

The spirit of Japan and the United States resonates in this World Heritage city



There are two "World Heritage Cities" in the United States designated by the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), which works with UNESCO. The first of these is Philadelphia, which was designated in 2015. The entire city is a World Heritage Site, and the city is dotted with a huge number of historical sites. In particular, the World Heritage Site "American Independence National Historical Park" is a special place that symbolizes the identity of Americans. An event to honor the achievements of Japanese Americans will be held here on April 7, 2024, and a plan to plant 250 new cherry trees in preparation for the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States in 2026 was announced. The Japan-America Society of Philadelphia, which has contributed to Japan-U.S. friendship for many years, has received great support from the entire city's citizens.

The highlight of the event was a one-of-a-kind ceremony concert, an artistic encounter between Daniel Matsukawa, principal bassoonist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and calligrapher, ink artist, and cultural envoy for the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Rogan Ebihara. *(Photo left: Ebihara's calligraphy)* The concert began with "Lullaby" from Stravinsky's "The Firebird." Matsukawa's bassoon performance created a dignified and tranquil atmosphere on the reception terrace. Ebihara then appeared, and the performance shifted to "Meguri" by Toru Takemitsu. The piece was composed to commemorate the sculptor Isamu Noguchi, who was subjected to discrimination in both Japan and the United States. Ebihara continued to grind his ink while taking in the piece with all his senses. When the music stopped and the tension reached its peak, Ebihara stood up and brushed his brush powerfully and delicately. The result was two books: "Wa" (Wa) and "Inori" (Prayer).

Matsukawa then began the finale, "Homeward," from Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World." Gazing at the freshly completed "Wa" and "Inori," the ink still wet, the participants no doubt listened to "Homeward" with the same feelings. A sense of unity is created by the common value of "wa," which runs through the foundations of Japanese culture. It was a moment when the Japanese and American participants became one as they led everyone in a prayer for the homeward journey.



Daniel Matsukawa (left) and Visitor Centre Deputy Director Maita Soukup



Calligrapher, Sumi artist and Cultural Envoy for the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Ebiwara Rogan and Independence National Historical Park Chief Executive Steven Sims

These two pieces of calligraphy have been dedicated to the Independence National Historical Park, and the park has decided to exhibit both pieces on a large scale at the visitor center every May. May is the US's AAPI Heritage Month, and through Ebiwara's work, the park hopes to celebrate how immigrant diversity has enriched America in the birthplace of the United States. The pieces will be labeled in English with "Inori (Praying)" and "Wa (Harmony & Peace)."

"It is deeply moving and makes me proud as a Japanese person that an event celebrating the achievements of Japanese Americans has resulted in the creation of art that fuses Japanese and American culture and has raised the profile of Asian Americans as a whole. These two pieces of calligraphy are sure to unite the hearts of those who see them as symbols of American diversity."

Vice President, Japan America Society of Philadelphia

Ren Egawa

He has been involved in cutting-edge technology development and new market development in the tech industry in Japan, the US and Europe for over 30 years. While working at Panasonic, he developed a new broadcasting system and promoted it at the FCC (Federal Communications Commission). He led it to become a global standard and received the Head Office Executive Award. He served as a next-generation GPU developer at SRI in the US and software strategy chief at ST in France and Italy. He is currently CEO of Rexcel Group in the US, where he manages the innovation promotion business. He is also involved in volunteer activities as vice

president of the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia, advisory committee member for the Asian American Chamber of Commerce, advisory committee member for the Opera Promotion Advisory Committee, and Philadelphia Orchestra Ambassador.