



Board Chair Matt Magenheim, Award Recipient Michael Stern, and Founder Kenro Izu

Hundreds Attend NY Gala to Support Children's Hospital in Laos

More than 300 supporters of Friends Without A Border attended the organization's 16th Annual New York Gala on April 5 at The Edison Ballroom in Manhattan.

The event raised over \$380,000 for Lao Friends Hospital for Children (LFHC), which the organization operates in Laos. Friends Without A Border (Friends) is a New York-based non-profit organization that was founded in 1996 by photographer Kenro Izu.

After successfully building the Angkor Hospital for Children in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in 1999, Friends launched the LFHC in 2015.

A video shown at the gala highlighted the work of the doctors and nurses at the Laos hospital by telling the story of a premature baby, who was brought to the facility right after their birth, and hospitalized for six months. The video underscored the hospital's mission to provide compassionate care as well as medical treatment.

The gala also featured a presentation by Dr. Eric Fleegler of Boston Children's Hospital, who spoke about his recent volunteer experience at LFHC.

The organization presented its Best Friend of Friends Award to longtime board member Michael Stern, and the Excellence in Corporate Leadership Award to Martina Hund-Mejean, CFO of Mastercard.

Gala attendees bid on fine hotel packages and exquisite gift items from Southeast Asia during live and silent auctions. Supporters also made generous donations toward the salaries of doctors and nurses, and for neonatal care. For more information, visit www.fwb.org.

(Written and Translated by Friends, Photo by Ellen Wallop)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

The Metropolitan Museum of Art First-Ever Endowed Curatorial Position for Japanese Decorative Arts

Monika Bincsik named Diane and Arthur Abbey Assistant Curator for Japanese Decorative Arts

Each year, The Metropolitan Museum of Art mounts special exhibitions in its Arts of Japan galleries to showcase and introduce its superb collection of Japanese art to visitors from around the world. The most recent of these, Japanese Bamboo Art: The Abbey Collection (June 2017–February 2018) attracted over 400,000 visitors, proving even more successful than the Museum initially predicted, and garnering positive attention. A well-known New York Times art critic not only praised the exhibition, but also named it as one of the top



Mr. and Mrs. Abbey

ten exhibitions of the year.

Mr. and Mrs. Abbey, globally renowned collectors of bamboo art and generous supporters of the exhibition, were thrilled by its overwhelming success. The positive reception strengthened their ambition to utilize their collected masterpieces to introduce a wider audience to the significance of Japanese decorative arts.

In the interest of achieving this goal, the Abbeys endowed The Met's first curatorial chair in Japanese decorative arts, making it possible for the Museum to bring on a full-time employee specializing in the subject. With this generous donation, the Diane and



Ms. Monika Bincsik

Arthur Abbey Curatorship for Japanese Decorative Arts was established. Fittingly, the first appointee to the position is Ms. Monika Bincsik, curator of Japanese Bamboo Art: The Abbey Collection.

Born and raised in Hungary, Ms. Bincsik studied nineteenth-century

European paintings at Budapest University, where she encountered Japonisme (many Impressionist painters were influenced by *ukiyo-e*) and was captivated by the beauty of Japanese lacquers. She recalls, "When I saw them for the first time, I was convinced that they represented the Japanese aesthetic." With scholarships awarded by Japan's Ministry of Education, she pursued further studies of Japanese decorative arts at Kyoto University and Ritsumeikan University, and worked under the tutelage of Mr. Akio Haino of the Kyoto National Museum.

Ms. Bincsik has been with The Met for five years. Prior to accepting the new position, she worked as an assistant curator in the Asian Arts Department. She holds two PhDs in the field of Japanese decorative arts, and is fluent in the language.

The endowment guarantees that The Met will have a full-time specialist in Japanese decorative arts on-site, enabling it to care for delicate works and expand its international audience. Alongside curator John Carpenter, who also specializes in Japanese art at The Met, Ms. Bincsik is now a "Formidable Guardian" of Japanese art. "Sometime in the future, I would love to organize an exhibition presenting the history of Japanese lacquer art and *maki-e*," she commented in impeccable Japanese. (Written by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kunio Shimura)

La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club Receives Tony Regional Theater Award

Shuji Terayama, Tokyo Kid Brothers, Kazuo Ohno among those who gave performances there

Candidates for the Tony Awards and the American Theatrical Awards were announced on May 1. A day earlier, April 30, it was decided that its Regional Theater Award, a Tony special award, would go to the La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, an East Village theater. The theater was founded by the late Ellen Stewart, and many avant-garde stage artists of America and foreign countries presented their arts there to the world.

Drama critic Noriko Sengoku said, "It is a surprise and a pleasure to learn that the La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, which is deeply related to Japan, was selected for the Regional Theater Tony Award as the best theater among over 2,000 regional theaters all over America. La MaMa has a very long

history with Japanese theatrical persons, with Shuji Terayama, Tokyo Kid Brothers and Kazuo Ohno among those who gave their performances there. The most impres-

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sive memory was that nearly 100 Japanese patrons had donated to La MaMa when the theater nearly went bankrupt due to financial difficulties 25 years ago. Although Founder Ellen Stewart died just before its 50th anniversary, her young staff, who

inherited her will, received that bright news. Right now, La MaMa is beginning its old headquarters renovation, and requires another donation."

Stage art critic Toshi Cappuccino mentioned: "Although the opening of 'Frozen' was talked about in this year's musical season, overall there were less new openings and no especially outstanding production. Any musical, if opened, would highly likely win a production award this season. It was overall a poor production year." But, "In dramas, on the other hand, 'Angels in America,'

'Harry Potter' and other British dramas were extraordinarily overwhelmingly, with talented performances by star casts such as Andrew Garfield and Nathan Lane. I have a strong interest in how many Tony awards will be given to 'SpongeBob SquarePants', which has received 12 division nominations. It will also be very interesting to watch how new drama productions and revival productions will be judged."

(Written by Kaoru Komi/Translated by Kunio Shimura)

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●Focusing historical issue from the overseas point of view chapter 9

The Comfort Women A fabricated story as a tool of bashing Japan! Don't let that change true fact

I was born in 1930. I am in the same generation of those "comfort women" who allegedly insist that they were abducted by the soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army and forced to become sex slaves - or so called "comfort women." I am a living witness of the upheaval Showa era of Japan. Although I have the deepest sympathies for those who were born in poor families and who were forced to engage in professions which would yield much greater amount of money than factory workers or baby sitters, I am appalled by the allegations which these comfort women appealed at the meeting of the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations. As witnesses of the most inhumane acts done by the Japanese Imperial Army whose allegations, for the most part, do not match the backgrounds of that time, it is indeed a shameless act by the Korean Government to use old women as witness at the international scene and let them speak the fabricated story which has already been denied by the Japanese people who live in the same generation.

In August 1945, Japan lost the war and was occupied by the Allied Forces led by General Douglas MacArthur. The GHQ (General

Headquarters) was very eager to change Japan towards modern society, particularly the social status of women. The gates of good colleges, which were opened only to male students, had to open their gates equally to women. Japanese women over 20 years old were given voting rights and freedom of marriage, by which allowed women to marry men they chose without their parents' consent. The most notable change was the abolition of licensed prostitution. Until 70 years ago, it was notable that chronically poor families had many children, and even before they could finish elementary school, many girls of poor families had to work as babysitters, factory workers, and at other low-wage jobs. Some girls, particularly good-looking girls, were adopted by the owners of licensed prostitution houses and were taught about their jobs until they reached the legal age of 17 to work as prostitutes. In those days when I was a child, I noticed a big advertisement on the pole at the corner of streets that read "Help wanted - Girls for Brothel". I asked my mother what a brothel was, and she quickly said "Children don't have to know." Before 1945, it was obvious that many women who were born in

poor families took that kind of job at their own will in order to bring some money to their family.

Those Koreans, who are completely ignorant about the history of their own country, use "comfort women" as a tool of Japan bashing. What shameless people they are! Furthermore, in Japan, there are some people, including a honorary professor of one of the top ranking universities, who believe the fabricated story of the comfort women. Without having a bit of knowledge about the history of the feudalistic society both in Japan and Korea, those Koreans who immigrated to the U.S. with their parents and were educated in the U.S. believe the fabricated story of comfort women, and are actively working with local governments to build comfort women statues in public places such as play grounds and parks. How ignorant and shameless they are!

In June 22, 1965, The Treaty for the Basic Agreement for the Normalization of the Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was signed by the Prime Minister of Japan and by the President of Korea. Since the first meeting to discuss the treaty was held

in February 1952, it took 15 years to conclude the finalization of the Treaty. After numerous negotiations, both governments finally agreed that Japan will pay the total of \$800 million as an indemnity. The assets of about \$530 million owned by the Japanese government and Japanese residents in the Korean Peninsula were confiscated. During the negotiations, the Japanese Government suggested that such individual claims as forced laborers and comfort women will be taken care of by the Japanese Government. However, the Korean Government insisted that the individual compensation will be taken care of by the Korean Government.

In December 2015, Japan again paid \$100 thousand dollars by the request of the then Korean President, and both countries agreed that this issue is irreversibly solved. However, some Koreans still insist to build comfort women statues in the U.S. and Canada.

In the past, the Japanese Government paid twice.

Yoko Wiles
Publisher Potomac Newsletter