

# Rally Day <sup>2021</sup>

## **Mitsuru Claire Chino '88 is the epitome of poise, practice-makes-perfect and power.**

Even as she ascended to the role of Executive Officer and the General Counsel for ITOCHU Corporation (Tokyo), becoming the first female executive officer of any major Japanese trading company, as well as the youngest to do it, Claire has maintained a sense of balance and humanism that is not always easy to attain or exude in business leadership.

Her former music professor, Karen Smith-Emerson, Elsie Irwin Sweeney Professor Emerita of Music, has fond memories of Claire. Even though she left a book of her students behind that was “too big to store,” Claire remains one of her standout students; committed to maintaining a connection, studying music and growing in her practice as a vocalist. She recalled that Claire was always interested in a lot and that music opened a whole new world to Claire, including German lieder which she went on to study further during her JYA in Hamburg, Germany. “She would listen and come back with ideas” making her a “dream student because there was always interaction.” Smith-Emerson also shared that Claire “exuded something different,” “she had an intel and depth to her beyond most of the students.” Though was on sabbatical for Claire’s last two years at Smith, Smith-Emerson heard about Claire’s growth and progress from her replacement, Professor Will Parker. He wrote to her “I love working with Claire Chino.” It is evident that music fed Claire’s soul while on campus and even post-Smith. Smith-Emerson connected her with a vocal teacher in New York City, and Claire went on to be a finalist in the Tokyo Voice Competition in 2007 and also performed at Carnegie Hall in January 2020.

Fellow classmate, Mona Ghosh Sinha '88 and Chair, Fund for Women’s Equality (Equal Rights Amendment) and Chair, Women Moving Millions, shared similar sentiments and recalled parallels in their introduction to their studies at Smith. Like Claire, Mona was an international student and set out to study Economics as Claire was studying Government. While they didn’t know each other on campus, they both found their way to the arts; Mona studying Art History and Claire studying music. As Monas put it, Claire has “left brain and right brain” at work. When Mona moved to Hong Kong in 2008 to revive an Asian alum group, Claire was one of the first alums to be open and receptive. Claire was instrumental in coordinating President McCarthy’s visit to Asia as well as a visit with Ambassador Caroline Kennedy. In 2012 when they hosted an event with Professor Mahnaz Mahdavi, Claire came from Japan specifically to attend the event. Mona said this about Claire, “she is a beautiful, beautiful singer. She takes on things with a passion and keeps that beauty all throughout.” Most recently, Claire offered remarks for “The Smith Network at Work: Mentors, Models and Sponsors” event, a collaboration between The New York Smith Business Network Advisory Board and the Smith College Office of Alumnae Relations. This well-roundedness and dedication to Smith alum engagement is one that we admire as we look at future medalists. No matter the distance, Claire has shown up to be in community, in fellowship, and connecting with the larger Smith community.

Claire, thank you for modeling the versatility of what is accomplished with a Smith education and reminding us to be centered, balanced and about our business!

***Tribute by Medal Committee researcher Imani Darden Missouri '08***