

Origin of the University Song

Hiroshima University has three symbols: the university tree (Phoenix tree), the university crest (and flag), and the university song.

On September 20, 1955, a notice was issued inviting students, graduates, and faculty to submit lyrics for the university song. The 21 member University Song Selection Committee, chaired by President Tatsuo Morito, selected three works from among the 44 submitted as candidates for the prize, and left the final selection to a subcommittee comprised of three members: Professor Jiro Ogawa (Faculty of Letters), Assistant Professor Saburo Mashimo (Faculty of Letters), and Professor Yukio Hajiro (Faculty of Liberal Arts). The subcommittee chose Mr. Sumito Yamanaka, a student of the Faculty of Letters, as the potential winner, and finally selected his lyrics after making some modifications.

The modified lyrics were approved by the Council on March 16, 1957, and established as the university song. Because of this process, the lyrics of the university song are not credited to an individual author and are instead indicated to have been, “selected by Hiroshima University.”

The composer of the music is indicated as the Music Department, Faculty of Education, Hiroshima University. At the time of the song’s composition, Mr. Shinichi Takata, a former conductor of the NHK Symphony Orchestra, was a professor in the Music Department at the Fukuyama Campus of the Faculty of Education. Mr. Takata is mentioned in the minutes of University Council meetings at this time as one of the professional composers to whom the Council considered commissioning the composition of the music. In name, the Music Department was finally commissioned to compose the music.

The music was completed in July 1957 and previewed at the Council meeting on September 13, 1957. The minutes of this meeting state, “The music of the university song, commissioned to the Fukuyama Campus of the Faculty of Education, has been completed, and its recorded performance was previewed.” Accordingly, the music was also not credited to an individual composer but to the “Music Department, Faculty of Education, Hiroshima University.”

The first official performance of the Hiroshima University Song was given by the Symphony Orchestra and choir of the Music Department at the Fukuyama Campus of the Faculty of Education, at the orchestra concert held as part of the university's opening ceremony in the Hiroshima City Hall on November 5, 1957.

President Morito later made the following comments regarding the circumstances surrounding the advent of the university song in his book entitled, "At the Time of the Reestablishment of Hiroshima University":

The simple and elegant lyrics of the university song were based on the submission of a student and completed by Professor Hajiro into their current impressive form. The first verse begins with the words, "There is light," the second with, "There is flow" (which represents the Ota River and its tributaries*), and the third with, "There is green." The last words of each verse are, "Our hope is to seek truth," "We gather to strive for the good of the world," and, "Our wish is to pursue beauty," respectively. These words express the unwavering desire to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty.

He recalled the spirit of the time: a desire to promote the emotional unification of Hiroshima University, which had previously been a mere combination of academic units, by adopting a university flag, university song, and symbolic tree (Phoenix tree).

*The Ota River and its tributaries, the Enko River, the Kyobashi River, the Motoyasu River, the Tenma River, the Fukushima River, and the Yamate River; the last two were later changed into a drainage canal.

Note: Based on an article contributed by Mr. Michio Komiyama in the regular 50-year university history editorial team column published in the university newsletter, Hirodai Forum, Term 33, Issue 6 (No. 369), on April 1, 2002.