

**Speech given by Josef Ostermayer, Austrian Federal Minister for Arts, Culture, Constitution and Public Service, on the conferral of the title "Professor" to Placido Domingo at the Europa Nostra Gala in Vienna's Burgtheater, 5th May 2014**

Commissioner Vassiliou,  
President Domingo,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

It is my privilege to take the stage for a second time today, and it is my pleasure to share this moment with an extraordinary personality. Once again, I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to one of the greatest artists of our time.

The person whose achievements I would like to celebrate was born in Madrid on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1941, and from 1949 onward he spent his childhood in Mexico, where he went on to study piano, conducting, and later singing.

In 1959, he celebrated his opera debut at the Mexican National Opera in Mexico City. In 1961, he sang his first leading role as Alfredo in Verdi's *La Traviata* in Monterrey, Mexico. His international career soared to even greater heights in 1966, when he enjoyed critical acclaim as Don Rodrigo in Alberto Ginastera's *El Cid* at the New York City Opera.

By now I am sure you have all realised who I'm talking about – one of the most extraordinary singers and one of the greatest all-around musical talents of our time: Placido Domingo.

His truly remarkable singing career, in which he has brought joy to people all over the world for decades, has been complemented by his success as a conductor in recent years. To date, he has appeared on stage some 3,700 times and in 144 different roles, as well as spending 500 evenings at the head of the orchestra.

He also cares a great deal about sharing his artistic genius with the younger generation – and using his enormous talent to exert a positive impact on society. For example, he founded the annual opera contest

"Operalia" in 1993 in order to identify and promote the world's most promising young opera singers.

He has also repeatedly shown great generosity and commitment to humanitarian causes, in particular by lending his support to aid projects all over the world. In addition, this evening we have all had the opportunity to witness Mr. Domingo's dedication to cultural heritage and its preservation for the coming centuries.

For many years now, Placido Domingo and his art have also been a great enrichment to Austria:

At the Vienna State Opera alone, he has graced us with no less than 242 performances as a singer or conductor since 1967. He also stood at the conductor's podium when the *Theater an der Wien* – Vienna's New Opera House – was re-opened in 2006.

His most recent performance in Austria was in the role of Nabucco at the Vienna State Opera yesterday. At the upcoming Salzburg Festival, we will also be able to admire his work in Max Reger's *Requiem* and Verdi's *Il Trovatore*.

For our country, he has been a great ambassador of Austrian culture all over the world. And given that he celebrated his 40<sup>th</sup> stage anniversary with a gala evening at the Vienna State Opera in 2007, it would seem that he appreciates Austria as much as we appreciate him.

For that, we are both honoured and grateful.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna has provided me with a clearly affirmative opinion which now allows me to confer upon you, Mr. Domingo, the title of "Professor" on behalf of the Republic of Austria. Please accept it as a token of our deep gratitude and recognition of your extraordinary achievements.

Congratulations!