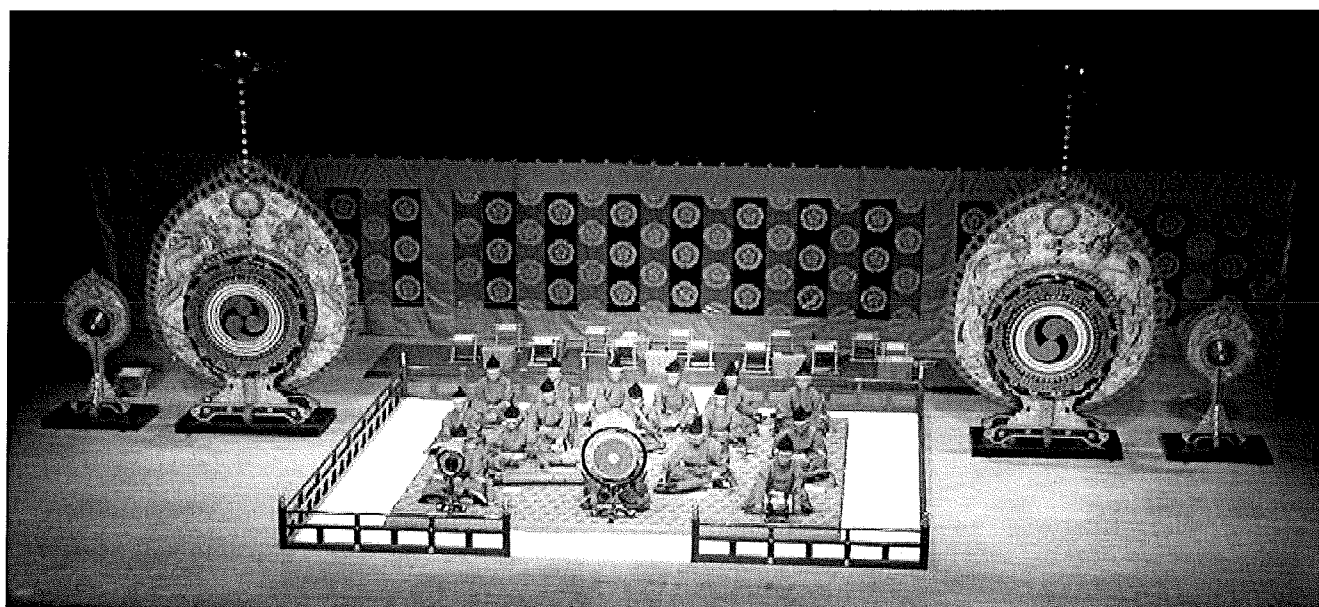


# **2014 The “Seigaiha” Concert**

**at the Danube, the Rhine and Mediterranean Regions**



**JAPAN**FOUNDATION 

**Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble**

## The Purport of Our Concert

The East and West have a long history of interacting with one another from ancient to modern times. At this concert, we set this interaction as our theme, and strive to contribute toward world peace through *Gagaku*, a fitting representative of the uniqueness of Japanese culture. The tradition of *Gagaku* has been kept for more than one thousand years. It is our sincere hope that our concert will be helpful in promoting a mutual understanding of *Gagaku's* world heritage value at venues where Western music is highly regarded.

The first performance will be *Kuniburi no Utamai, Urayasu no mai*. This is a native-style dance of Japan. The dancer wears a *Jyunihitoe* (twelve-layered ceremonial kimono), the top formal attire of Japanese women in the Imperial Court. The dance is based on a Showa Emperor's poem expressing his desire for peace. The dancer performs wholeheartedly, praying for eternal peace.

Following the dance, we will hear the elegant sound of instruments which have been perfected and preserved over a thousand year history in order to create high music artistry. Then, one of the most well known and elegant running dances, *Ryô-o*, is preformed.

The last dance piece is called *Segaiha* which expresses the vast inclusiveness of the sea and the universality of the coming and retreating of the waves. The dance goes beyond time and space to bring a sense of unity among the audience. For this dance, musicians wear a gorgeous *Kasane-shozoku* costume and together with the dancer's most famous costumes among *Bugaku* dances will create a multi-faceted effect to fascinate the audience.

## Program Description

### 【Part 1】

***Bugaku*, dance « *Urayasu no mai* »** (15 min)



In 1940, to commemorate the 2600<sup>th</sup> year of Japanese imperial history, Tadatomo Ohno, then head of the Imperial Household Agency's Music Department composed music and choreographed a dance based on the poem written by Emperor *Showa* (1901-1989). Following are the poem and an English translation:

*Ame tsuchi no kami nizo inoru asanagi no Umi no gotoku ni nami tatanu yo wo* “I pray to God, creator of the universe, for a peaceful world - a calm world like a morning sea.”

From ancient times, Japan has been referred to as *Urayasu no kuni*, which means “the land of natural beauty, where serenity reigns.” The name of the dance *Urayasu* translates as “peaceful mind” and derives from it, in hopes for peace. There are two types of *mai* in this dance: *Ôgi no mai*, which uses fans, and *Suzu no mai*, which uses bells as props. These are solemn, graceful dances with a gentle rhythm.

**Presentation of the instruments** (15 min)

*Kangen* includes three kinds of wind instruments, two kinds of string instruments, and three kinds of percussion instruments. These instruments have not changed their forms to the present time.

Percussion instruments: *Kakko* (small drum), *Taiko* (large drum)

*Shôko* (small metal percussion)

String instruments: *Biwa* (lute), *Sô* (long zither)

Wind instruments: *Shô* (free-reed mouth organ), *Hichiriki* (small double-reed Japanese flute), *Ryûteki* (transverse bamboo flute)

**Kangen, music «Ôshikichô no Netori» (2 min)**

*Ôshikichô* is one form of the Chinese music *Tôgaku* (*Gagaku* music of Chinese origin). It follows a mode whose fundamental note is “La” in the western music. *Netori* is a short piece of music which serves as an introduction and which is generally played at the beginning of a concert, to tune the instruments and to indicate to the audience which kind of music is going to follow. This gives the atmosphere of the concert.

We may say that it is a highly stylized chord to adapt the scale of sounds. The main player of each instrument plays the piece in the following order: *Shô*, *Hichiriki*, *Ryûteki*, *Kakko*, *Biwa* and *Sô*.

**Kangen, music «Kaisei-raku, music of the blue sea» (9 min)**

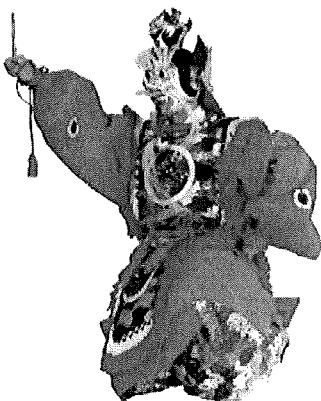
When Emperor *Ninmyô* (who reigned from 833 to 850) visited the *Sinsen-en* garden, he ordered the musicians who played *Gagaku* on the boat to compose a new partition while they turned three times around the pond and play it on the island which was in the middle of this pond. It was this piece *Kaisei-raku* which was immediately composed and performed by the flute player *Oodo Kiyoue* and the *Hichiriki* player *Nyômaroj*.

It has a rhythm of 4/4 and 8 small passages which form a phrase.

Intermission (20 min)

**【Part 2】**

**Bugaku, Dance «Ryô-ô» (20 min)**



The dance portrays the story of *Chokyo*, King of the Northern *Qi* Dynasty (551-577 A.D.), who had such a beautiful face that he could not inspire courage amongst his soldiers on the battle field. To solve this dilemma, he wore a fierce looking mask and assumed greater command of his army. This piece is said to have been composed by his subordinates, who praise *Chokyo*'s valor. It is a solitary dance. A dancer moves

in a brave and elegant fashion wearing a soldier's ceremonial costume with a hairy border, and a mask with a dragon's head and holding a golden stick in his right hand.

***Bugaku*, dance « *Seigaiha*, a wave of the blue sea » (20 min)**



Such as the waves of the sea which repeat their movement eternally, the dance *Seigaiha*, a wave of the blue sea, describes the universal motion of the tide coming and going. The name of this musical piece derives from that of a region West of China. This music was modified at the time of *Heian* in Japan and since then the costumes and the movements of the dance were likened to the blue sea.

In the chapter *Momijiga*, red maples of the novel «The Tale of *Genji*» written by *Murasaki-shikibu* a thousand years ago, the *Seigaiha* dance realized by the hero *Hikaru-Genji* and his rival *Tô-no-Chûjô*, was described as a symbol of prosperity of the culture in the Imperial Court.

It is also said that the costume used is the most beautiful and luxurious amongst the numerous *Bugaku* costumes. The top tunic is called *Seigaiha* on which about 70 birds are embroidered on to represent the waves of the blue sea. The headpiece and sword are also decorated with the design of the waves. The coming and retreating of the waves are choreographed in the dance and similarly the percussion instruments also have a way to create these unique waves.

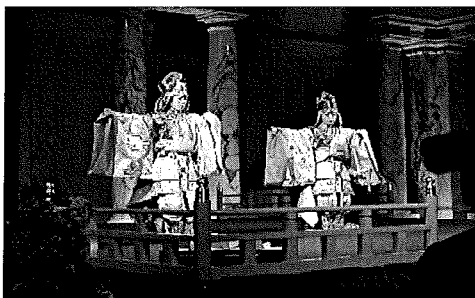
## Performer profile : Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble

In July 2011, Kitanodai Gagaku Kai, established in 1982, filed an application to the Cabinet Office of the Japanese government in order to obtain status as a public organization to smooth its overseas activities. In November 2012, it was granted this status and became the public interest incorporated association, Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble. The objective of the Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble is to promote international cultural exchanges and to educate and raise the aesthetic sensibilities of young people through *Gagaku*, a classical Japanese art form with a rich, thousand-year history and high international recognition. From its inception, the Ensemble studied under the late Mr. Fumitaka Thogi, the former chief court musician of the Music Department of the Imperial Household Agency of Japan and currently receives lessons from Mr. Shogo Anzai, the ex-chief court musician of the Music Department at the Agency.

The Ensemble has held many *Gagaku* concerts and workshops in Japan as well as abroad in Australia, USA, Europe, India and Tunisia.

### 【Major performances】

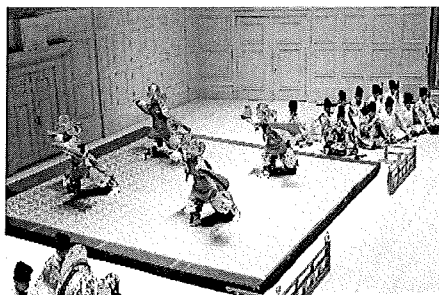
“2005 EU-Japan Year of People-to-people Exchanges” performances in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Luxembourg, Frankfurt.



“Japan-Danube Friendship year 2009” in Vienna



Concert in Luxembourg 2011



2012 The Japan-U.S. Cherry Blossom Centennial Celebration (The Boston Symphony Hall)



2013 Performance at Berklee College of Music in Boston

## What is *Gagaku*?

*Gagaku* is the oldest traditional performing art form in Japan, as well as in the world, with a history of more than one thousand years. Since its perfection in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, *Gagaku* preserved and handed down its ancient style to the present day. It is very rare to see such a historically valuable cultural asset of music and *Gagaku* is regarded as the oldest orchestra in the world.

*Gagaku* represents the oldest classical music in Japan which was based on and influenced by not only Japanese native music but also music of the Asian continent. It used to be performed mainly in the Imperial court, in aristocratic society, and at major shrines and temples.

*Gagaku* has three forms of performance: *Kangen* (winds and strings), *Bugaku* (music and dances), and *Kayo* (songs and recitations). *Kangen* is performed with only string, wind and percussion instrument. *Bugaku* consists of music and dance. *Kayo* refers to the chanting of Chinese and Japanese poetry with Chinese and Korean music, used to be sung by aristocrats who were fond of foreign music during the *Heian* period (794-1185).

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