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An explosive way to send peace message to a warring Russia

Вибуховий спосіб надіслати мирне послання воюючій росії

Йошікадзу Конно вважає, що порох донесе його послання до його молитви за мир в Україні, коли він і його колеги-піротехніки освітлять нічне небо 26 серпня сліпучим феєрверком. Піротехніки покажуть соняшник, національну квітку України, на фоні фортепіанної сюїти російського композитора Мусоргського «Картинки з виставки» під час одного з трьох найбільших фестивалів феєрверків. Конно сказав, що він був дуже засмучений постійним потоком повідомлень про жертви в результаті вторгнення росії в Україну з лютого минулого року. «Не слід використовувати порох для війни», — думав він, задаючись питанням: «Що я можу зробити?». Великий феєрверк живе 10 секунд: сім секунд до вибуху та три секунди магії в небі. Незважаючи на його короткий термін існування, Конно вважає, що феєрверк на тему соняшників на фоні музики Мусоргського передасть потужне послання миру через світло та звук.

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Yoshikazu Konno reckons gunpowder will get his message across in his prayers for peace in Ukraine when he and fellow pyrotechnicians light up the night sky here Aug. 26 with a dazzling fireworks display.

The pyrotechnicians will display sunflowers, Ukraine's national flower, against the backdrop of Russian composer Mussorgsky's piano suite "Pictures at an Exhibition" during the Omagari Hanabi, one of the nation's three largest fireworks festivals.

"I hope both countries will respect each other in things that they are strong in and value," said Konno, 59, the fourth-generation president of Kitanihon Hanabi, a Daisen-based fireworks manufacturer founded in 1899.

A pioneer in fireworks displays to accompanying music, Konno is known as an "entertainer" in the pyrotechnics industry.

He firmly believes that gunpowder, the key ingredient of any firework, should be used for peace, not war. Konno has felt that way since he visited West Berlin in August 1987, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall that divided East and West Germany.

A group of 20 pyrotechnicians had been invited to a festival to celebrate the 750th anniversary of Berlin being incorporated as a city. Konno, who had joined the family business less than a year earlier, traveled to West Germany in place of his father, who was too busy to attend.

He recalled his shock at encountering bullet holes in walls across West Berlin. A memorial marker stood for East Germans who had sought freedom by attempting to scale the barrier erected around the city and paid for it with their lives.

"While a wall stands on the ground, there is no wall in the sky," the leader of the delegation of pyrotechnicians told local reporters. "We hope that people in the West and the East alike will enjoy our fireworks display."

His words have since served as a guide in Konno's professional life.

Konno's contribution to the festival was a firework themed on Japan's four seasons. He prayed it would be seen by East Germans as well.

"I felt in my bones that gunpowder, which is often used to kill people, could also become a tool to move the hearts of people," he said.

Konno has visited South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Canada to present fireworks displays.

“Fireworks can touch hearts universally, regardless of race or language,” he said.

But peace and security are essential for pyrotechnicians to demonstrate their craft.

Konno said he had been greatly distressed by the steady stream of reports of casualties from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine since February last year.

“Gunpowder should not be used for war,” he thought. “What can I do?”

A large firework has a life of 10 seconds: seven seconds before it explodes and three seconds of magic in the sky.

Despite its brief life, Konno believes the sunflower-themed firework against Mussorgsky’s music will convey a powerful message for peace through light and sound.