

# Austria National Day

## Continuing to build bridges through art and culture

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AMBASSADOR OF AUSTRIA



As the ambassador of Austria in Japan, I wish to send my sincere regards to the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the National Day of Austria.

About a month has passed since my arrival in Tokyo and within this short time, I have already welcomed various Austrian artists and cultural institutions that have visited Japan. The promotion of cultural exchange is especially close to my heart, because, while living in a very diverse and sometimes conflicting world, the language of music and art is the only language that is truly understood by everyone.

The advancement of cultural exchange offers a means of building bridges between nations and creating strong bonds between people. Therefore, the "language of arts and music" is indeed the backbone of Austria's relations with Japan.

In October, we were able to welcome the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, which always used to call Japan their



**A Japanese room divider was discovered during renovations of Eggenberg Castle in 2001. It depicts the city of Osaka during its so-called "golden era," of about 400 years ago.**

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"home in Asia." Zubin Mehta and Seiji Ozawa jointly conducted the Philharmonic Gala Concert at Suntory Hall in Tokyo. By performing works of Austrians such as Mozart or Strauss Jr., as well as the great Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, the Vienna Philharmonic underlined again their long-lasting friendship with Japan.

The orchestra's tour is being complemented by the

Vienna State Opera, which is performing through mid-November in Tokyo and Yokohama.

We are also very happy that one of our great institutions in the field of fine art, the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien recently brought an exceptional and very timely exhibition to Japan. The German Renaissance painter Lucas Cranach the Elder is for the first time presented in a

comprehensive exhibition at the National Museum of Western Art.

This cultural connection is crucial for mutual understanding. Not only is Japan happy to welcome Austrian artists — Japanese works have consistently influenced the cultural life in Austria.

A very early example of this artistic interconnection is the sensational discovery of a Japanese room divider during

renovations of the Austrian Eggenberg Castle in 2001. Parts of the room divider were worked into some wall decorations and show the city of Osaka during its "golden era," of about 400 years ago. This golden era was ended by war, which also destroyed all pictures of the city. The discovery of the wall divider was electrifying, as it shows the only remaining pictures of the golden Osaka. Hence, in 2009 Eggenberg Castle and Osaka Castle concluded a sister great-house partnership agreement.

We are very proud that Eggenberg is the only great house outside of Japan that has been accorded the honor of such a sister great-house partnership to further enhance our cultural exchange.

This exchange is also facilitated by the permanent exhibition of Asian art at the Museum of Angewandte Kunst in Vienna. Moreover, this museum is one of the first museums ever to show a major temporary exhibition of shunga erotic paintings, which has just opened this month.

Dance festivals also give music-loving Austrians an opportunity to learn more about the Japanese way of expressing themselves. At the Vienna International Dance

Festival ImPulsTanz Austrian-Japanese dancer Akemi Takeya presented a performance that intertwined both Austrian and Japanese influences.

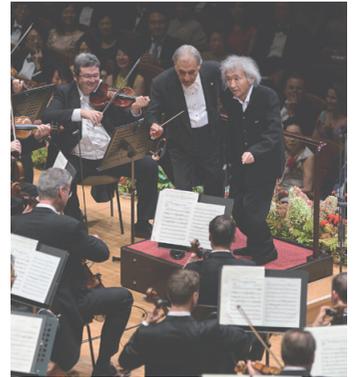
Austria is happy to host a significant number of young Japanese music students in Vienna and the Austrian Cultural Forum regularly gives young Austrian artists the chance to come to Japan to perform, work, study and exhibit here. Many of them engage with Japanese people and their culture, which is often reflected in the artists' works.

The promotion of innova-

tive and creative art is the fundamental aim of Austria's international cultural policy. In this respect, we are led by Gustav Mahler's guideline "Tradition does not mean to worship the ashes, but to pass on the flame."

Within my capacity as the new ambassador of Austria in Japan, I intend to further promote fresh artistic exchange and mutual inspiration among Austrian and Japanese artists to "pass on the flame."

For further information on the Austrian Cultural Forum in Tokyo, please visit <http://austrianculture.jp/>



**The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's Gala Concert at Suntory Hall in Tokyo on Oct. 1 was jointly conducted by both Zubin Mehta and Seiji Ozawa.** BENEDIKT DINKHAUSER

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## Greetings on the Austrian National Day

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