

# harmony

Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association

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## Singing Ambassadors of the Rainbow Nation Crossed a Mountain of Struggles

**D**rakensberg, which means “Dragon Mountains,” refers to the eastern portion of the Great Escarpment in the Republic of South Africa. This area has been officially recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its exceptional natural beauty, including spectacular rock arches, caves and pillars, as well as diverse natural habitats harboring a variety of globally important plants and endangered species.

Nestled against the Drakensberg mountain range, the Drakensberg Boys Choir School (DBCS) was founded in 1967 in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, with a total of 20 white students. Claiming to be the only choir school in Africa, DBCS was established as a boarding school using choral music as a vehicle for holistic education. The school has fostered effective and inspirational leaders, bringing a sense of hope and thanksgiving to South Africa through excellence in music, academics, physical education and social enrichment. Persevering through the struggles of apartheid in South Africa, the choir school broke the racial barrier and accepted its first black student six years before apartheid ended with South Africa’s first ever all-race democratic election in 1994. Since then, Drakensberg Boys Choir

School has become an internationally acclaimed educational institution. They’ve presented their choral programs worldwide, including in North America, Asia, across the continent of Africa and in Europe. Today, Drakensberg Boys Choir is a beloved South African asset, and their fame as the ‘Singing Ambassadors of the Rainbow Nation’ extends globally.



Min-On Concert Association and the Republic of South Africa established their relationship in 1990 at a meeting of Min-On Founder Daisaku Ikeda and late South African President Nelson Mandela in Tokyo. In support of Mandela’s dreams for South Africa to be a ‘rainbow nation,’ the Founder proposed initiating cultural exchange between Japan and South Africa. Min-On brought its founder’s proposal to fruition with

a Japan tour by South African percussion group AMANPOND in 1995, followed by the Drakensberg Boys Choir in 1997. Since then, Min-On has invited the choir for nationwide Japan tours in both 2001 and 2002.

This year, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of DBCS and the 20th anniversary of their first Japan tour, Min-On, with the cordial support of the embassy of the Republic of South Africa in Tokyo, welcomed Drakensberg Boys Choir to Japan for their fourth Japan tour. The two month-long, twenty five-city tour premiered in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture on July 4 and successfully concluded at the Bunkyo Civic Auditorium in Tokyo on August 10, with a full audience including ambassadors and diplomats from 12 countries.

During their tour, the Drakensberg Boys Choir engaged in cultural exchange with youth choirs in local communities, experiencing fascinating culture and beautiful nature throughout Japan. In their performances, they showcased the virtuosity of harmony—from gospel to pop numbers, and both South African and Japanese folk songs. Their music radiated great energy and sensitivity, drawing enthusiastic cheers and a standing ovation from the capacity audience at each venue across Japan this summer.

# Min-On's World Choral Music Series

## Inspiring Audiences across Japan since 1970

Choral music refers to music written specifically for a choir or chorus to perform. Each part in a piece of choral music is sung by two or more voices. Since the size of a choir can vary, naturally, the structure of a choral composition also varies. The origins of choral music are found in Ancient Greece, as well as in contemporary European musical cultures. During the 14th century, choral music evolved from monophonic group singing of a single vocal melody to polyphonic arrangements with more than one part, including multiple singers and different melodies. Choral music with diverse voices, tones and melodies in harmony has the capacity to speak deeply to human emotion. It also creates a positive influence by emanating a harmony that signifies human solidarity across

national boundaries. Today, myriad professional choirs can be found all around the world.

Min-On initiated the World Choral Music Series in 1970 with a Japan tour by the Men's Chamber Choir of Bulgarian Radio and Television from Bulgaria, a country known as a "Kingdom of Choruses." Since then, Min-On has invited over 30 of the finest choirs from all over the world, organizing over 600 concerts introducing world choral music to Japan. Each individual choir has a distinctive character showcasing a diverse repertoire. Through these chorus groups, almost one million audience members have been greatly inspired throughout Japan. Some of the choral groups invited in recent years are listed below.



*The Riga Chamber Choir "Ave Sol" from the Republic of Latvia, 2004*



*The Efroni Choir of Israel from the State of Israel, 2006*



*The Philip Koutev Choir of Bulgaria from the Republic of Bulgaria, 2007*



*Carmina Slovenica Women's Choir from the Republic of Slovenia, 2008*



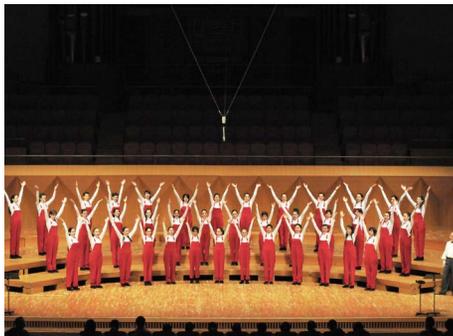
*Sveshnikov Children's Choir of Kolomn from the Russian Federation, 2008*



*The Red Star Chorus of China from the People's Republic of China, 2009*



*The Young People's Chorus of New York City from the USA, 2009 & 2010*



*The Little Singers of Armenia from the Republic of Armenia, 2012*



*The Norwegian Girls' Choir from the Kingdom of Norway, 2014*

# Min-On Music Museum Cultural Lecture and Concert

On August 8, at the Museum Hall in the Min-On Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, the Min-On Music Museum sponsored a cultural lecture and memorial concert in tribute to the late South African President Nelson Mandela. The event was hosted in cooperation with the embassy of the Republic of South Africa in Tokyo during the Drakensberg Boys Choir's Japan tour. Looking toward next year's 100th birthday of Nelson Mandela, Mr. Royce Bongizizwe Kuzwayo, representing South

Africa, and Mr. Kazuto Ito, representing the Min-On Concert Association, delivered commemorative speeches. The Drakensberg Boys Choir then gave a performance envisioning Mr. Mandela's dream of a 'rainbow nation.' With the aim of celebrating and learning about his courageous life, and most importantly passing on his legacy to future generations, the memorial event in tribute to the freedom fighter gave both spiritual inspiration and artistic gratification to the young audience in attendance.

## Speech by Mr. Royce Bongizizwe Kuzwayo, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, Embassy of the Republic of South Africa

(partial introduction of his speech)



sadly lost to the world on December 5, 2013.

Born during World War I, far from the corridors of power, as a young boy he herded cattle and was tutored by elders of his abaThembu tribe, Nelson Mandela would emerge as the last great liberator of the 20th century. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he would lead a resistance movement, a movement that at its start had little prospect for success. Like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he gave a potent voice to the claims of the oppressed and the moral necessity of racial justice. He endured a brutal imprisonment that began in the time of Kennedy and Khrushchev, and reached the final days of the Cold War.

When he emerged from prison, without the force of arms, he held his country together when it threatened to break apart. He worked to erect a constitutional order, to preserve freedom for future generations, a commitment to democracy and the rule of law ratified not only by his election, but by his willingness to step down from power at the end of his first and only term as President of the Republic of South Africa.

It was precisely because he could admit to imperfection, because he could be so full of good humor, even mischief, despite the heavy burdens he carried, that we loved him so much. He was not a bust made of marble; he was a man of a flesh and blood, a son and

a husband, a father and a friend. It is for this reason that we learned so much from him, and that's why we can learn from him even today.

His inspirations in our hearts humble us and make us commit to the value of life, to respect all languages and cultures and to oppose racism, sexism, chauvinism and genocide. He has never wavered in his devotion to democracy, equality and learning. Despite terrible provocation, he has never answered racism with racism. His life has been an inspiration in South Africa and throughout the world to all who are oppressed and deprived and to all who are opposed to oppression and deprivation.

We trust that young Japanese friends and our South African youth of Drakensberg Boys Choir present here today will remember Nelson Mandela as a symbol and a tool to use as a common platform to serve humanity and to deepen and entrench the spiritual philosophy of Ubuntu (means "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity") and its inherent values of equality, freedom and justice for all.

In closing, may I once again thank all of you present here today, my colleagues from the Embassy, Min-On and our exceptionally melodious Drakensberg Boys Choir. Thank you so much.

Excellencies, all the staff of the Min-On Concert Association, ladies and gentlemen, and the members of Drakensberg Boys Choir! May I express on behalf of myself, the Embassy and the people of South Africa our sincerest gratitude for availing yourselves and hosting this important commemorative day of our Founding Father Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

Today, we would like to remember the sacrifices he made for us to attain our freedom. Nelson Mandela, born on 18 July 1918, in a small town called Mvezo, in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa would have seen him celebrate this year his 99th year of his life but as we all know, he was

# Honoring South African President Nelson Mandela

## Speech by Mr. Kazuto Ito, President of the Min-On Concert Association (partial introduction of his speech)



Today, please allow me to share my personal experience of meeting Mr. Mandela. I had the great honor of meeting him on the occasion of his first encounter with Min-On Founder Daisaku Ikeda here in Shinanomachi, Tokyo in October 1990. It was a little more than half a year after his release from nearly twenty-eight years of imprisonment. Mr. Mandela was not the president of South Africa yet, but he visited Japan in his capacity as deputy-president of the African National Congress (ANC) party. During his stay in Tokyo, their first meeting was realized at the request of Mr. Mandela. I still remember it vividly. As he arrived at the meeting venue in Shinanomachi, Mr. Mandela was greeted by our founder, together with hundreds of students and young representatives, who sang, “Rolihlahla Mandela—Freedom is in Your Hand,” the song repeated by the people of South Africa in support of their imprisoned freedom fighter. Mr. Mandela quietly stood and listened to the song with a big smile on his face until their performance ended. At that moment, he did not say anything, but later, he laid his heart bare and remarked how greatly touched he was by the youth’s heartfelt song, and how he would never forget the warm welcome of their sincere hearts and pure sparkling eyes.

Mr. Mandela described his time in captivity as “every hour seemed like a year.” Indeed, the severe environment of 28 years of imprisonment adversely affected his health to a serious extent. Even during the meeting with Mr. Ikeda, his exhaustion was quite apparent. Regardless, he sat up straight in his seat and intently listened to the reading of a poem, entitled “Banner of Freedom, Path of Justice,” written by our founder in tribute to Mr. Mandela—the champion of freedom. As their heart-to-heart talks continued, Mr. Ikeda proposed organizing a series of cultural and educational

exchange programs aimed at the Japanese public, focused on the reality of apartheid and promoting educational initiatives in South Africa. As Mr. Mandela accepted the proposals with genuine joy, his secretary Ismail Meer stood up from his seat and expressed sincere gratitude to the offer of cultural exchange as a welcome recognition of Africans as human beings. This is what had been denied to them in South Africa, where they were simply classified as “black.” As the meeting was coming to a close, Mr. Mandela said, “A great harvest we have reaped here today is your words of wisdom. Medals may someday be destroyed. Awards may be burned or lost or stolen. However, words of wisdom are imperishable. In this sense, today, we have received more than mere awards as we listened to you. We will leave here as better individuals than when we arrived.” Then, as they firmly shook hands, he said, “because of today’s meeting, I feel healthier than before.

As everyone knows, Mr. Mandela struggled his entire life to realize his dream of a land ruled neither by blacks nor whites, but rather, of a “rainbow nation” in which all people enjoy equal treatment. His call from inside prison raised the spirits of a number of freedom fighters for peace outside those walls. Drakensberg Boys Choir School (DBCS) was not an exception. Initiated by the courageous singing voice of one individual, the entire school eventually stood against apartheid and opened their doors to people of all colors. When I visited South Africa in 1993 as a member of the Min-On Concert Association, with the mission of bringing our founder’s proposal of cultural exchange with South Africa to fruition, DNCS was already one of the most appreciated and respected non-discriminatory institutions representing the rainbow nation of South Africa. The singing voices of individuals in harmony have the power to influence humans to unite in harmony as equals. We hope the Drakensberg Boys Choir, inheriting the spirit of the late President Mandela, continue to inspire humanity in hearts around the world through the power of their harmonious music.



## Schoolchildren in Kyushu Enjoy Bolivian Folclore Performance



Min-On's endeavors contribute to the flourishing of music and art through musical programs that cultivate artistic sentiments in children and young people. Since launching in 1973, the Min-On School Concert Program has provided admission-free concerts at primary and secondary schools throughout Japan, giving younger generations an opportunity to experience live music by premier artists from around the world.

Anata Bolivia is one of the most popular Bolivian folclore bands, from

the home of the genre—La Paz, Bolivia. Ever since the Bolivian Ministry of Education began promoting indigenous culture, traditional Spanish folk music—folclore—has gained popularity in Bolivia and around the globe. The nostalgic sounds of folclore performed by Anata Bolivia have been well received by both Bolivian and Japanese audiences. They have invited by Min-On to Japan on a number of occasions.

During their Japan tour this year, Anata Bolivia delivered a series of school concerts to schoolchildren in the Kyushu region. On May 22, a thousand schoolchildren from Midorigaoka and Chuo elementary schools of Arao City in Kumamoto Prefecture assembled at the grand concert hall of Arao City Culture Center. Later, on May 30, more than a thousand students from seven different elementary and junior high schools in Oita Prefecture gathered at Oita Iichiko Grand Theater. The children had a truly memorable experience—discovering Bolivian folclore through a genuine live performance—that captured the universal joy of music and culture.

## Joyful Storybook Musical Gifted to Preschool Children

As an outreach program for younger generations, Min-On produced a series of unique educational programs for preschool children, including a concert program entitled *A Storybook Musical for Children and Parents*. Created by Japanese singer songwriter Mayumi-nu, the program is a musical comedy featuring her own original illustrated storybook accompanied by song. With the support of Min-On and local boards of education, she traveled around different regions of Japan and touched the hearts of

children with her unique musical performance. On July 12-14, she delivered a series of concert programs to hundreds of children in Fukuoka Prefecture at several local kindergartens. She performed her original musical storybook accompanied by a keyboard player and a drum machine, and also performed exercises for the music learning method known as eurhythmics, which includes many rhythmic and harmonious body movements. Children and parents alike greatly enjoyed the unique musical experience.



## Sixty-First Tohoku Hope Concert Held in Fukushima



In spring 2012, a year after the Great East Japan Earthquake hit the Tohoku region, the Min-On Concert Association launched a series of concerts entitled *The Tohoku Hope Concert* in collaboration with TBS Radio and other radio broadcasting stations in the three most affected

prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima. The series' goal was "standing close to the people in the affected areas, providing spiritual support through the power of music to give hope and courage, and lighting up a torch of healing and restoration in people's hearts." Kicking off the series in May 2012, *The Tohoku Hope Concert* has been held almost monthly in different cities and towns for five years to date. Most recently, the sixty-first concert was held on July 13 at Shoei Junior High School in Shinchi City, Fukushima Prefecture, where the energetic and dynamic all-female tropical big band Taoyame Orchestra performed.

The highlight of every *Tohoku Hope Concert* is when the students and the artists sing their school song together in unity. At the finale of this sixty-first concert, the 18 members of Taoyame Orchestra played the Shoei Junior High School song in a special instrumental arrangement, and all the students sang along enthusiastically. It was a memorable and joyful musical experience for everyone. Min-On will continue to organize similar concert activities to help people in need through the power of music.

## A Capella Weaves Colorful Voices into Harmony

A cappella is not a specific genre of music, but a style of vocal music performance—group or solo singing without instrumental accompaniment. Singing is probably the first form of music that humankind created and experienced; the voice is a musical instrument that all human beings possess, regardless of their difference in race, ethnicity, or nationality. Everyone has the possibility to make music with his or her own voice and can experience a feeling of mutual communication through a cappella music. Min-On has invited a number of a cappella groups from all around the globe for harmonious vocal performances, fascinating thousands of audiences across Japan. Beginning May 27, 2017, at Min-On's invitation, the Taiwanese a cappella group Gili—a lyric quartet consisting of two male and two female singers—embarked on a nineteen-city nationwide Japan tour ending on June 25.

The group's name "Gili" means "weaving happiness through music" in the language of the Atayal people—one of Taiwan's sixteen officially recognized indigenous

Austronesian tribes. "Gili" can be attributed as the sound made by traditional weaving machines in Atayal onomatopoeia. "Gili" also symbolizes the members' desire to weave their voices together in harmonious a cappella music. Featuring a diverse repertoire including Atayal traditional songs,

such as "Sinramat" and "Swa I Yan," to modern jazz and popular numbers, each of their colorful voices were intricately woven together onstage as the fabric of harmony. Gili's award-winning a cappella artistry created a heart-to-heart connection with audiences at each concert across Japan.



### From the Editor

- » In this issue, a few activities of Min-On's multifaceted outreach programs are introduced, particularly those contributing to the emotional development of young people. When we see the facial expressions of young people engaging in cultural exchange, we feel great confidence in the value of outreach through these programs. However, it is not only true in the case of young audiences at outreach events and concerts, but also among young performers visiting Japan, such as the Drakensberg Boys Choir. It is truly an honor to serve the youth who hold the keys to our future.
- » The day after the passing of President Nelson Mandela on December 5, 2013, Min-On Founder Dr. Ikeda made the following comment in response to a request from the Japanese media: "Mr. Mandela, more than anyone, loved young people and valued the power of education. He was focused on these concerns above all when I met him for the first time in 1990 in Tokyo, soon after his release from prison, and again when we met in 1995. He once said, '[My country's] greatest wealth is its people, finer and truer than the purest diamonds.' With his words in my heart, I am determined to further develop a solidarity of the people, working together with the youth who will shoulder the future, to construct a century of peace and creative coexistence."
- » During the Japan tour of the Drakensberg Boys Choir, the members posted a daily blog on the official DBCS website. One day, a blog post was written on "Some prominent aspects of Japanese culture that I appreciated and enjoyed," with a list of exciting events and the member's impressions. One reads as follows: "Deep thought and equality prevail here in Japan. Dr. Ikeda, Min-On's founder, is most definitely one of the most profound people with whom I have been associated. Although we never met him, I feel as though he has made a very significant impact on my life. His messages to the choir often contained humbling and thought-provoking haikus. The majority of his messages had something to do with youth, focusing on two ideas he used to explain the significance and importance of youth in society. Point 1: Youth have an extraordinary effect on the future of a nation. The youth are the future of all society and it is important that we spread the idea of world peace to them. He aims to achieve this by making use of many cultural and religious avenues, ours being music and song. Point 2: Gratitude to parents. Dr. Ikeda often expressed his gratitude to the boys' parents for allowing them to come to Japan and further the development of youth both in Japan and around the world. He told the boys to be grateful for everything their parents do for them, especially for affording them the opportunity to attain a good education."

### From the Min-On Music Museum Collection

There are a number of ways to classify musical instruments. In the West, they are divided into three categories of string, wind and percussion instruments. The classification used in the Folk Instrument Exhibition Room at the Min-On Music Museum follows the system that is now in general use, in which instruments are classified according to the source of their vibration. It also uses shape and other factors to produce more specialized groupings. This results in four categories: chordophones, aerophones, membranophones and idiophones.

Chordophones are instruments in which the source of vibration is stretched strings to produce sound. The rich wisdom and creativity of each instrument from countries representing a diverse array of ethnic, linguistic and religious traditions are on display at the Min-On Museum.



Oud — Chordophone

### 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 800 performances each year, attracting a total audience of more than 1.2 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

