

harmony

Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association

No. 10

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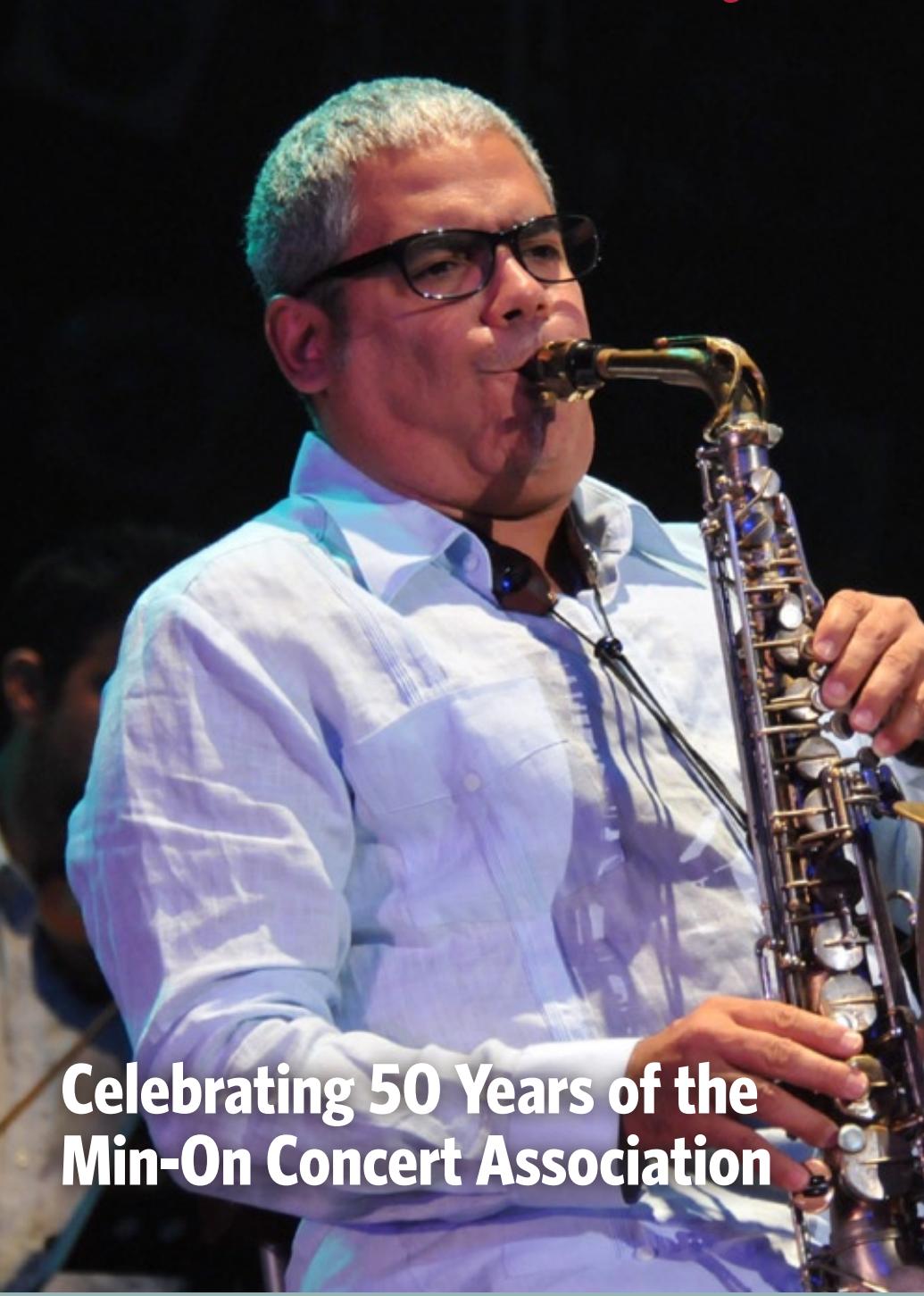
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Celebrating 50 Years of the
Min-On Concert Association



Passionate Cuban Music Marks Min-On's 50th Anniversary



Above: Passionate singing and dancing; Below-right: César López

The Caribbean Musical Cruise is a popular Min-On concert series showcasing the rich and diverse musical cultures of the Caribbean nations. This year, the Cruise visits Cuba—the largest “treasure island” of music in the Caribbean. With its diverse ethnic and cultural background, Cuba is the birthplace of a rich variety of unique rhythms and musical styles. For many years, Cuban music has enjoyed international popularity and has been immensely influential throughout the world.

At the invitation of the Min-On Concert Association in conjunction with the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in Tokyo, the Cuban Ministry of Culture officially dispatched the internationally acclaimed virtuoso saxophonist César López and his Habana Ensemble to Japan in celebration of the 50th

anniversary of the founding of Min-On, as well as the 400th anniversary of the first encounter between people of Japan and Cuba. For this special Japan tour, the Ensemble’s lineup was bolstered with renowned musicians, singers, and dancers in addition to his regular Cuban jazz quintet to introduce a variety of Cuban music to Japanese audiences.

The long-awaited 19-city tour, entitled *The Caribbean Musical Cruise—Music Full of Passion from Cuba*, kicked off in the northern island of Hokkaido on September 18, and their passionate performances, including premiers of his original pieces *Los Amigos* and *Conga Para El Japon*, effortlessly captivated audiences at every venue they played across Japan. The program featured many Cuban jazz classics as well as contemporary pieces

spanning more than a dozen unique rhythms and styles from habanera, mambo and rumba to son, cha-cha-cha, timba and danzon. César López himself sang an original bolero piece to express his deep love of people.

Coinciding with the actual date of the 50th anniversary on October 18, the marvelous month-long tour came to a close on October 16 at the Tokyo’s Nakano Sun Plaza Hall, a regular venue for Min-On concerts for the last 40 years. The final concert drew a full house of more than 2,000 people, including Ambassador Rodriguez of the Republic of Cuba as well as many other ambassadors, diplomats and distinguished guests from seventeen different countries. The passionate performance given by César López and the Habana Ensemble celebrating Min-On’s 50th anniversary and friendly international relations brought a beguiled and enthralled audience to their feet for a standing ovation.

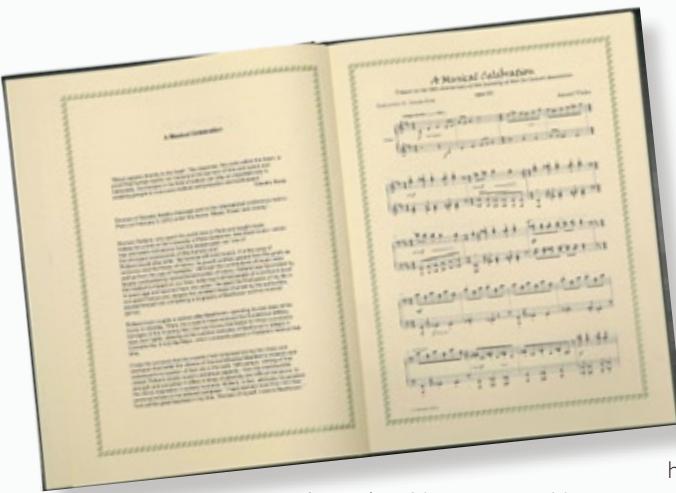


César López Dedicates Two Original Compositions

On September 13, the day after their arrival in Japan, maestro César López together with all the members of his special Habana Ensemble visited the Min-On Culture Center in Tokyo before embarking on their nationwide tour. They were warmly welcomed by President Hiroyasu Kobayashi along with staff members of the Min-On Concert Association. During a formal meeting, López expressed his personal admiration and warmest appreciation for Min-On’s contributions of international cultural exchanges and congratulated the Association on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. In celebration of this auspicious occasion, López said they had come to deliver their sincere best wishes to Min-On and to the people of Japan. As an expression of his admiration and appreciation, he had composed two original pieces—*Los Amigos*, dedicated to late Cuban national hero José Martí and Min-On’s Founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, and *Conga Para El Japon*, dedicated to the Japanese people. After discussions on the significance of the tour, maestro López presented a framed score of *Los Amigos* to the Founder, which was received on his behalf by the president.



César López presents a framed score of *Los Amigos*



Amaral Vieira is an internationally acclaimed Brazilian composer and virtuoso pianist. He has also been a dedicated scholar at the Brazilian Society of Musicology for many years. From an early age, Vieira began composing music and performing all over the world. His own output comprises more than three hundred compositions and he has received many international awards for his outstanding accomplishments. His first performance in Japan was in 1994 at the invitation of the Min-On Concert Association. He has now toured Japan a total of nine times with Min-On and delivered more than 250 performances in over 200 cities in Japan, a part of Min-On's history for two decades. Today, he is Japan's best-known Brazilian pianist and composer.

On October 24, Maestro Vieira and his wife Yara returned to the Min-On Culture

Amaral Vieira's Musical Tribute to the 50th Anniversary

Center in Tokyo for the 50th anniversary before embarking on his tenth nationwide tour of 18 cities. After a warm welcome from many old acquaintances at the Min-On corporate headquarters, Maestro and Mrs.

Vieira were cordially greeted in the grand reception room by Soka Gakkai Vice General Director Hiromasa Ikeda, who attended on the Founder's behalf, together with the other board members. During the meeting, Mr. Ikeda showed the couple an essay written by the Founder and published in a booklet to commemorate Min-On's 50th anniversary. The essay praises Maestro Vieira's sense of mission in music, arguing that "[t]he fine arts, by definition, should strive toward perfection in bringing out the best and the brightest in humanity. In reality, however, exactly the opposite is true in many cases. However, Vieira is regarded as a true musician, one who cares more about people than popularity."

In response, Vieira expressed his determination for the upcoming tour: "It is my greatest pleasure to be able to join the 50th anniversary celebrations of my beloved Min-

On. I will relish each concert as an opportunity to reach each member of the audience and give inspiration and encouragement."

At the end of the meeting, the maestro introduced two new compositions, which will premiere during this tour. The first, *A Musical Celebration—Tribute to the 50th Anniversary of the Founding of Min-On Concert Association*, was written for the members of Min-On, while the second, *Song of Solidarity*, was composed for the people of Tohoku and inspired by Dr. Ikeda's article *The Courage to Rebuild*. Both scores were dedicated to the Founder and were received on his behalf by the board members of the Association.



Presenting the scores at the Min-On headquarters

Min-On Music Museum Hosts 'The Power of Music' Symposium

The Min-On Music Museum is one of only a handful of music museums in the world. Located in Shinanomachi, Tokyo since 1998, the Museum has to date welcomed more than 1.6 million visitors. In addition to a variety of exhibitions and services as a music library, it has occasionally hosted series of cultural lectures and symposia related to the performing arts.

This year, in commemoration of Min-On's 50th anniversary, the Museum initiated a new series of symposia entitled *The Power of Music* taking as its theme "Music and Peace" to encourage discussion on how music can contribute to the cause of world peace.

The first symposium was held on October 22 at Tsuda Hall in Tokyo; the two panelists were Dr. Agnes Chan from Hong Kong and Dr. Olivier Urbain from Belgium, and the event was moderated by cultural journalist Miyako Yamada. Dr. Chan is a pop singer and popular TV personality in Japan as well as a professor of education and a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. Dr. Urbain is director of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research and formerly a professor of peace studies specializing in the field of music and conflict transformation. Both experts shared their own experiences and discussed their beliefs

on the power of music to promote understanding and friendship—essential components for world peace.

A lively question-and-answer session with the audience followed the presentations.



Dr. Olivier Urbain (above) and Dr. Agnes Chan (right)



An Ode to the People's Magnificent

On the 50th Anniversary of the Min-On Concert Association



An essay by Dr. Daisaku Ikeda

Founder of the Min-On Concert Association
President of the Soka Gakkai International

The date October 18, 1963 marks the auspicious founding of the Min-On Concert Association. Behind every step that brought our institution into being were efforts of earnest youth who shared a deep and abiding love of music. The struggles faced at each turn of events went uncelebrated, and the unprecedented endeavor to create an association of world-class music for all was met with whirls of objection, hostility, intimidation and prejudice.

What has propelled us forward, then as now, is the overriding goal to return music to the populace, to broaden a culture of

humanism and to kindle the solidarity of all people through music for peace in the world.

In these fifty years since its inception, Min-On has welcomed more than 110 million concertgoers, and its network of cultural exchange now spans 105 countries and territories.

In recognition of these milestones, I offer my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to each precious visitor as well as the audiences for their patronage and for taking part in our history; to the remarkable artists and staff for sharing their love of music with us; and to the Promotion Committee members for their noble and unwavering support overall.

Throughout the world, music expresses a sonorous paean to humanity. How wonderful that our desire to produce concerts in which all people, without distinction, feel at home is bearing fruit in every corner of Japan!

Some of the world's foremost artists resonate with Min-On's founding principles and have welcomed our invitation to express their heartfelt and highest art for local communities throughout Japan. And every artist has marveled at the warm and invigorating reception to their music.

Under the auspices of Min-On, the Tango Concert Series has orchestrated 2,400 concerts in these 43 years since it began in 1970. The series has featured the Tango maestros of Argentina, one of the geographically farthest countries from Japan. It has succeeded in bringing this vibrant people's music even to younger Japanese audiences and winning their appreciation. Similarly, the Argentine Tango performers have expressed exuberance and a renewed vitality from the Min-On concert tours, saying that these tours have given them unique opportunities to nurture successors in these younger generations.

Exchanges such as these, between audience and artist, spark mutual creativity. They exemplify the fact that music has the



Performance of Min-On Tango Series by Carlos Garcia Tango All Stars in 1974



Otello by La Scala (Teatro alla Scala) in Japan 1981

Castle of Wonderful Sound

power to connect the hearts of all people. And it is courage, sincerity and tenacity that tap that power.

In September of 1981, Min-On succeeded in inviting Italy's renowned Teatro alla Scala (La Scala) to tour Japan for the first time. With a 500-strong cast and crew from Milan, the then-superintendent Mr. Carlo Maria Badini commented that La Scala had brought everything but the opera house itself.

This monumental feat of cultural exchange was accomplished sixteen years after my first courtesy visit to the Teatro alla Scala. In the intervening years, there were those in Japan who openly mocked the Min-On Concert Association and its ability to bring La Scala to Japan. Ultimately, their pronouncements were overturned.

Moreover, our distinguished colleagues at La Scala, who exerted their good offices toward this grand feat, still refer to it as one of their cherished memories. For this I am deeply grateful.

The Min-On Concert Association has invited over 40 cultural groups from neighboring China since 1975, three years after the normalization of diplomatic relations between our two nations. These reciprocal exchanges have continued throughout the past 38 years, surmounting the surge

and swell of the times. This golden bridge of culture connecting people to people, especially youth to youth, remains unshaken.

Sir Yehudi Menuhin, distinguished violinist and world-class musical gem of the 20th century, once said with inimitably passionate conviction: "Music manages to give us its message of good cheer again and again, even in the hardest of times, especially when it springs from deep roots." (Yehudi Menuhin and Curtis W. Daris, *The Music of Man* [Toronto: Methuen, 1979], 234)

Music, indeed, conveys the message of hope that invigorates life.

As part of the reconstruction efforts after the Great East Japan Earthquake, Min-On's school concert series, entitled "The Tohoku Hope Concert—Musical Bonds of the Heart," toured elementary and middle schools of the three disaster-stricken prefectures of Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima. The project arose out of the wish to encourage children, who will shoulder the future, with the power of music. The spontaneous eruption of sparkling smiles and song from young boys and girls as performing artists gave their all at each concert serves to inspire hope in everyone.

Every age has its epoch-making pioneers who stake their very lives on music. From generation to generation, they hand down

their passionate conviction in the truth that the instrument is more powerful than the sword.

This reminds us that music, the "Wonderful Sound" of culture, energizes life and never succumbs to the cacophony of violence which enervates life. Here, let me declare that such attempts to do harm must never go unchecked.

The heart-to-heart symphony of humanism orchestrated over the last half-century through the Min-On Concert Association peals the prelude ever more powerfully to a new era of dignity, the dignity inherent in all life.

On this 50th anniversary, all of us at the Min-On Concert Association renew our commitment to the peace and harmonious coexistence of global society through music, to ever amplify the rhythms of joy and triumphant melodies of happiness for all people.

Let me close with this "Ode to the People's Magnificent Castle of Wonderful Sound" that I have composed for this occasion:

Heavenly music

Opens the road to culture and peace

Min-On, you belong to the world,

Always performing the dance of triumph



Premiere of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in Japan by the China Peking Opera Theater in 2006



The Tohoku Hope Concert by a cappella group INSPi at Kesen Junior High School in 2012

A Country Where Music is Everywhere

Interview with H.E. Marcos Rodriguez Costa, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba



Min-On: We wish to express our appreciation to your Excellency for your generous cooperation and support in realizing this Japan tour of internationally acclaimed Cuban saxophonist César López and the Habana Ensemble.

Ambassador Rodriguez: First of all, I would like to express my sincere congratulations on the auspicious occasion of the 50th anniversary of Min-On's founding. We are very grateful to the Min-On Concert Association, not only for hosting this special opportunity to introduce the music of Cuba to Japanese audiences, but also for its continuous contribution for 50 years in promoting international cultural exchanges to further the cause of world peace. Min-On has always been an important cultural organization, and we are proud to be associated with such a respected institution.

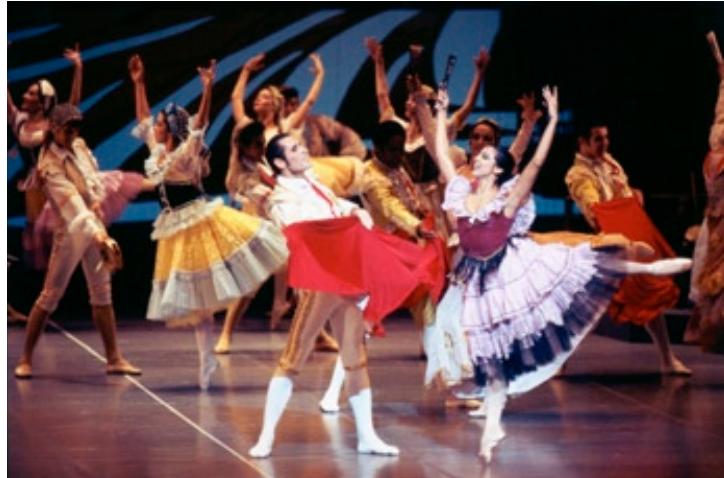
Min-On: Cuba has one of the richest cultures in the world. Could you briefly tell us about the country's cultural development?

Ambassador: The culture of our country is a complex mixture of different and contrasting elements and influences. In order to explain the richness of Cuban culture, we need to start with the formation of Cuban nationality. Soon after Columbus' arrival in the Caribbean in 1492, the largest island was colonized by Spain. The aboriginal peoples who inhabited the island had their own indigenous culture with unique styles of music and dancing, and during the early colonial period there was some mixing of

cultures; however, in general the indigenous people were treated very harshly and were set to work mining and reclaiming gold. By the end of the 16th century, as a result of the hard labor and foreign diseases introduced from Europe, the indigenous people had completely died out.

With no indigenous people left, the Spaniards brought slaves from Africa. And just as the Spaniards had brought their own culture

Chinese indentured laborers arrived to replace the loss of labor caused by the impending end of African slavery, and later in the early 20th century after independence from Spain, many Americans came into Cuba. Thus, Cuba has been a meeting point for European, African, Chinese and continental North American cultures. Although only a little of the original indigenous culture has survived, it gave birth to an exceptionally rich culture and a unique Cuban identity.



Performance of *Don Quixote* by Ballet Nacional de Cuba in Japan 1991

from Europe, the African slaves also brought their own cultures to Cuba, including singing and dancing, poetry and storytelling. As time passed, both races and cultures gradually mixed to create the so-called *Mulattos*, a word that originally referred to a person born from one white parent and one black parent, but today more broadly refers to a person of any "mixed" ancestry. This is the basis of Afro-Cuban culture.

Toward the end of the 19th century,

the revolution led by Fidel Castro and were immensely influential on the development of the nation throughout the 20th century. Still today, Martí is considered the greatest national hero of Cuba.

Born to a Spanish father and Cuban mother in Havana in 1853 and raised in the heart of the Spanish colony in Cuba, he saw that what the Spaniards were doing in Cuba was wrong and started to express his ideas of rebellion against the colonial power. A talented writer, the

young José wrote passionately about freedom, independence and democracy without slavery in Cuba. Although only sixteen at the time, he was arrested for conspiring against the Spanish government and eventually exiled to Spain. From then, until he died in 1895 in military action in Cuba, he lived most of his short life outside of Cuba as a poet, an essayist, a journalist, a philosopher and a political ideologist. He fought his battles with the pen and traveled extensively in Spain, Latin America and the United States, raising awareness and support for the cause of freedom and independence.

I have here in my office 29 books, a part of the *Complete Works of José Martí* that itself is less than half of his total work. He not only provided the intellectual underpinning of Cuba's struggle for liberty and independence but also had a significant influence on Cuban culture. Today, the José Martí Cultural Society organizes various cultural events and plays a significant role in the promotion of ethics and moral values through educational programs based on Martí's works. Min-On's founder Dr. Ikeda has a warm relationship with the Society and he has even authored a book about José Martí. Representatives of Soka University annually attend the cultural and educational events held by the José Martí Cultural Society in Cuba.

Min-On: Cuban music is hugely popular—many wonderful Cuban artists have been influential



Performance of Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba in Tokyo in 1993

in many countries throughout the world. Please share with us your personal thoughts on Cuban music.

Ambassador: I don't play any instrument myself, but I love music. My family and I have been in Japan for less than a year, but we are already missing the music that accompanies daily life in Cuba. In Cuba, while a neighbor on one side is playing a favorite song, your other neighbor will be playing a different song. And you'll be in the middle playing yet another song. In Japan, that might be seen as an annoyance, but in Cuba music is an essential part of daily life—you cannot live in Cuba without music.

Especially since the revolution of 1959, Cuba has placed special emphasis on

education, and many educational institutions, including those for art and music, have been established. Many wonderful artists have graduated from these institutions and a wide range of musical cultures developed. As a result of this great educational movement, 10 percent of the entire Cuban population today are university graduates.

Despite the geographical distance, Cuba and Japan have a close relationship. There is a natural sympathy between our people—a kind of reciprocal fascination—which allows us to mutually enjoy our nation's artistic manifestations in a very special way. Because of this, we attach great importance to the performance of Cuban art in Japan.

From the Editor

- » When we visited Ambassador Rodriguez at his office in the Cuban Embassy in Tokyo, he spoke enthusiastically about his love of Cuban music and literary works by José Martí, which he described as "fine artworks about human dignity." Martí wrote about Cuba, Latin America, Europe, the United States, and even about Japan—even though he never traveled here. The Ambassador speculated that he was able to do this because he had met and known Japanese people living in various parts of Latin America and Europe, and had developed a better understanding of Japan through his relationships with these people. I took the Ambassador's words as a compliment on Min-On's international activities of the last 50 years in developing mutual understanding and respect through people-to-people exchanges.
- » Min-On Founder Dr. Ikeda has frequently drawn attention to Martí's life and work in his own writings and speeches about selfless commitment to the ideals of freedom and human dignity. In June 1996, at the invitation of the Cuban Ministry of Culture, the Founder visited Cuba and met with Cuban leader Fidel Castro, as well as a number of cultural and academic figures in the country. During a 90-minute discussion with President Castro at the Palacio de la Revolución, the two exchanged views on education and life philosophy, and agreed that dialogue and cultural exchange were vital to secure peace. Min-On's first cultural exchange with Cuba was in 1981, and this Japan tour featuring César López and the Habana Ensemble marks the eighth opportunity we have had to introduce the musical culture of Cuba to the people of Japan.
- » During his Japan tour, César López presented an original composition titled *Los Amigos (The Friends)*, dedicated to the late Cuban philosopher Jose Martí and to Min-On Founder Dr. Ikeda. César deeply admires both José Martí and Dr. Ikeda, and was inspired to write the piece after reading Dr. Ikeda's book about Martí's philosophy of humanism. César observed that the two men shared common ideals of humanism and had forged a strong bond of friendship, even though they lived in different countries and in different eras.

From the Min-On Music Museum Collection

Cylinder Phonograph: Edison Ambelora Model 30, 1918, U.S.A.

In 1877, the American inventor Thomas Edison unveiled one of his most original inventions: the tinfoil phonograph. This device employed a style-tipped transmitter that made impressions on a copper cylinder wrapped in tinfoil, to record and reproduce sound.

This Cylinder Phonograph: Edison Ambelora Model 30 with a built-in horn, manufactured in 1919 by Edison, Co. was designed to be used exclusively with cylinder records, which were capable of performances of up to four minutes. Edison's standard cylinder record had a diameter of 2.25 inches, a length of four inches, and a performance time of two minutes; however, with his Blue Ambelora records, playing time was increased to four minutes. This model was the first to use needle dials.



Edison Ambelora Model 30 with a cylinder record

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 (Tuesday-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



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, independent nondenominational 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. In 1965 it became an incorporated foundation, which is now supported by more than one million sustaining members nationwide. Min-On literally means "people's music," and its 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 1,100 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 77,000 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 105 countries and regions around the world.

