50 music festivals held every year throughout Japan. I believe that these activities contribute not only to boosting local economies, but also to the vitalization or revitalization of local communities as a whole.

According to an article in the Nikkei newspaper, culture and the arts—including music—are a 40-trillion-yen industry. This means that in economic terms, the arts are on the same level as the food and medical care industries.

Finally,

(3) **Music helps promote mutual understanding, goodwill and friendship.**

The world-famous conductor from South Korea, Maestro Chung Myung-Whun, who is often compared to the Japanese Maestro Seiji Ozawa, founded an orchestra called the Asian Philharmonic Orchestra, comprised of musicians from Korea, China and Japan.

Another well-known conductor, Maestro Daniel Barenboim, who is originally from Argentina, established an orchestra made up of Israeli and Palestinian musicians.

A Japanese conductor named Toshio Yanagisawa founded the Balkan Chamber Orchestra in 2007 in the hope that it would help people of different ethnic groups share peace and prosperity in the conflict-battered region. The orchestra has about 20 members representing various ethnic groups and nationalities, including musicians from Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia.

By overcoming religious, racial and national differences, artists and musicians are able to get together and create a world that can contribute to mutual understanding among people and even to world peace.

In conclusion, classical music is something that (1) can help heal people's spirits and bring them joy and happiness, (2) play an important economic role in society, and (3) contribute to international understanding and friendship.

I am happy and proud to be a part of this unique field, classical music.

Thank you.