

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you this evening to the Consulate General of France in New York for the Friends of IHES Charity Gala. First, I would like to convey the apologies of our French Ambassador to the United States, Mr. François Delattre, who could not be with us tonight. I would also like to thank both Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, Director of IHES, and Renaud Dutreil, President of Belleville Foundations and of Friends of IHES, for organizing this event.

I am much honored to host such exceptional mathematicians and physicists as James Hawryl Simons and his wife, Marilyn, to whom we are paying a tribute here tonight. James, you have taught in the most prestigious schools – MIT, Harvard, Stony Brook University. You also applied your knowledge of mathematics to the financial world, developing particularly innovative mathematic models which have revolutionized electronic trading. On the grounds of your own research, you founded Renaissance Technologies, one of the most well respected hedge funds of our times. And you, Marilyn, allow me to mention your charitable commitment at the Paul Simons Foundation, most particularly in the fields of health, education, and scientific research. Your unconditional support for research on autism is acknowledged worldwide. I would also like to thank Ingrid

Daubechies, a Duke University Professor and President of the International Mathematical Union, for her presence here this evening.

High representatives of the world of Art are also among us tonight: director of the famous Galerie Murlot in New York, Eric Murlot, fashion designer Eri Matsui, American composer Derek Belmer, and finally, screenwriter and film director Olivier Peyon.

As you can see, Art and Science are both honored at this event, bearing the possibly puzzling title of “Beauty and Mathematics”. Indeed, France is known for its tradition of excellence in scientific research and is particularly renowned across the globe for its mathematicians and physicists. We all know what French mathematicians have contributed to the field: Fourier, Monge, Poincaré whose 100th anniversary of his death will be celebrated this coming November 17, as well as Guy Laroche, who recently received the Nobel Prize in Physics, only to name a few.

A school as prestigious as IHES is currently taking the measures to perpetuate this tradition, by freeing its mathematicians and physicists of many constraints (both on the bureaucratic and the educational levels), by finally giving them the time to work peacefully, and by letting them meet and exchange their knowledge with their American peers.

I am not saying anything new when I mention IHES is today an international scientific reference. Seven out of its ten tenured full-professors have received the Fields Medal, which is the mathematicians' highest international distinction. The Institute's success is due not only to this kind of intellectual freedom it provides its members with, but also to its openness towards others and the world.

As such, the Institute's ties with the United States in particular have always been very strong. It is in fact the famous Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton which served as a model for Leon Motchane, who founded IHES in 1958. These relations are currently stronger than ever, thanks mainly to the Friends of IHES who never cease their efforts to support them, and who organized tonight's auction in order raise the necessary funds for allowing American scientists to work at the IHES research center. Today, American mathematicians, physicists, biologists and IT researchers comprise no less than 30% of the Institute's research staff. And we shall of course not forget to mention the generous donators – The Courlot Collection, Eri Matsui and The Skybox – with the risk of vexing their modesty.

I hand over the floor to Paul Christie, Vice President of the Screen Actor Guild and a well known figure to all of you, who will tell us the story of an equation – a carefully chosen debut for this evening of “Beauty and Mathematics”.

I wish you all an excellent soirée and *bon appétit*.