

To all the people that I came to meet and get to know,

I hereby would like to inform you that I am resigning from the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra, the beloved orchestra I have spent as the concertmaster for more than 21 years. There have been so many wonderful encounters and unforgettable concerts which are all in my heart.

Till now, I have been running without rest, trying to find what I can do as a person, as an individual. The time may have come to change from all these.

Since March this year, I felt something funny in my throat, and have been visiting clinics to take various examinations. On November 15, a medical doctor has told me that my symptoms are very similar to those of ALS, Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. By having heard this, I started to think there must be other meanings for my life. I would like to find and complete little things that I can do, and my very first step was to make this name of my disease public. I would be very happy and obliged that you would accept this as my message of gratitude.

I sincerely hope that you would keep in touch with the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra. I believe there is a huge power in music. I am looking forward that I can meet you again, maybe not in the concert halls, but somewhere else.

November 20, 2019

Mayumi Ohira

Biography

Born in Sendai and graduated from the Music High School attached to the Faculty of Music, Tokyo University of the Arts. Ohira continued her study at the Tokyo University of the Arts, however, she was invited to study at the San Francisco Conservatory in the United States after 3 months. While at the conservatory, she won the first prize at the Coleman Chamber Competition and was presented Silverstein Award in Tanglewood as the best violinist. After her graduation, she became a lecturer of the conservatory and of the Stanford University and actively performed as a member of Stanford String Quartet and Philadelphia String Quartet worldwide.

After having posts of the concertmaster of Pasadena Chamber Orchestra, an associate concertmaster of Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, the principal second violin of Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, an assistant concertmaster of Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Ohira became a guest concertmaster of Yomiuri Nippon

Symphony Orchestra. Since 1998, Ohira is the concertmaster of the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra.

What has happened?

In March 2019, during the graduation ceremony of a school, when I tried to sing the national anthem, I noticed my voice became lower in tune. From April, I visited internal medicine, 3 otolaryngologists, brain surgery, oral surgery, and orthopedic surgery and took number of examinations. It gradually became more difficult for me to speak properly, and it got worsen in August. I visited other clinics in September, however, could not find out causes of my symptoms. In October, I was advised to visit the hospital specialized in neurology. On October 16, I visited Hokkaido Medical Center (Hokkaido Iryo Center) and started detailed examination. On November 15, I was diagnosed as ALS from the test results and symptoms.

What is ALS?

ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord.

(From ALS Association <http://www.alsa.org/about-als/what-is-als.html>)