

Japanese Individuals Contributing Worldwide

Young Japanese Pianist Soars from Russia

Russia, has produced many musical giants, and aspiring young musicians flock there from around the world to study. One such person is Kyohei Sorita.

Sorita started playing the piano at the age of four. Initially he only took a 30-minute lesson once a week at an ordinary piano school. But he was attracted by the instrument's timbre, and when he was 14 he began practicing intensively with the aim of becoming a pianist. "I wanted to pursue a career in which I could give people dreams," he says.

Sorita quickly revealed his talent, in recognition of which he gained admission to a prestigious music high school. Unexpected difficulties were awaiting him, however. "I had only been practicing music that I liked," he recalls, "and I had hardly done anything from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* or Mozart's works, which are the fundamentals of piano education. So while I was in high school I had to spend every day practicing the classics." His natural talent blossomed, and in 2012, while still a high school student, he won the Music Competition of Japan, a gateway to success for young musicians.

With this victory Sorita also won the chance to receive lessons from Mikhail Voskresensky, a world-famous piano instructor and performer from Russia. Voskresensky recognized his talent and paved the way for him to study in Russia. In 2014 he entered the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, the most prestigious music school in the world, becoming the first Japanese to do so at the head of the incoming class by winning the highest score.

Inspiration, along with the gravity of Russia's history and traditions, filled Sorita's student life in Moscow. The complex overtones of church bells, he remembers, sounded to him like music by Sergei Rachmaninov. He experienced Russia's music culture with all five of his senses. "Around the time when I had begun to understand a little Russian," he says, "my teacher performed a piece by Rachmaninov, and for a moment it sounded like Russian being spoken. It was a fantastic experience for me to be able to directly sense the distinctive *Weltanschauung* that Russian composers could express precisely because they were Russian musicians."

Regarding the significance of studying music in Russia, Sorita points to the tradition that has produced world-renowned musicians. "You learn under the same roof as historic musicians," he says, "from teachers who are in a direct lineage from them, practicing the same methods as they did. The voices of the great composers of the past are still alive in today's instruction." And he cannot hide his love for the country, declaring, "Wherever I may be based, Russia will always be my spiritual home."

Sorita has two major goals. One is to pass on Russia's Romantic piano style, which helped Sorita himself to grow so much, to the next generation in Japan. The other is to convey the joy of becoming one with melodies to children around the world who are unfamiliar with the classical music that he and his fellow musicians perform. "I want to achieve these goals," he declares, "even if it takes me thirty years." Sorita's fingers are singing in pursuit of these great goals.



Sorita rehearses with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra at the Russian International Music Festival in 2015.

1	2	1. Chatting over tea with the maestro Mikhail Voskresensky. "I was drawn not only by his piano playing but also by his charming personality," says Sorita. 2. At the grave of Mstislav Rostropovich, the master cellist and conductor, graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, who died in 2007. For Sorita, visiting the graves where Russia's great musicians rest is one means of getting closer to the Russian musical tradition. 3. In Moscow's Red Square.
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Kyohei Sorita

Born in 1994. In elementary school he was just a typical young boy eager to become a soccer player, but later he took to the piano out of a desire to "give people dreams." After studying in Russia, he won the Città di Cantù International Piano and Orchestra Competition (Classical Section) in 2015.

