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Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association



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The Bayanihan Delights Audiences with Rich Diversity of Filipino Culture

The Republic of the Philippines is a remarkable island country consisting of over 7,500 islands surrounded by emerald green waters in the western Pacific Ocean. An ancient explorer described this beautiful island country as the “Pearl of the Orient Seas.” People from more than 100 ethnic groups reside on its scattered islands, and historically, under a mix of both Eastern and Western influences, the Philippines of today has developed as a uniquely multicultural and multiethnic society.

Entrusted with the mission of preserving, developing and promoting the rich diversity of Filipino culture, the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) was founded in 1966 by the government as the premiere showcase of multicultural Filipino arts. Various resident companies have been established within the CCP for producing and presenting music, dance, performing arts and other cultural expressions of the Philippines. Min-On initiated a cultural exchange with the Philippines in 1990 and later in 1993 established a relationship with the CCP, inviting one of their superb resident companies, Ballet Philippines, to Japan in 1993 and 1998.

The Bayanihan National Dance Company of the Philippines takes its name from the ancient Filipino tradition of Bayanihan, which means “working together for the common good.” Founded in 1957, it is the oldest folk dance company in the Philippines. As a leading resident company of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, which is entrusted with the mission of promoting international goodwill, the Bayanihan has delighted audiences on six continents, across 66 countries and in more than 700 cities to date, winning numerous prestigious awards.



Vocal expression of indigenous Lumad folklore

This year, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines, the Min-On Concert Association, in collaboration with the Embassy of the Philippines in Tokyo, invited the Bayanihan to Japan for a special commemorative performance at the Nakano Sun Plaza Hall in Tokyo. Twenty-five members of the Bayanihan delivered a two-hour onstage production featuring the rich diversity of Filipino culture. The performance began with the traditions of the Lumad, showcasing the song and dance of indigenous people from the rural areas of Luzon and Visayan, followed by the exotic traditions of the Muslim Mindanao region. It also included various Spanish, European, Tagalog and even Japanese influences. A full house of more than 2,000 audience members and distinguished guests included Her Imperial Highness Princess Hisako of Takamado, Ambassador H.E. Manuel M. Lopez of the Philippines and many other ambassadors and diplomats from 19 countries. Everyone was delighted and inspired by the Bayanihan’s exquisite, joyful performance displaying the Philippines’ extraordinary cultural heritage.

Music and Dance are Irreplaceable Universal Tools to Foster Understanding Worldwide

Interview with Ms. Suzie Moya Benitez, Executive Director of the Bayanihan



Min-On: Thank you so much for your wonderful performances yesterday and today in Tokyo. The Bayanihan has not performed in Japan since your last visit more than 20 years ago. What are your impressions from this tour and the Japanese audiences?

Ms. Susie M. Benitez: There is a feeling of excitement and anxiety during every performance we give worldwide, because we want every show to be a great success. We want our audience to receive the message we're sending, because our dance is always filled with emotion, bold statements and situational relevance. Since we want to bring the story of the Philippines to Japan, we were excited, yet also slightly anxious about how the audience would interpret us. However, in reality we have felt nothing but passion and enthusiasm from our Japanese audiences.

As you saw in the theater, our program is a combination of many different cultural influences in the Philippines. There are Spanish influences in some dances, there are tribal dances, and maybe you noticed that some dances have Japanese influences, too. It is a very diversified program, and I hope that every single dance number appeals to our Japanese audiences.

Min-On: We think the Bayanihan carries an important mission as a cultural emissary of the Philippines. Please share your thoughts on this mission.

Ms. Benitez: The Bayanihan was founded by Dr. Helena Z. Benitez, with the intention to foster nationalism and patriotism among Filipinos. At the same time, we try to unearth stories about what Filipinos had before the era of colonization. One thing we discovered is that before the Spaniards came to the Philippines, we Filipinos already had our own music and dance woven into everyday life. Therefore, we have carried out the mission of researching, recording and promoting those stories and beautiful vestiges of the Philippines as our precious cultural heritage. I think it is very significant that the Bayanihan has upheld all the assignments and invitations we've been given across the globe.

If I may say something as the second-generation director of the Bayanihan, in

2002 we decided to join the World Dance Competition in order to establish our performance as something the world wants and that everyone can understand. Since then, dedication and hard work have allowed us to become nine-time Grand Prize winners at the World Dance Competition.

Min-On: That's an exceptional achievement. Throughout Min-On's experiences in promoting cultural exchange, we all believe in the power of music and cultural performance. Please share your thoughts on that.

Ms. Benitez: I really think that anyone involved in dance, music and the arts—or other cultural endeavors—can help make the world a better place. You don't have to learn a foreign language in order to communicate with others around the globe. Even if you don't understand each other's language, music and dance are always universal. They are irreplaceable tools for fostering understanding among the diverse people of the world. We know that people are very diverse culturally; however, as dancers and musicians, when we're face to face with someone from another culture, we speak the same language—dance and music. It is the unifying factor in our endeavors and an essential tool for changing our world, people's attitudes and people's outlooks in pursuing better lives.



Dancers carry candles on their heads to provide light during the 'Candle Dance'



During the popular bamboo dance, dancers comically step in between two bamboo poles

MOMRI Successfully Hosts First Annual Report Conference in Tokyo

The Min-On Music Research Institute (MOMRI) announced their initiative at the official launch event last February in Tokyo. Since then, MOMRI's four distinguished research fellows have attended various international conferences and succeeded in their research in the fields of music psychology, music education, music sociology and music ecology, throughout the first year of their academic challenges.

The 2016 MOMRI Annual Report Conference was held on June 2, 2016 at the Yasuda Seimei Building Hall in Shinjuku, Tokyo. The event, attended by over 300 people, presented the accomplishments of the first year and reinforced the institute's academic foundation of "the application of music in peace-building."

After opening remarks from Min-On President Hiroyasu Kobayashi, MOMRI's Senior Research Fellow Olivier Urbain gave a report of their recent accomplishments spanning academic conferences, publications and research work. In conclusion of Part I of the conference, guest speaker Dr. Norihiko Kuwayama, specialist of psychosomatic medicine and president of the NPO Frontline, shared his experiences in Rwanda in the context of post-conflict reconstruction work using music and arts therapy. He also presented his own musical performance alongside a slide show on his activities with young people in Rwanda.

For Part II of the conference, each of the four research fellows delivered reports on their own work, entitled: *Different Drums of*



The first annual report conference was enjoyed by a capacity audience

Ireland by Dr. Olivier Urbain, *Peacebuilding Pedagogies: Learning from Musical Violence* by Dr. Elaine Chang Sandoval, *Operationalizing Music and Peacebuilding through Critical Public Relations* by Dr. Craig Robertson and *Musicking and Peace: Insights from Ecology* by Dr. Michael Golden.

The second day of the conference, June 3, took place at different venue, the TKP Conference Center. MOMRI held the first panel discussion, attended by about 50 audience members, including prominent scholars in music studies and individuals involved in the field of music. In addition to the four research fellows, guest scholars Dr. Norihiko Kuwayama and Dr. Mia Nakamura—Associate Professor at Kyushu

University and the author of *Possibility of Music: Art, Care, and Culture*—joined as panelists.

After opening remarks by Dr. Urbain, who served as moderator of the proceedings, each panelist shared their comments on the topic of "Musicking and Identities: Models for Peacebuilding." The panelists received insightful questions from the audience and exchanged thoughts and opinions in an informal atmosphere. The great success of the two-day conference indicates a bright future for music research. Furthermore, MOMRI reaffirmed their commitment to the ongoing "multidisciplinary investigation of the potential application of music in peacebuilding activities."



Interactive discussion among the panelists during the second day session

Three Young Conductors Make Successful Debuts from the Podium in Japan



First prize winner Etxebarria

Second prize winner Ota

Third prize winner Niemeyer

In October of last year, the 17th Tokyo International Music Competition for Conducting was held at the majestic Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall. Sixteen contestants from seven different countries were selected from the 239 applicants from 40 countries and regions. The week-long competition saw four finalists proceed into the final round and concluded with an awards ceremony presenting first prize and the Special Hideo Saito Award to Mr. Diego Martin

Etxebarria from Spain, the second prize and the Audience Award to Mr. Gen Ota from Japan and the third prize to Ms. Corinna Niemeyer from Germany.

As promised to all the award winners from the competition last year, Min-On invited these three young talented conductors back to Japan for a series of their debut concerts held in Osaka, Nagoya and Tokyo in May of this year. Each conductor selected their own favorite compositions to conduct as their debut performance with a prestigious Japanese orchestra in front of a large audience at a distinguished concert hall in each city.

The first-prize winner Diego Martin Etxebarria, who has already launched his professional career since the Competition, prepared Symphony No.1 by Brahms and Symphony No.5 by Tchaikovsky for his debut performance in Japan. After conducting these two major masterpieces confidently without looking at the orchestral score, he said he challenged himself to memorize all the notes in order to maintain eye contact with the orchestra while conducting. He was delighted with a favorable response from the wonderful audience, he also stated. The second-prize winner, Gen Ota, dramatically and touchingly conducted Tchaikovsky's overture-fantasia "Romeo and Juliet," and the third-prize winner Corinna Niemeyer sensitively and precisely conducted R. Strauss's symphonic poem "Don Juan" and Stravinsky's ballet suite "The Firebird." Each of the young conductor's debut performances drew enthusiastic applause from the audience to celebrate their first appearances from the podium in Japan.

The First Min-On Conductor's Seminar in Korea Cultivates Talent and Friendship

As an organization that brings hope to society through music, Min-On has been a mainstay in the three areas of international cultural exchange, concert promotion and public outreach. Of these three strands of Min-On's activities—despite significant diversification since its founding—the greatest contributions have been in the field of public outreach, not only in Japan but for the advancement of music culture worldwide, over the last fifty-plus years.

In conjunction with the ongoing prestigious Tokyo International Music Competition for Conducting, Min-On sponsored the very first Min-On Conductor's Seminar in Korea for five days from July 5 through 9 at the Seoul campus of the Korea National University of Arts. The lecturers and instructors for the first ever Min-On Conductor's Seminar included internationally acclaimed Maestro Tadaaki Otaka from Japan, permanent conductor of the NHK Symphony and honorary professor of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, and Maestro Jeong Chiyong of Korea, president of the Korean Conductors Association and Chief Professor of the Department of Conducting at the Korea National University of Arts.

A total of 21 young talented participants, 15 from Korea and six from Japan, received attentive lessons from the two Maestros on conducting everything from classical masterpieces to piano accompaniment over the first two days. Then, a selected ten participants continued into the third and fourth day's lessons

on conducting a full orchestra. Finally, on the last day of the Conductor's Seminar, five representatives were selected from the participants and each conducted the Gangnam Symphony Orchestra as a memorable graduation concert to conclude the seminar. Regardless of each participant's level of achievement during the five-day seminar, not only did they strengthen their own commitment to a career in conducting, they also nurtured a bond of friendship among all the participants from Korea and Japan.



Maestro Otaka gave a hands-on conducting lesson for each young participant

The Philippine–Japan Relationship Represents Bold Heritage

Interview with **H.E. Manuel M. Lopez**, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Japan



I like to remind all Filipinos of our past, especially the youth, including the myriad cultural influences we Filipinos have experienced through contact with different races, countries and cultures.



Min-On: First of all, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Your Excellency, for supporting the recent performance of the Bayanihan, The Philippine National Folk Dance Company, in Japan, which Min-On proudly organized in collaboration with your embassy. Please give us your impressions from the Bayanihan's performance here in Tokyo.

Ambassador Manuel M. Lopez: The Bayanihan has delighted audiences all over the world and won many prestigious awards, yet they have not performed in Japan for over 20 years. We are so happy to again realize a performance of theirs here in Tokyo, especially upon the auspicious occasion of the 60th anniversary of Philippines-Japan diplomatic relations. When planning the celebration, I told my embassy staff we must offer the very best to the Japanese public. We all thought that for us Filipinos, some kind of cultural presentation is the most ideal way to celebrate the anniversary. We then decided there isn't a more fitting cultural group than the Bayanihan to represent the culture of the Philippines on this special occasion.

However, my staff were worried about inviting the Bayanihan to Japan, due to the difficulties in scheduling the popular group, as well as organizing and funding a large-scale production of theirs here in Tokyo. Very fortunately, Min-On helped us resolve all those difficulties, and we are deeply thankful to Min-On for their sponsorship and professionalism to make this performance a great success. We are very proud that Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado graced the commemorative occasion alongside many other distinguished guests, including ambassadors and colleagues of the diplomatic community in Tokyo, and of course, a full house audience.

Min-On: We were impressed by the diversity of the Bayanihan's performance. Please share your thoughts on the diverse culture of the Philippines.

Ambassador: In a way, the history and diversity of Philippine culture is depicted through the Bayanihan's dance. You may have noticed that the performance included dance from the northern region of Luzon, down to the southern region of Mindanao, which has Muslim influences, and also the region of Visayas, in between the big islands of Luzon and Mindanao. All of those regions are represented in the Bayanihan's dance. Furthermore, there have been various cultural influences throughout our history, including Malay culture, Spanish culture and later, some American influences. All of these regional and international influences have been incorporated into our culture and shaped the Philippines of today. Personally, I value every aspect of our history. Sometimes the younger generation tends to not appreciate our heritage, and our history books and academics don't address it enough. I like to remind all Filipinos of our past, especially the youth,



The Bayanihan performs to honor the 60th anniversary of Philippines-Japan diplomatic relations

including the myriad cultural influences we Filipinos have experienced through contact with different races, countries and cultures. I think we should all learn how to appreciate the diversity of our country and the real heritage of the Philippines.

Min-On: It was a great honor to have your courtesy visit to the Min-On Culture Center and Music Museum. Please share with us your impression after visiting our facilities and participating in Min-On's cultural activities.

Ambassador: I strongly feel that Min-On is a very cohesive association. When I arrived at your Culture Center, I was touched by the warm welcome and hospitality of your staff at the entrance hall. I was deeply impressed by how kind-spirited everybody was, and I want to pay a sincere tribute to the Min-On Concert Association for their well-deserved success.



H.E. Manuel M. Lopez enjoying an antique piano performance from the Min-On Music Museum collection

I was most impressed by your antique piano collection. I have never seen such an amazing and priceless collection of pianos in my life. When I return to my country, if I meet someone who plays the piano, I will tell them to visit your unbelievable piano collection here in Japan. Seeing your efforts to preserve those treasures of world cultural heritage, I can tell what kind of organization Min-On truly is. I was deeply impressed by everything I have experienced with the Min-On Concert Association during my time in Japan.

I also want to thank the Japanese people for kindly hosting my wife and me for the last five and half years. The Japanese people have always been very friendly and accommodated us so well. The same is most likely true for all of the ambassadors who have spent time here—I think Japan is the best country to be assigned to as an ambassador. I have been very fortunate to happily fulfill my mission here. Thank you sincerely for everything.

I am leaving my position of ambassador to Japan soon, but even after retiring from the diplomatic corps, I will commit myself in whatever capacity possible in the private sector to support the bond between the Philippines and Japan. There is already a strong bond between the two countries, but I will make an effort to forge an even stronger one.

From the Editor

- » The Bayanihan, The Philippine National Folk Dance Company, delivered a most wonderful cultural performance this year to celebrate the important anniversary for peace between Japan and the Philippines, just as the Ballet Philippines delivered a message of peace to Japan decades ago, in 1993 and 1998. Both companies are affiliated with the Cultural Center of the Philippines and have carried out their mission of promoting international goodwill through their cultural exchange activities towards the cause of world peace.
- » In 1993, Min-On Founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda met to have a dialogue with the former president of the Cultural Center, Mrs. Maria Teresa Escoda Roxas, whose mother Josefa Llanes Escoda was a heroine and spiritual leader of the underground during World War II. Her mother's picture appears on the 1,000-peso banknote and many streets in the Philippines proudly bear her name. Later, the Founder wrote in his essay series about Mrs. Roxas and how her parents suffered at the hands of the Japanese militarists during World War II. One episode reads: "During the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, the military forced all Filipinos to bow their heads when encountering a Japanese. If they failed to do so, they were slapped across the face in public. The Filipinos remember the occupation as a period when the entire country was transformed

into a terrifying concentration camp. The Japanese committed horrific atrocities . . . the young Mrs. Roxas was determined not to forgive the Japanese, but her mother told her: 'There are good Japanese and bad Japanese, just as there are good Filipinos and bad Filipinos, or good Americans and bad Americans. We should show goodwill towards the good Japanese. We only need to hate the bad Japanese.' . . . Mrs. Escoda did not care about a person's nationality, judging people solely on their worth as human beings. For the Japanese, the most important thing was whether a person was Japanese or not; that he or she was a human being was only remotely important."

- » In the ancient Filipino tradition "Bayanihan" means "working together for the common good." When meeting with the Min-On Founder, Mrs. Roxas described how an encounter with Japanese traditional arts finally enabled her to see the Japanese through new eyes. She said, "I came to love Japanese arts, and through them, at last, to open my heart to the Japanese people. Art can lead us to transcend love and hate. Culture is the strongest tie that can bind human beings together." Min-On shares the same belief in our cultural exchange undertakings, and we believe that the Japanese audience at the performance of the Bayanihan could open their hearts to the Filipino people in the same way she did.

From the Min-On Music Museum Collection

“Steinway” Baby Grand Piano of Pablo Casals (1952, USA)

Steinway is an American and German manufacturer of handmade pianos, founded 1853 in New York by German immigrant Henry E. Steinway. The company’s growth led to the opening of factories in Queens, New York and Hamburg, Germany. Steinway became a prominent piano company known for making pianos of high quality, and for influential inventions within the area of piano development. The company has been granted around 130 patents related to piano making, and has been internationally recognized with numerous awards.

This Steinway Baby Grand Piano, manufactured in 1952 in commemoration of Steinway’s centennial anniversary, was owned by Pablo Casals (1876-1973), the world-renowned Spanish cellist, composer, conductor and pianist, when he was in Puerto Rico.



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.

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.

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

