

2026-2027



# SEA BRIDGES | 海の架け橋

MUSIC,  
MEMORY,  
AND SHARED  
FUTURE

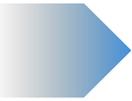


Presented By :  
**Patricia Vlieg**  
**Vilma Esquivel**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Vision at a Glance

1977



Sea Bridges (海の架け橋) is a binational cultural initiative marking the 50th anniversary of the Panama-Imabari sister-city relationship (1977-2027) through music, youth participation, and shared creation.

The initiative centers on a two-week artistic residency in Imabari, where Panamanian and Japanese artists work together with local youth ensembles to co-create new material. Two major public concerts—one didactic and one open to the general public—alongside educational activities that emphasize collaboration rather than a one-time performance.

As part of the initiative, one Panamanian videographer and one Japanese videographer are selected through an open call and awarded a fully supported residency to document the project. Their work contributes to the initiative's cultural memory and educational materials.

2027



Building on a successful collaborative concert in Imabari in 2019, Sea Bridges proposes a model of cultural exchange based on mutual learning, active youth involvement, and lived intercultural experience, transforming fifty years of friendship into a future-oriented celebration connecting generations and cultures through music.

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# WHY THIS INITIATIVE MATTERS

## **For Imabari City**

- Positions Imabari as an internationally engaged cultural city
- Strengthens civic pride through active participation of local children and youth
- Creates educational and cultural materials for long-term community use
- Deepens the meaning of the sister-city relationship beyond formal ceremonies

## **For Panama–Japan Relations**

- Translates diplomatic history into people-to-people connection
- Builds continuity after Expo 2025 and recent bilateral milestones
- Places youth at the center of future-oriented cooperation

## **For Institutional and Cultural Partners**

- Aligns with education, youth engagement, and cultural diplomacy priorities
- Offers a high-visibility initiative with controlled scope and risk
- Emphasizes memory, documentation, and long-term value



# CORE IDEA:

## CONNECTION AS LIVED EXPERIENCE

Sea Bridges is based on a simple principle:

Where infrastructure connects economies, culture connects people.

Through music and shared artistic practice, the initiative translates historical ties into human experience, allowing participants and audiences to live the exchange rather than observe it.



# WHO IS PARTICIPATING

## Leadership

### **Artistic Director**

- Patricia Vlieg (Panama)
- Singer-songwriter and composer responsible for the artistic vision, repertoire, and co-creation process.

### **General Producer & Cultural Manager**

- Vilma Esquivel (Panama)
- Responsible for overall coordination, institutional relations, production management, and integration of artistic, educational, and cultural components.

## Artistic Participants

### **Panamanian Artists in Residence**

- Patricia Vlieg – Voice, piano, composition
- Vilma Esquivel – Classical guitar, coordination
- Milagros Blades – Percussion and rhythm workshops
- VITRADANZAS Academy Dancers (2) – Panamanian folkloric dance
- Additional Panamanian musician (1) – Accordeon or percussion
- Photographer/videographer (1)

### **Japanese Artists in Residence**

- Miwa Inaba – Koto, shamisen, co-artistic direction
- Tomohiro Yahiro – Percussion
- Local musicians from Imabari / Ehime Prefecture
- Photographer/videographer (1)

# Youth and Community Participants

## **In Imabari**

- Imabari Children's and Youth Choir (approx. 20-30 participants)
- Local instrumental ensemble (municipal, community, or university-based)
- Local taiko group (8-12 performers)

Youth participate throughout the residency, not only in the final performances.



# THE ARTISTIC RESIDENCY: HOW IT WORKS

**Duration: two weeks (March 2027)**

**Location: Imabari City**

The residency is a shared working and learning environment, not a tour.

Week 1 - Encounter and Listening - Co-Creation and Learning

- Arrival and orientation
- First encounters among artists and youth ensembles
- Listening sessions and informal rehearsals
- Exchange of musical traditions and working methods
- Development of intercultural arrangements and compositions
- Joint rehearsals between professionals and youth
- Educational workshops in schools and community spaces

Week 2 - Integration and Public Sharing

- Full ensemble rehearsals
- Technical integration (sound, lighting, staging)
- Two major public concerts (didactic and public)
- Documentation of the artistic and educational process



# FROM RESIDENCY TO CELEBRATION

The two public concerts in Imabari are the visible outcome of:

- Two weeks of shared artistic work
- Continuous youth participation
- Intercultural collaboration lived day by day

Audiences witness not a visiting performance, but the result of a process already lived together.



# SIMPLIFIED BUDGET LOGIC

Budget Block	%	JPY (Approx.)	Japanese Perspective (How it Reads)
Artistic Creation & Talent	38%	¥3,105,000	Professional fees for Panamanian and Japanese artists; composition,
Production & Technical Quality	23%	¥1,900,000	Venue rental and basic hall services; professional sound engineering and
International Mobility & Logistics	22%	¥1,797,000	Economy-class international airfare; modest accommodation during the
Education, Youth & Community Activities	11%	¥899,000	School-based workshops and demonstrations; participation of
Documentation, Communication & Legacy	6%	¥469,000	Basic professional video and audio recording; archival documentation for
TOTAL	100%	¥8,170,000	

The budget presented for Sea Bridges is preliminary and indicative, intended to provide a clear planning framework while remaining flexible. Final figures will be refined in consultation with partners and aligned with the scope of institutional collaboration and in-kind contributions.

# PATRICIA Vlieg

Patricia Vlieg is an internationally acclaimed Panamanian singer, pianist, guitarist, composer, arranger, poet, and musical researcher whose work bridges cultures through the transformative power of music. Her artistry weaves together Latin American musical traditions, jazz, and world music, creating performances that are both emotionally resonant and intellectually engaging.

Born in Panama, Patricia graduated from Berklee College of Music in Boston and pursued advanced vocal studies at the New England Conservatory of Music. Her distinguished discography includes *Tus Promesas* (2001), *Origen* (2005), *A una Cantora* (2011)—a widely celebrated tribute to Mercedes Sosa that brought her international recognition—and *Cabanga* (2015), an evocative journey through emblematic Panamanian songs also released in Japan.

Beyond the stage, Patricia has made significant contributions to music education and leadership. She has been invited as a lecturer to the Berklee Latino Program and has served on the teaching faculty of the Music Business Diploma Program at Ciudad del Saber (City of Knowledge) and the IESA School of Management, in addition to teaching at the University of Panama.

As a soloist, Patricia has performed on prestigious stages across the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Her collaborations with world-renowned artists such as Paquito D'Rivera, Lila Downs, Popi Spatocco, Lilian Saba, Cheo Hurtado, Aquiles Báez, and Japanese percussionist Tomohiro Yahiro reflect her versatility and her ability to create meaningful musical dialogue across genres and cultures.

Performing and engaging audiences in multiple languages, Patricia creates an inclusive and intimate atmosphere in which music, story, and cultural dialogue naturally converge. Equally recognized as an inspiring speaker, she uses music as a platform to explore themes of cultural exchange, inclusion, empathy, and the role of the arts as a catalyst for human development.

Patricia is the creator and host of the weekly series *Puentes y Diálogos* (Bridges and Dialogues 架け橋), dedicated to conversations and artistic collaborations that promote intercultural understanding through music. She has built sustained cultural bridges between Panama and Japan since 2011, curating concerts and experiences that celebrate diplomacy through the arts, including her 2019 Japan tour celebrating the 500th anniversary of Panama City and 2024 concerts honoring 120 years of diplomatic relations between Panama and Japan, recognized by the Japanese Embassy in Panama for her contributions to cultural diplomacy.

Her artistic excellence and social commitment have been honored with numerous awards from Berklee College of Music, including the Quincy Jones Award, the Solo and Ensemble Award, and the Professional Achievement Award, as well as recognitions from governmental, civic, and scientific institutions in Panama and abroad.

Recently completing her Master of Arts in International Relations and Peace Studies at Soka University in Tokyo, Patricia expands her work at the intersection of culture and peacebuilding. Through her interdisciplinary approach combining artistic excellence, education, and peacebuilding research, she demonstrates music's power as a catalyst for intercultural understanding, empathy, social cohesion, and sustainable peace across diverse communities worldwide.

Through every performance and dialogue, Patricia Vlieg invites audiences into a shared space where music becomes a bridge—connecting histories, cultures, and people across the world.

# VILMA ESQUIVEL

Panamanian professional with more than three decades of experience in international coordination, institutional management, and the development of complex programs, currently based in Tokyo, Japan. She combines a solid trajectory within the United Nations system (UNDP, UNICEF, Spotlight Initiative) with expertise in cultural management, public diplomacy, and the building of intercultural bridges between Panama, Latin America, and Asia.

## CORE COMPETENCIES

### International and Multilateral Experience

- Over 15 years working within the United Nations system (UNDP, UNICEF, Spotlight Initiative) in regional and national programs
- Coordination of multi-country initiatives across the Caribbean and Latin America
- Management of institutional relations with governments, international organizations, and civil society
- Direct experience living and working in Japan, with in-depth understanding of the Japanese cultural and institutional context

### Institutional Representation and Leadership

- Founder and President of the Panamanian Association of Music Therapy (2020–2022)
- Led advocacy processes resulting in the approval of the Music Therapy Law in Panama
- Strategic relationship management with international cultural institutions
- Demonstrated ability to represent institutional interests before diverse stakeholders

### Program Management and Complex Coordination

- Design and implementation of knowledge management strategies and digital systems in institutional contexts
- Coordination of multi-dimensional cultural and development projects
- Administrative, financial, and compliance oversight in international programs
- Leadership of multicultural and multidisciplinary teams

### Strategic Communication

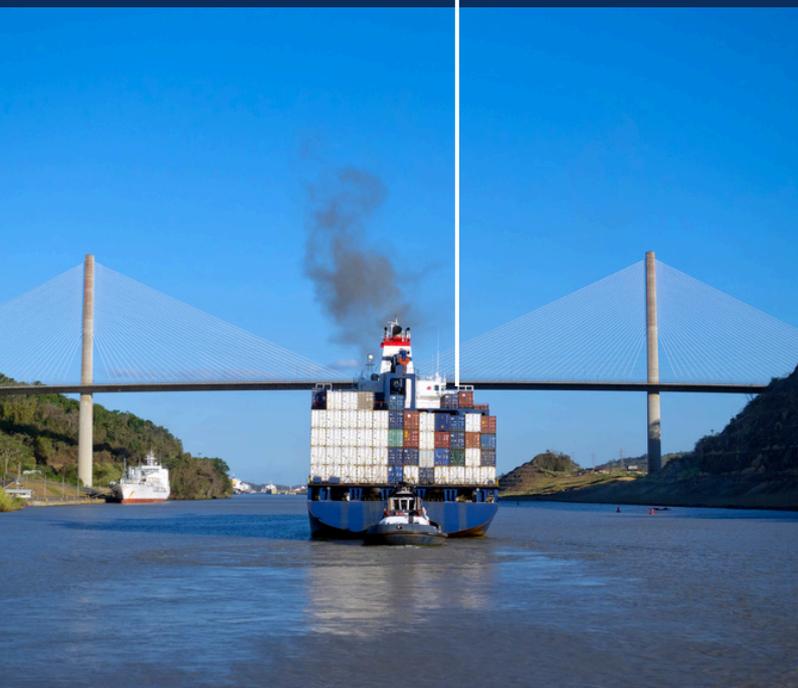
- Ten years directing corporate communications and brand strategy in the private sector
- Audiovisual production and strategic storytelling for diverse audiences
- Design of institutional communication and organizational transformation strategies
- Professional fluency in Spanish and English

### Knowledge of Japan and Intercultural Competence

- Currently completing a Master's degree in International Relations and Peace Studies at Soka University, Japan (2026)
- Established residency in Tokyo with deep understanding of Japanese social, cultural, and institutional dynamics
- Academic research focused on relational approaches and intercultural practice
- Experience navigating complex institutional systems in multicultural environments

## ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

- Master's Degree in International Relations and Peace Studies – Soka University, Japan (2026)
- Bachelor's Degree in Music Therapy – The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.
- Certificate in Marketing – Universidad de La Sabana / Universidad Santa María La Antigua
- Certification in Coaching – Belbin Methodology



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