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Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association

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### Message to the Friends

Following the twin catastrophes of the earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan, we offer our deepest condolences to all the victims of this unprecedented tragedy, as well as our sincere prayers for the safety of the many thousands of people who have been displaced in the affected areas. In turn, we would also like to express our heartfelt appreciation to everyone around the world for their sincere concern and encouragement at this difficult time.

As an institution of musical culture, the Min-On Concert Association will do everything it can to help and support the people of Japan through the power of music, and to facilitate the speedy recovery and revitalization of our country.

The Min-On Concert Association

## The Orquesta Color Tango Presents Dramatic Tango—Golden Rhythm Across Japan



Chizuko Kuwamoto and Diego Ortega (right) with other world-class tango dancers perform with the Orquesta Color Tango

The Min-On Concert Association has long conducted cultural exchange activities with Argentina. Launched in 1970 with a concert by the internationally renowned Orquesta Jose Basso, the series has continued on an annual basis with a number of successful nationwide tours by, among other fine tango artists, maestros Osvaldo Pugliese and Mariano Mores. To date, the Min-On Tango Series has hosted more than 2,300 tango performances, bringing the wonder of tango to a combined audience of more than 3.5 million people in Japan, undoubtedly contributing to the popularity of Argentine tango in the country.

This year, the forty-second installment of the acclaimed Min-On Tango Series featured the Orquesta Color Tango. This internationally renowned orchestra, conducted by the virtuoso bandoneónist Roberto Alvarez, performed “Dramatic Tango—Golden Rhythm” onstage in thirty-one cities throughout Japan from January 26 through March 14.

Widely recognized as successor to the legendary Orquesta Osvaldo Pugliese, the Orquesta Color Tango performed music in Pugliese’s unique style, filled with vibrancy and passion. The orchestra was accompanied by three world-class dance couples, including the Japanese Chizuko Kuwamoto and the

Argentinean Diego Ortega, winners of the stage tango category at the finals of the 8th Buenos Aires Tango Dance World Championship in 2010.

The audiences that filled each venue of the tour expressed their appreciation with enthusiastic applause for the assured musical performances from the orchestra and for the breathtaking display of dramatic tango dance by the couples on stage.

Even though a few concerts were canceled due to the March 11 tragedy, the group concluded its hugely successful 34-concert nationwide tour and safely departed Japan.

## Osvaldo Pugliese —The Venerable Maestro of Argentine Tango

The following are excerpts from the essay titled “Recollections of World Figures: Osvaldo Pugliese —The Venerable Maestro of Argentine Tango” written by Min-On founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, in 1995. Maestro Pugliese is a legendary Argentine tango musician, who developed dramatic arrangements that retained strong elements of the walking beat of salon tango but also heralded the development of concert-style tango music. He passed away on July 25, 1995 after this essay was written.

“My fingers are as hard as nails. I’m just a carpenter, hammering away at the piano keys”— this is the spirit of the maestro of Argentine tango. I like people who are completely devoted to their chosen vocation. Osvaldo Pugliese is tango incarnate. In December of this year [1995], he will be ninety years old. His life has been inseparably intertwined with tango’s century-old history.

To my question, “What is tango?” Mr. Pugliese replies: “It is the folk music of the Argentine people, born from their hearts. It was first heard



“Personally speaking, tango for me is a way to embrace a partner, a way to speak to a loved one, or a way to share my emotion to a person.”

## The Treasure of Argentina Emerges From A Melting Pot of Ethnicities

Interview with H.E. Raul Dejean, Ambassador of the Argentine Republic

**Min-On:** First, we wish to express our appreciation to your Excellency for your courteous cooperation and continuous support of Min-On’s activities since your arrival in Japan as the ambassador of Argentina.

**Ambassador:** As I am still new to Japan, I continue to learn more about the Min-On Concert Association and its activities. After hearing of the forty-one-year history of the Min-On Tango Series, I want to express my sincere appreciation for Min-On’s introducing our treasured culture of tango to all the Japanese people. Actually, I am very surprised by the fact that many people in Japan are so enthusiastic about tango.

**Min-On:** The Argentine Tango has been recognized as part of the world’s cultural heritage by the UNESCO in December 2009, and indeed, it’s very popular in many different countries all around the world. I want to ask you, as the ambassador from the home country of tango, how is tango viewed among the people in Argentina?

**Ambassador:** I am not an expert on tango, but I can say that tango resonates deeply with the people in Argentina. Tango emerged in the late 1800s among the working-class neighbor-

hoods in Buenos Aires and in a part of Uruguay. It was not originated by any particular culture of a single country, but rather by the mixture of diverse cultures brought by immigrants from Spain, Italy, and most likely, Africa and other countries. So I can say that our treasure of Argentine Tango emerged from the melting pot of ethnicities. Although tango is now identified as our nation’s proud culture, at the beginning, people among the upper classes of society segregated tango as emotional music and dance from the working-class slums in the dark side of town. But eventually in the early 1900s, tango came to be accepted in the elegant salons of high society and, after introduced in Broadway shows and popular movies in the 1980s, the tango boom started all around the world. It became popular even among younger generations in Argentina after the rise of a new style of tango such as the “electro tango” and “tango fusion.” Even now, tango has become a very important part of the economy and business in Argentina.

**Min-On:** Personally, what do you think about tango?

**Ambassador:** Even though I am not a good dancer, I love “salon-style tango.” For many people, the typical image of tango is the dramatic and

dynamic dancing style on stage, known as “stage tango” or “show tango.” But I feel tango is rooted more in the daily lives of the common people. Tango for me is a way to embrace a partner, a way to speak to a loved one, or a way to share my emotion to a person.

**Min-On:** As the ambassador, what do you think about promoting your native culture in Japan?

**Ambassador:** Developing a healthy diplomatic relationship and promoting business for a better trade balance are very important objectives of the embassy. At the same time, however, I strongly believe that exposing the people of Japan to the culture of Argentina will be beneficial in promoting business. For example, if people learn about our food culture, they will discover the excellent wine that we produce. This will result in the promotion of the wine business in Argentina. In that sense, promoting our proud culture is one of the most essential functions and my mission as an ambassador. We are very proud of our treasured culture of tango and deeply appreciate Min-On’s dedication in its promotion. I sincerely look forward to collaborating with Min-On on further cultural exchanges between our two countries.

in the lower class districts near Buenos Aires, and for a time it was regarded as indecent and disreputable. But the people took tango into their hearts, creating deep roots in their lives. Today, it is our national music, and it is loved equally by audiences in Argentina and abroad.”

For a period after World War II, tango enjoyed a boom in Japan as well, and in Tokyo alone there were dozens of “tango coffee shops”—even in Kanda, the area where the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters was located. The annual Tango Concert Series, which began in 1970 under the sponsorship of the Min-On Concert Association, has been popular in Japan for nearly a quarter of a century. Mr. Pugliese has played a major role in elevating tango to an international art form.

“We cannot do the same thing we were doing ten years ago. We must always be thinking about tomorrow. We must always find something new,” asserts Mr. Pugliese, who even included a new composition in his final concert tour before retiring from the stage [held in Japan and sponsored by the Min-On Concert Association in 1989]. Mr. Pugliese’s musical career spanned seven decades, and his music has won the hearts of four generations of audiences—no small accomplishment in itself. The reason for this long-lived success is his iron determination

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## Tango for Me is Emotion Itself!

Interview with Roberto Alvarez, Director of the Orquesta Color Tango

Roberto Alvarez was born in 1940 in Buenos Aires, the birthplace of tango. From the age of fourteen, he studied music theory with Maestro Hector Marseletti. In 1978, he was invited to join the Orquesta Osvaldo Pugliese. While contributing his skill as an excellent arranger, he also kept his position as first bandoneón player. After eleven years with the orchestra, the virtuoso bandoneón player Roberto Alvarez decided to start his own orchestra with other musicians, keeping alive Pugliese's style and spirit. That is how the Orquesta Color Tango was born two decades ago in 1989 as a legitimate successor to the legendary Maestro Osvaldo Pugliese's orchestra.



Roberto Alvarez with his bandoneón on stage

**Min-On:** First, please tell us your thoughts about performing with your own orchestra all over Japan.

**Alvarez:** During this Min-On tour, every venue we've played has been filled to capacity, and the encouragement we've received from the audiences has been truly warm and sincere. It has been an extremely moving experience in every city throughout Japan. Usually when we perform in other countries, we never know how our audiences will respond, so we are always filled with anxiety. But this time from the beginning of the tour, I really feel that we've pleased everyone here in Japan, and that makes me very happy.

**Min-On:** From 1978 to 1989, you were a member of the legendary Orquesta Osvaldo Pugliese. You and the late Maestro Pugliese performed on many stages together. What sort of presence was he to you, and to your orchestra of the Color Tango?

**Alvarez:** Maestro Pugliese changed every aspect of my life. Musically, of course, but he also modeled a magnificent humanity as a man of character in his everyday personal actions. He was loved by everyone, and respected by everyone. In that sense, as an orchestra, our Color Tango endeavors to inherit not only his music but to learn everything from the principles and actions by which he lived his life. He did not call himself an artist, but used the word *lavoratore* in Italian, to refer to himself. In the city of Buenos Aires, "an ordinary person performing hard labor" is called a *laburante*, and this is how he referred to himself. The maestro was a truly magnificent musician, a great mentor, but he was always humble. So we endeavor to be as humble as the maestro and work as hard as a *lavoratore* at

the labor of making music. We are said to be Pugliese's successors, but we are not a finished product yet; I think we're always in the process of striving to be true successors to our mentor, Maestro Pugliese.

**Min-On:** During this Japanese tour, you've played "Tokio Luminoso," the piece Maestro Pugliese dedicated to Min-On founder Dr. Ikeda. Could you tell us anything about that piece?

**Alvarez:** This is something I heard directly from Maestro Pugliese. When he traveled to Japan for the Min-On performances, he was so moved, both by the warmth of the Japanese audiences and the magnificent response to the concerts, and by Tokyo's wonderful glittering night views and dazzling streets, that he created a piece called "Shining Tokyo," or in other words, "Tokio Luminoso." When I perform this piece, I always think of it as a homage to my great mentor, Maestro Pugliese, and as a homage to Dr. Ikeda, whom I personally respect as well.

**Min-On:** This may be a familiar question, but what does tango mean to you?

**Alvarez:** I think tango is emotion itself, and its music conveys emotion. Immigrants to Argentina originally created tango music. It was born out of their shared sorrow and pain at wanting to return to their homeland but being unable to do so. It's a musical culture created by people with no knowledge of music, who listened with their ears and played and danced by intuition, giving expression to pure emotion as they did so. I am very happy to perform my tango as Color Tango for the Min-On Tango Series, and I am deeply grateful for the kindness of the Japanese audiences.

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to stay in tune with the people's feelings, and his faith in the infinite creative richness of the people. "My greatest teacher has always been the people," he declares.

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When I visited Buenos Aires in 1993, not only did Mr. Pugliese come

with his wife, Lidia, to greet me at the airport, but he agreed to perform at the Eleventh SGI World Youth Peace Culture Festival [held in the Argentine capital on February 18, 1993]. This itself was a major news event in Argentina, but people were astonished when he brought his entire orchestra to rehearse two days before the festival.

"I don't like to sit at home. I want to be out among people, creating something together with them," he once said. His action was in perfect

# Winning Couple at the World Tango Championship Performs Across Japan

Interview with Chizuko Kuwamoto and Diego Ortega

*The Japanese Chizuko Kuwamoto and the Argentinean Diego Ortega took top honors in the stage tango category at the finals of the 8<sup>th</sup> Buenos Aires Tango Dance World Championship in Argentina in 2010. Thousands of dancers from Argentina and twenty other countries took part in the World Tango Championship. Twenty-two couples from around the globe reached the finals, and the Argentine-Japanese couple won the top prize at the end of the festival on August 31, 2010.*

**Min-On:** Could you share your thoughts about your first-time performances throughout Japan in the Min-On Tango Series as the recipient of the “Min-On Award”?

**Chizuko:** To tell the truth, I’ve wanted to stand on the Min-On Tango Series stage ever since I participated in the tango tournament five years ago. That wish came true this time. I have been so moved and very happy that I, as a Japanese native, could introduce Argentinean tango to Japanese audiences. Indeed, every audience was so warmhearted and gave us many calls of encouragement.

**Min-On:** Could you tell us about any difficulties you have experienced in your career as a tango dancer, and what you pay attention to during your performances?

**Chizuko:** Obviously, I grew up surrounded by Japanese culture and customs, so I think the hardest thing for me as a tango dancer is the difference in the “sense of spacing” between two people. People who are raised in Argentina naturally acquire this “sense of space” between people, starting from an early age. Kisses and hugs are used as greetings, and people have a proper understanding of this moderately unique sense of spacing, even when they’re in close contact with others. When dancing the tango, this “sense of spacing” is especially important. But Japanese people have not acquired this sense, so when I dance the tango with Japanese men, at first, many of them

bump foreheads with me (laughter).

**Diego:** I feel the same way. I think the difference in this “sense of spacing” is, at the same time, the difference between the cultures and ways of life in Japan and Argentina.

**Chizuko:** Also, I consider “feelings” that are expressed as something very important, but that is not easy for Japanese people. I feel the music that is playing, I feel my partner Diego’s feeling, and I naturally express what I feel in my heart, every single moment in my tango.

**Min-On:** Min-On has hosted the Tango Series as a cultural exchange with Argentina forty-two times since 1970. Tell us your thoughts about Min-On’s cultural projects.

**Chizuko:** Until now, I didn’t know much about Min-On’s cultural projects, other than the tango performances. However, this time, I learned how wonderful and respectful your music museum is in treasuring music culture of the world. The consideration given to us performers at every show is so meticulous and the respect shown to us as artists is invaluable. I also want to express my heartfelt respect to Min-on for its dedication in raising young artists with the aim of advancing musical culture.

**Min-On:** How is tango viewed by young people, and what is its status now in Argentina?

**Diego:** For a while, even in Argentina, tango



Chizuko and Diego receive the Min-On Award at the World Tango Championship in Buenos Aires, Argentina

was seen as a dance for older people, from an older era, and it wasn’t popular among young people. Lately, a new style of tango music has appeared, and young people are beginning to pay attention to tango as well. Now I’ve become a champion with Chizuko, and as a young man, I feel very deeply that introducing tango to many young people all around the world has become my mission.

**Min-On:** Would you tell us about your future goals?

**Chizuko:** I’ve studied ballet and performed in musicals ever since I was young, so my dream is to someday perform in a “Tango Musical.” Ideally, apart from the songs, I’d like it to be a musical without lines, acted through tango dance. I’d like to overcome the language barrier, to take a tango musical produced in Japan and perform it in Buenos Aires, the birthplace of tango.

accord with this credo. When his piano was delivered, the then eighty-seven-year-old Mr. Pugliese revealed his amazing youthfulness by trying to push it into place himself!

On the day of the festival, he played the piece he had written for me as a token of his friendship with Japan, “Tokio Luminoso” (Shining Tokyo). As we all applauded his vigorous performance, I recalled what he said to me in Tokyo: “I want to work with you, President Ikeda, for

peace, so that we do not repeat the tragedies of the past. I will fight. To the very end, to the moment of my death, I will fight for victory.”

There on the stage, Mr. Pugliese was a living example of his message for all young people: “Study, inquire, seek intensely. Learn what life is, what life should be—this is what you must pursue.”

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*Adapted from an article in the February 12, 1995, issue of the Seikyo Shinbun*

## Viennese Waltzes and Operettas Performed for the Min-On New Year's Concerts

New Year's concerts of lively music from the vast repertoire of the Johann Strauss family has been a long tradition of the people in Vienna, Austria. Originating during a dark period of Austria's history, these concerts were initially formed for local audiences as encouragement and a source of hope for better times in the future; but today, these concerts are enjoyed by audience around the world.

During the month of January, in response to enthusiastic calls for encore performances in Japan, the Wiener Operettenorchester, internationally acclaimed as the Vienna Operetta Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Siegfried Andraschek, participated in the 2011 Min-On New Year's Concert

with delightful performances of famous Viennese Waltzes and Operettas in eight cities around Japan. Their enormously popular Japan tour concluded with a performance to a full house and energetic audience in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space on January 31.

Maestro Andraschek says, "An operetta should be staged in a humorous way with a happy atmosphere so that the audience can have fun and be encouraged with the spirit of hope." The orchestra was joined by soprano and baritone singers, who portrayed the personalities of characters in those operettas with their magnificent voices, along with cheerful performances of a dancing couple. The Wiener



Singers perform with the Vienna Operetta Orchestra at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space

Operettenorchester, as musical ambassadors of Austria, surely brought a delighted savor of the New Year's liveliness and

the brilliant atmosphere of Vienna with a spirit of hope, friendship and peace to the cities around Japan.

## Min-On Hosts a Lively School Concert of the Vienna Operetta Orchestra

Since its foundation, Min-On has offered a diverse range of nonprofit public-service programs designed to cultivate music appreciation

in Japan and around the world. Especially in contributing to the emotional development of schoolchildren, Min-On has

provided admission-free concerts at primary and secondary schools throughout Japan to offer the younger generation the opportunities to experience a rich diversity of live music by premier artists of the world. Indeed, more than 1.2 million students in more than 3800 schools across Japan have benefited from the "Min-On School Concert" program in the last 37 years.

and enjoyed the Viennese waltzes and operettas.

Cheerful performances of the orchestra accompanied by singers and dancers drew enthusiastic applause, as well as big smiles, from the students. In reply to the wonderful gift of the performances by the professional artists all the way from Vienna, Austria, the representative members of the "Soka School's Koto (Japanese harp) Club," who won a national title of *Koto* performance in the high school division, played their original *Koto* piece as a token of their gratitude. With the coming of spring, this became a splendid cultural exchange between the Japanese young musicians and the first-rate artists of Austria.



The Vienna Operetta Orchestra performs at the Min-On school concert



## Special Exhibition for the Bicentennial of Franz Liszt's Birth Opens at the Min-On Music Museum



The year 2011 marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the marvelous virtuoso pianist, Franz Liszt, who is also known as one of the most brilliant composers of the Romantic period. The Min-On Concert Association presents the special exhibition of "Brilliant Composers of the Romantic Period" for the bicentennial of Franz Liszt's birth at the Min-On Music Museum from January 1 through July 3, 2011.

In this special exhibition, the focus is on Franz Liszt (1811–86), born two hundred years ago in Hungary and active as the most technically advanced pianist. At the same time, Liszt was the most important and influential composer during the Romantic period, which was an era in the late eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century

when composers began to express each individuality, and when music came to be freely enjoyed by all. This era also signaled the appearance of composers who attempted to express—through music—deeper truths or human feelings that could not be expressed through language.

Alongside Min-On's own collection of original musical manuscripts and personal correspondences written by Liszt and other composers of the Romantic period, there are explanatory panels that form an easy-to-understand introduction to the composer's life and work. Through this exhibition, depicting an era in which the freedom of the citizenry brought a great flowering of musical culture, every audience will certainly feel the Romanticism that these artists bequeathed to us.



Original musical manuscripts and personal correspondences form part of the exhibition

### From the Editor

» Fifty years ago during his first visit to Southeast Asia as the newly inaugurated president of the Soka Gakkai, Min-On founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda conceived the idea of the Min-On Concert Association. His elder brother and many others died in Burma (now Myanmar) during World War II. Traveling over the battlefields from Burma toward Thailand and Cambodia, he thought about what was needed for humanity to break away from the tragedy of war and build lasting peace. He realized that promoting mutual understanding among the people of the world was indispensable to this end, and that cultural exchange through music and other arts was essential. Thus, Dr. Ikeda initiated the establishment of the Min-On Concert Association on February 9, 1961, in Bangkok, Thailand.

» This year, early on the morning of February 9, NHK TV broadcast a news program featuring the story of a unique museum in Thailand near the Myanmar border. The museum displays the collection of items left behind by Japanese soldiers for the purpose of never forgetting the cruelty of war. One elderly lady in the village shared her unforgettable memories of kindness and help received from the remaining defeated Japanese army soldiers, to whom she provided relief and lodging. Remembering what she learned from these soldiers and with heartfelt passion, she sang a Japanese children's song with precise pronunciation. She also recounted everything very vividly as she sang the song. It was such a mystic coincidence on this morning of the fiftieth anniversary.

» Celebrating this fiftieth anniversary, we renew our quarterly newsletter with a new design and title "Harmony," and refresh our spirit to carry on the founding principles of the Min-On Concert Association, especially at this crucial moment in the beautiful country of Japan.

### From the Min-On Music Museum Collection



**“Strohm” Forteplano  
(1793, Rome)**

*The word Forteplano designates the early version of the piano, from its invention in 1709 up to the early nineteenth century. This magnificent “Strohm” Forteplano was manufactured in 1793 in Rome, Italy. It was built in a Baroque/Rococo-style harpsichord case, and its body was custom designed and decorated with the landscape painting of beautiful Chinese gardens for a wealthy Roman aristocrat.*

### The Min-On Concert Association Celebrates the People’s Music

The Min-On Concert Association was founded in 1963 by Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, as a nonprofit organization to promote the global exchange of musical culture. Min-On aims to develop mutual understanding and respect among people of different races and nationalities around the world. In 1965 it was incorporated as an independent foundation, which is now supported by more than one million sustaining members nationwide. Min-On literally means “people’s music,” and the foundation’s aim is to share the joy of music and to unite people through shared emotion, thus creating an ever-expanding circle of friendship among people around the world.

Today, Min-On sponsors some 1,300 performances each year, attracting a total audience of more than 1.5 million, and making available diverse music of high quality—from classical to modern, from popular to traditional—to as wide a range of music lovers as possible. Min-On also sponsors various musical programs, including free concerts in schools and the Tokyo International Music Competition to encourage the emotional development of young people and foster the growth of new talent.

Since its foundation, Min-On has hosted almost 75,000 cultural performances and concerts, with a total audience of more than 110 million. Through these various musical activities Min-On has successfully initiated cultural exchanges with 103 countries and regions around the world.

### About The Min-On Music Museum and Music Library

The Min-On Culture Center is home to the Min-On Music Museum and Music Library. The collection includes more than 120,000 vinyl records, CDs, and DVDs, as well as 45,000 musical scores and 33,000 reference books and other materials, all of which are freely available. On display in the museum are

a number of antique harpsichords and classical pianos, various music boxes and gramophones, and a variety of ethnic instruments collected from around the world. The museum also hosts various special exhibitions and cultural activities on different musical themes. Entrance to the museum is free of charge.

### Come and Visit Us!

**Address:** Min-On Culture Center  
8 Shinano-machi, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 160-8588  
**Tel:** 03 5362 3400 **Fax:** 03 5362 3401

**Exhibit and Shop**

**Open:** 11:00-16:00 (Monday-Saturday)  
10:00-17:00 (Sunday & public holidays)  
**Closed:** Every Monday (If Monday is a public holiday, next day is closed)

**Music Library**

**Open:** 11:00-18:30 (Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday)  
(Closed on public holidays)  
**Closed:** August 1-15, Year-end / New Year

