

## JAPAN: Kimigayo (*The Emperor's Reign*)

When the Meiji period began in 1868 and Japan made its start as a modern nation, there was no Japanese national anthem. In 1869, the Irish military band leader John William Fenton, learned that Japan lacked an anthem and told the members of Japan's military band about the British national anthem "God Save the King." He emphasized the importance of a national anthem and offered to write the music for a Japanese anthem if suitable words could be found. The task of finding a text fell to Artillery Captain Oyama Iwao, who was highly knowledgeable in Japanese and Chinese literature. The words were selected from a *tanka* (a 31-syllable poem) found in a 10th century anthology. From very early times, this poem had been recited to commemorate auspicious occasions and the words had often been set to music. As a result, the Japanese anthem has the distinction of being unique, in having words of such antiquity. Fenton setting of the *Kimigayo* words was first performed, accompanied by brass, during an army parade in 1870.

Fenton's melody was later considered to be lacking in solemnity and in 1876, Osamu Yusuke, the director of the Naval Band, proposed to change the melody, in order to reflect the musical style common in chants performed at the Imperial Court. In July 1880, a new melody was selected, composed by Yoshiisa Oku and Akimori Hayashi. The name of the composer is often listed as Hiromori Hayashi but actually he was their supervisor and Akimori's father. Akimori was also one of Fenton's music students. The German bandmaster Franz Eckert (1852-1916) later made a four-part vocal arrangement, and the song became Japan's national anthem in 1888. The government did not officially adopt the anthem until 1999.

When the anthem is being performed by instrumentalists and singers, the first two measures are often played as an instrumental introduction. The *comma* marks in the notation indicate where there is a slight pause between phrases. The melody is in the Dorian mode.

Hiromori Hayashi (1831-1896)  
Arranged by Colin Kirkpatrick

♩ = 56

Cymbals

Snare Drum

Bass Drum

*p*

Cym.

S.Dr.

B. Dr.

*mf cresc. f*

*mf poco rit. p*

You may download the score and the instrumental parts free of charge, making as many copies as you need. However, these may not be subsequently sold. Feedback from users is always welcomed. If you would like to report any mistakes in the music, make comments or suggestions (in English) please contact Colin Kirkpatrick at [doctorcolin@csloxinfo.com](mailto:doctorcolin@csloxinfo.com). If you perform, record or broadcast this arrangement, please notify the Performing Rights Society (in the UK) or the equivalent performance rights organisation in your own country (e.g. ASCAP in the USA; SOCAN in Canada), listing the name of the anthem and the arranger.

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