

Opening Remarks
Megumi Kanda Recital
Consul General George Hisaeda
July 25, 2009

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome [on this beautiful afternoon].

As Consul General, I'm always thinking about the best ways to bring Japanese culture to Chicago and the Midwest. We present traditional Japanese arts such as Kabuki, Noh, and Ukiyo-e. And we sponsor events that feature manga and anime, innovative technology and contemporary Japanese design.

However, I believe that it is equally important to highlight Japanese individuals, who excel abroad in traditionally Western fields such as baseball and classical music.

The Japanese community is proud of star athletes like Fukudome and Ichiro, and it is proud of internationally acclaimed conductors and musicians such as Seiji Ozawa and Midori Gotoh. This afternoon, I am especially proud to present a Midwest treasure, Japanese trombonist Megumi Kanda.

I have long known of Ms. Kanda. Since her high school days, her extraordinary talent has been celebrated far and wide.

Today, Megumi is Principal Trombone of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. She is the first female to hold such a position in a major American orchestra.

This is not a surprise. When I've talked with Chicago's best trombone and brass instrument players, their praise for her is unanimous. They all say that Megumi's playing has a beautiful tone. And I couldn't agree more.

When I was named Consul General last year, I couldn't believe my great luck. I was overjoyed that I would soon join Ms. Kanda as a resident of the Midwest. Shortly after I arrived, I met with her in Milwaukee, and asked her to present this recital. She accepted much to my delight.

Because she is so much in demand, it has taken a year to bring this special performance to you. And I couldn't be more thrilled to welcome Ms. Kanda, and her gifted accompanist, Ms. Nakamura, this afternoon.

At concerts, the piano, violin, and cello often take center stage. I believe that the trombone should shine as well. In Megumi's talented hands, the trombone is a superb solo instrument. It can be just as expressive as the cello. And it can play music for all tastes – not only classical works and jazz, but also Japanese folk songs. This wide range

may surprise you, but each type of music can be wonderful on the trombone.

Today, Megumi will play classical trombone masterpieces, a couple of jazz standards, and two Japanese songs: Sakura Sakura and Akatonbo, or ‘Red Dragonfly.’ Both songs depict the natural beauty of Japan, which is much beloved by the Japanese people.

You may wonder why I’m talking so much about the trombone. Well, I must confess, I’m a trombone player myself. And I often think that my title should be “Trombone Advocate General of Chicago,” rather than Consul General.

I believe that my staff wants me to stop – right now. They know all too well that I can go on forever about trombones.

Anyway, let’s experience the trombone at its finest as we listen to a great artist, Ms. Megumi Kanda.

Thank you all very much.