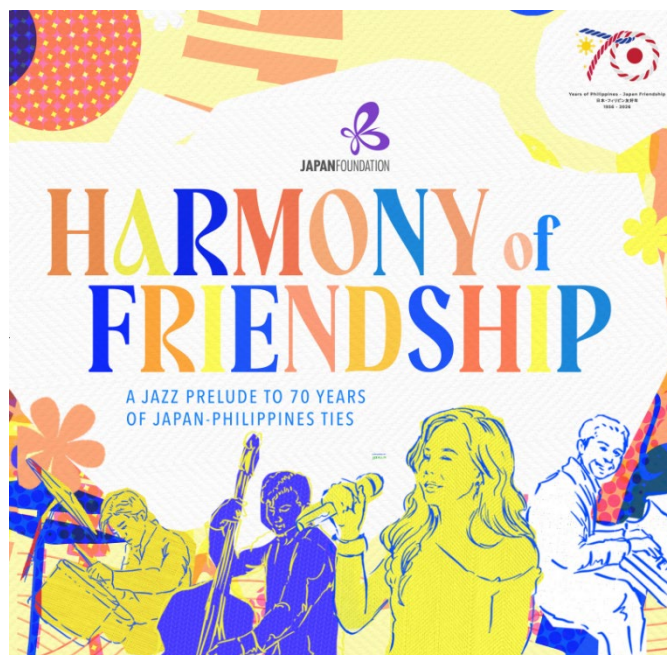


2026 Philippines–Japan Friendship Year (70th Anniversary of Normalization of Diplomatic Relations) Opening Event: Cultural Exchange Facilitated by the Tokyo-Manila Jazz & Arts Festival Group

As the **opening event to the 2026 Philippines–Japan Friendship Year (70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations)**, the Japan Foundation will host **concerts and a workshop by the Tokyo-Manila Jazz & Arts Festival Group** with main vocalist **Charito** in Manila and Cebu.

The event is aimed at further deepening ties between Japan and the Philippines, with the sound of jazz serving as a bridge between the cultures of the two countries, under the theme of the 2026 Philippines–Japan Friendship Year, “Weaving the Future Together: Peace, Prosperity, Possibilities.”

Charito is a multiple-award-winning vocalist at the forefront of the Japanese jazz world. In addition to her musical career, she has worked to connect Japan and the Philippines through music, such as by launching the Tokyo-Manila Jazz & Arts Festival, which brings together jazz artists from Japan and the Philippines, and engaging in charity work to support children in both countries.



Years of Philippines - Japan Friendship
日本・フィリピン友好年
1956 - 2026

We hope that the three concerts in Manila and Cebu will familiarize audiences with the cultural ties between the two countries through jazz.

In addition, in the workshop to be held at De La Salle University – Dasmariñas located to the south of Metro Manila, exchange with students studying jazz will contribute to fostering members of the next generation, along with conveying the appeal of music and the joy of creativity.

This event will be carried out as part of “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0,” a comprehensive people-to-people exchange program aimed at promoting exchange and fostering members of the next generation in Japan and ASEAN.

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“Harmony of Friendship: A Jazz Prelude to 70 Years of Japan-Philippines Ties” Overview of Concerts

Date/Time: Starts at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Venue: Proscenium Theatre (Manila)

Manner of Admission: By invite only

Organizer: The Japan Foundation

Date/Time: Starts at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 22, 2026

Venue: Romulo Theater (Manila)

Manner of Admission: Free (Reservation is no longer available as the quota has been filled. If you wish to request media coverage, please contact us at the address below.)

Organizer: The Japan Foundation

Date/Time: Starts at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, January 23, 2026

Venue: Cebu Capitol Social Hall (Cebu)

Manner of Admission: By invite only

Organizer: The Japan Foundation

Co-organizer: Consulate-General of Japan in Cebu

■ Workshop at De La Salle University - Dasmariñas

Date: Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Content: Jazz workshop by members of the Tokyo-Manila Jazz & Arts Festival Group

Organizer: The Japan Foundation

Co-organizer: De La Salle University - Dasmariñas

Location: De La Salle University – Dasmariñas (to the south of Metro Manila)

**Local coverage of the concerts/workshop and interviews with
the participating artists will be permitted.**

**For details, please contact the Public Relations Division of
the Japan Foundation at press@jpf.go.jp.**

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Artist Profiles

Tokyo-Manila Jazz & Arts Festival Group

Charito (Vocals)

A prominent vocalist at the forefront of the Japanese jazz world. Her singing voice, expressiveness, and musical artistry have brought her international acclaim. Her collaborations with Brazilian music legend Ivan Lins on the 2004 album *Non Stop to Brazil* and with the Manhattan Jazz Orchestra on the 2006 album *Nica's Dream* both won grand prizes in the vocal category of the Jazz Disc Awards hosted by the Japanese jazz magazine *Swing Journal*.

In addition to her musical career, she is involved in charity work to support children in Japan and the Philippines as the founder of "Because We Care." In 2012, she also launched the **Tokyo-Manila Jazz & Arts Festival**, the largest music festival bringing together jazz artists from Japan and the Philippines. The festival is currently approaching its fifth installation as it continues to contribute to the education of young musicians in both countries, as well as international cultural exchanges.



Yuki Arimasa (Piano)

He began piano lessons at the age of three and became drawn to jazz at the age of twelve after hearing the jazz pianist Oscar Peterson perform. Initially self-taught, he later enrolled in Berklee College of Music in the United States to study composition and arrangement. While at Berklee, he was recognized with a Hank Jones Award and Duke Ellington Award for his achievements as a pianist and arranger. After graduating, he worked on numerous albums with various artists and jazz groups as a pianist, arranger, composer, and music producer. In 2000, he established a solfège course as a professor in the jazz program at the Senzoku Gakuen College of Music. He also teaches jazz classes for elementary school students sponsored by the Yokohama Arts Foundation. In 2016, he founded the general incorporated association Artist Green as an organization to promote the arts, including communication among musicians from all over the world and educational workshops. In subsequent years, he has been focusing on cultivating the next generation through efforts such as musical production for the educational jazz festival "WA Meets Jazz," workshops and concerts in Manila and Taipei, and serving as a jury member for the Montreux Jazz Festival Japan in Kawasaki and a jazz competition in Singapore.



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Satsuki Kusui (Bass)

He took up the contrabass after joining a jazz study club at Hosei University, where he studied under Yosuke Inoue and began playing professionally while still a student. In 2011, he joined the trio of Fumio Karashima, a pianist known for his many years of collaboration with Elvin Jones, taking part in annual two-month nationwide tours. He participated in the recording of a total of three albums as a member of Karashima's final rhythm section alongside Nobuyuki Komatsu on drums. He is currently active in various bands as well as numerous jam and recording sessions. He also frequently provides support for Japanese concerts by overseas musicians. In addition, he works actively as a bandleader based in the Tokyo metropolitan area. In 2017, he released *Satsuki Kusui & Vladimir Shafranov*, his first album as a bandleader. His career is now expanding even more with the release of two albums to date as part of the band SK4, which he co-leads, as well as successful overseas concerts. He has established his band's sound with his powerful swing beat rooted in the traditions of jazz and wide-ranging musicality suited to various genres.

**Hiroki Kitazawa (Drums)**

Jazz drummer. He graduated from the jazz program at the University of North Texas with outstanding grades and then completed a Master of Music degree in jazz studies with honors at the University of Northern Colorado. After his move to the United States at the age of eighteen, he was active mainly in the music scenes in California, Texas, and Colorado and studied under artists such as Dean Koba, Jeff Hamilton, Ed Soph, and Jim White. His career in the United States spans over ten years beginning during his student years and includes participation in a wide range of work such as television programs as well as state-sponsored events and symposiums. Artists with whom he collaborated include Vince Mendoza, Greg Gisbert, and Alex Sipiagin. After returning to Japan, in addition to providing support to artists such as Charito, Yoshiko Kishino, and Issei Igarashi, he has become a significant presence in the Asian jazz scene beyond Japan, including going on five Taiwanese tours in 2023.

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About “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0”

The Japan Foundation is an incorporated administrative agency that promotes arts and cultural exchange, Japanese-language education, and Japanese studies and global dialogue based on its mission of “cultivating friendship and ties between Japan and the world.”

It will conduct “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0,” a

comprehensive people-to-people exchange project with ASEAN and other Asian countries to promote the mutual recognition of each country’s values in the fields of Japanese-language education, culture and the arts, Japanese studies, and global partnership programs, over a ten-year period beginning in 2024.

Centered around the NIHONGO Partners program and programs for two-way intellectual and cultural exchange, the project will endeavor to strengthen multifaceted networks of people and build strong, far-reaching relationships of trust between Japan and its Asian partners through sincere and open communication.



◆NIHONGO Partners Program

Teaching assistants and instructors of Japanese culture are dispatched to secondary educational institutions in Asia as partners to local Japanese-language teachers and their students.

◆Programs for Two-Way Intellectual and Cultural Exchange

These programs will cultivate strong bonds between people and foster members of the next generation to serve as bridges between different countries in the world by creating opportunities for collaboration built on mutual understanding.

Please visit the official website of “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0” (<https://asiawa.jpf.go.jp/>) for articles and videos about past initiatives.

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