

harmony

Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association

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Caribbean Musical Cruise Departs for Jamaica

The Min-On Concert Association initiated a new concert series in the summer of 2009 entitled *The Caribbean Musical Cruise* to showcase the rich and varied musical cultures of the Caribbean nations, each of which has its own unique ethnic and historical background. The destination of the second cruise, departing this summer, is Jamaica—an island with a vibrant musical culture of global appeal and spanning a great variety of musical genres, including mento, ska, rocksteady and of course reggae.

On April 27 this year, after a series of meetings with H.E. Claudia C. Barnes, the Jamaican Ambassador to Japan, and kind assistance from her embassy in Tokyo, an official delegation from the Min-On Concert Association, led by its executive director Takakazu Watanabe, arrived in Kingston to meet with representatives of the Jamaican government. During their short stay in Kingston, the delegation was welcomed by the Honorable Olivia Grange, Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, H.E. Paul Robotham, a former ambassador to Japan, Under Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other government officials in various government

agencies. A series of fruitful meetings was held, and preparatory activities concluded with a group of Jamaican artists and technical staff.

During discussions, Minister Grange observed that “Jamaica and Japan have a long-standing relationship, and this cultural exchange with Japan through these Min-On concerts is a wonderful opportunity to further develop the friendship between our two countries.” Touching on the significance of the event—the first of its kind—she expressed a decision made by the Ministry: “This concert event represents the commencement of next year’s 50th anniversary celebration of Jamaica’s independence. Our government will send a group of Jamaican artists to Japan as our cultural representatives for Min-On’s *Caribbean Musical Cruise* concert series.”

During a courtesy visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ambassador Robotham shared his memories of Min-On from his time in Japan serving as the Jamaican ambassador: “I was always inspired by the high standards of artist selection at Min-On concerts in Tokyo, and delighted by the quality of their performances. Min-On’s

activities made it clear to me how important cultural exchanges are for helping people better understand one another. So it is a great honor to be able to send artists from Jamaica this time, and realize this cultural exchange as the one-hundred-and-fourth country to make such a gesture of goodwill.”

In the course of preparatory activities in Kingston, Mr. Sydney Bartley, principal director of culture and entertainment of Jamaica, introduced the group of artists known as *Jamaica Rocks*, a newly formed group initiated by Minister Grange specifically for this Japan tour, consisting of four popular singers—Abijah, Tessanne Chin, Ieye, and Dwight Richards—and five members of Jimmy Cliff’s backing musicians known as *The Skool Band*, as well as four dancers from the Jamaican National Dance Theatre Company. The group performed exclusively for the Min-On delegation, displaying a variety of styles.

The Caribbean Musical Cruise in 2011 is scheduled to call in at twenty-four cities across Japan from September 9 through October 16, welcoming audiences on board to enjoy the rich and colorful performances of Jamaica Rocks.



Left: The artists that make up *Jamaica Rocks*; **Right:** A small harbor in the Caribbean nearby the Jamaican capital, Kingston

Exploring the Richness and Diversity of Jamaica through Music

Mixing the rhythms of Africa with the melodies of Europe, the evolution of Jamaican music has been influenced as much by Jamaica’s cultural heritage as by the social conditions on the island itself. Until its rise to global popularity in the 1970s, Jamaican music made a journey all of its own.

After the English seized control of Jamaica from Spain in the 17th century, they encouraged new settlers to come to the island through

gifts of land, and soon the economy was booming through the business of the vast sugarcane plantations. During this time, many Africans were brought to the island as slaves, who in turn brought with them new languages, new religions, new music, different cultures, beliefs and ways of life.

The eventual mix of cultures led to what are probably the earliest forms of Jamaican folk music, which were generally sung in a local

A Message from the Honorable Olivia Grange Minister of Youth, Sports, & Culture of Jamaica

Olivia Grange has been a member of the Jamaican Parliament since 1997 and was appointed Minister of Youth, Sports & Culture in 2007, with responsibility for Women and Gender Affairs, Entertainment, Community Development and Special Projects. She has had a long, productive and inspiring career as a cultural activist, working at the grassroots level to foster young talent, and was appointed the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) first 'Champion for Culture', with responsibility for, among other things, advocating capacity-building for cultural industries, cultural institutions and individual artists.



Hello to the people of Japan,

First of all, I would like to express my deepest condolences and sympathies to everyone affected by the devastating earthquake and tsunami of March 11. Over the years, Japan and Jamaica have grown closer than ever, so we feel your pain and share your grief.

As the Minister of Culture, it is my great pleasure to send this talented group of performers to Japan for a twenty-four-city tour organized by the Min-On Concert Association. These artists are some of Jamaica's finest, and range from traditional song and dance groups through to popular reggae artists.

Our ambassador to Japan, Ms. Claudia C. Barnes, and I, on behalf of all Jamaicans, sincerely hope that the Japan audiences will not only enjoy the performances, but will also experience and appreciate the diverse culture of Jamaica, a culture born of men and women from a variety of ethnic origins and expressed in our national motto: "Out of Many, One People."

Among those taking part in the tour are Abijah, a reggae artist in the spirit of Bob Marley, Tessanne Chin, whose ancestry is Asian, and a young upcoming artist, Ieye. They will be

accompanied by the drummers and musicians that make up Jimmy Cliff's *The Skool Band*, and by Dwight Richards, a trumpet player who was also one of Jimmy Cliff's backing singers. The music will be further enlivened with dynamic dance performances.

We hope you enjoy all the performances: we invite you to share the love that we bring, and we hope that you will open your arms and embrace us as we give you "One Love."

"Minasama, Dozo Otanoshimi Kudasai!" Enjoy!

Creole that came about through the interaction between Europeans and Africans. These folk songs can be placed in two broad categories: European-influenced forms such as nursery songs and ring games, and other forms like Kumina and Tambo, where the influence is clearly African.

It was between these forms that a uniquely Jamaican sound started to emerge in the form of Mento. Mento draws heavily from these folk forms, featuring acoustic instruments such as acoustic guitar, banjo, hand drums and rhumba box, and also incorporates pan-Caribbean

influences. As Jamaica entered the 20th century, mento melded with American popular music, resulting in further influence from jazz and dance-band styles.

By the mid-1950s, Jamaica had transitioned from a rural society into an urban one. Parties gathered around mobile sound systems, and a new beat-driven music gained popularity. This was known as Ska, and combined elements of Jamaican mento with American rhythm

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Ambassador Barnes of Jamaica Visits Min-On Culture Center



Left: Ambassador Barnes is welcomed to the Min-On Culture Center; **Right:** Listening to one of the antique pianos from the Music Museum collection

On the afternoon of May 25, the Jamaican Ambassador, Ms. Claudia C. Barnes, accompanied by her secretary Ms. Sawako Toyama, visited the Min-On Culture Center for the first time. They were welcomed in the museum hall by Min-On President, Hiroyasu Kobayashi, and staff members of the Min-On Concert Association.

At the beginning of a formal meeting, Ambassador Barnes remarked that she was

deeply touched by the heartfelt welcome and warm hospitality shown by everyone at the Min-On Concert Association. In the course of discussions, she recalled that she had been greatly impressed and inspired by the ideals of Min-On founder, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda. She also promised that the Embassy of Jamaica would fully support Min-On to bring about a successful cultural exchange between Jamaica and Japan this autumn.

After the meeting, Ambassador Barnes was given a tour of the Music Museum and viewed the antique pianos and music boxes. Listening to the song *Mother* played on one of the antique pianos, Ambassador Barnes remarked that she found the song's lyrics, written by Dr. Ikeda, deeply moving, especially as her own mother had recently passed away.

Interview with Her Excellency Claudia C. Barnes, Ambassador of Jamaica in Japan

Min-On: Could you share your personal thoughts regarding Jamaica, particularly those that touch on its cultural heritage?

Ambassador: Before we begin, I should first like to reiterate condolences on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica to the Government and people of Japan following the tragic events in northeastern Japan. We are aware of the enormity of the challenges; however, we know that the Japanese are a strong and resilient people and we are

confident that Japan will emerge from these challenges with an even stronger spirit. I can say with certainty that the people of Jamaica remain in total solidarity with the people of Japan every step of the way.

With regard to your question, let me say first of all that I am very proud to be a Jamaican. I am also extremely proud to be serving as the Ambassador of Jamaica to Japan, a country with which we have a deep bond of friendship and collaborate on many levels. This includes

our mutual cooperation in the areas of trade, economic and technical cooperation and, of course, in the area of culture. I have noted that the Japanese have a great love of the Jamaican culture, and this I deeply appreciate.

Jamaica has a rich cultural heritage, which can be traced to our island's history of colonization—first by the Spanish, then the British—and thus its African influences, complemented by Asian and Middle Eastern influences. These influences have complemented each other

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and blues. The drums were taken from traditional Jamaican drumming and marching styles, and the guitar emphasized the offbeats, flipping the R&B shuffle beat and giving rise to the new sound.

In the 1960s, ska gave way to the less jazzy and more relaxed

Rocksteady, characterized by a slower tempo and bass-heavy sound. This sound dominated for two years until the rise of Reggae, a term which emerged around 1968 and is now sometimes used to refer to all popular Jamaican music. There are, however, many popular sub-genres such as Dub, Dancehall and Ragga, which all find their roots in the reggae sound.



Her Excellency, Claudia C. Barnes

and have bequeathed to us a rich and diverse culture. Since our independence on August 6, 1962, we have remained united under the motto: “*Out of Many, One People*”. This melting pot of races and cultures has resulted in a dynamic and varied Jamaican culture. This is certainly reflected in many facets of our lives, including our music.

Min-On: As part of Min-On’s *Caribbean Musical Cruise* concert series, the Jamaican government will send a group of artists to Japan under the banner *Jamaica Rocks* to commence next year’s 50th anniversary celebration of Jamaica’s independence in Japan. What is the significance of this Japan tour, and what do you expect to be the outcome of this cultural exchange?

Ambassador: I think this, again, is a reflection of our belief in Japan’s strength, and our confidence in the future of the country. On June 17, I had the opportunity to visit Sendai City with Miss Jamaica Universe, Yendi Phillips, and we were accompanied by two Japan-based Jamaican musicians, who put

“Since independence, we have been united under the motto, ‘Out of Many, One People’. We have embraced this melting pot of races and cultures.”

on a concert for tsunami victims at one of the evacuation centers. When I saw the joy in the audience, brought by this concert with just two musicians, I immediately started thinking that a musical performance could bring some healing to those persons in the affected zones. If it were possible to organize at least one concert in the affected zone this, I believe, could somehow help relieve some of the pain in the hearts of the people.

In Jamaica, there are still many fund-raising activities for people in the affected areas, and we continue to pray for the families of those who lost their lives in the earthquake and tsunami. We are truly honored to bring these artists to Japan at this time.

Over many years, several Jamaican artistes have toured Japan individually and in groups, but I think this is the first time that the Government of Jamaica will be sending such a large and varied group for a Japan tour. This show will feature a range of performing artistes, including a number of singers, musicians and even dancers, who are all coming together to bring this concert to life.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Min-On Concert Association, which has worked so closely with the Embassy and the Ministry of Youth Culture and Sport of Jamaica to make this tour possible. Some of these artistes do not yet have an international presence, so it is my hope that this will help create more opportunities for them. It is our fervent hope that this tour will further enhance the bonds of friendship and cooperation

between Jamaica and Japan, and also with the Min-On Concert Association.

I hope that this tour will inspire the people to experience and learn more about Jamaican culture, especially those people who have not yet been exposed to our country. I also anticipate that this will encourage the people of Japan to visit our beautiful country in the future. In this sense, I believe that this cultural exchange will further strengthen the cultural bridge between our two countries.

Min-On: Finally, could you share your thoughts regarding the Min-On Concert Association?

Ambassador: While preparing for a recent visit to your cultural center and reading about your organization, I discovered that one of the tenets of Min-on states that *music is a medium of great power, with an ability to transcend all boundaries and differences in race and culture*. This belief is reflected in your strong support for and promotion of cultural exchanges between many different countries.

We are very proud to be associated with Min-On, and for being selected to perform in Japan at this time. In order to meet Min-On’s high standards, our officials in Kingston worked very hard in choosing these artistes, and the Embassy is quite excited to welcome them to Japan this fall. This tour represents the official start of relations between the Min-On Concert Association and Jamaica, and we look forward to continued collaboration and future activities.

During the 1970s and 1980s, reggae achieved true international acclaim with the success of groups like The Wailers, and movies like Jimmy Cliff’s *The Harder They Come*. When Eric Clapton’s version of Bob Marley’s “*I Shot the Sheriff*” became a hit worldwide, it was a sign that this small Caribbean crossroads had made its mark at a global level.

Jamaican music remains today a truly global phenomenon, with

fans and artists all over the world, some of who may never have the chance to visit the birthplace of this great music. Min-On now presents a unique opportunity for music lovers to experience the diversity and richness of Jamaica’s music culture. Through these concerts, which bring a great variety of Jamaican artists to Japan, audiences will be treated to an up-close encounter with Jamaican culture at its finest.

Russian Folk Ensembles Perform in Taiwan

In order to realize its aim of effecting significant cultural exchange on a global scale, the Min-On Concert Association has introduced a wide range of international music culture to Japan, while also sending Japanese cultural groups to other countries. In addition, Min-On sometimes organizes concert tours for overseas musical and theatrical groups in countries other than their own.

Fulfilling a request from long-standing supporters of Min-On concerts in Taiwan, the Min-On Concert Association organized a fourteen-day concert tour of the Vladivostok-

based Russian folk ensembles *Primorye* and *Ryabina*. The tour comprised six performances in the cities of Kaohsiung, Taichung and Taipei, from May 26 through June 8, 2011.

The lively performances won enthusiastic applause from capacity crowds at every venue throughout the tour. In their news program, Radio Taiwan International (RTI) reported on the significance of Min-On's successful cultural exchange between the Russian performers and the Taiwanese audiences. RTI news is broadcast in nine languages for the benefit of neighboring countries.



Dancers and musicians from the Russian folk ensembles

Exhibition of Folk Instruments Held for Children at Min-On Music Museum

From July 10 through September 4 this year, the Min-On Music Museum hosts an exhibition showcasing a variety of folk instruments donated from various performing artists and collected from many different countries around the world. The Folk Instruments Exhibition has been specifically designed for school children to visit during the summer vacation.

Comprising some 100 instruments, the exhibition is organized by continent—Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas—plus a section on Japanese folk instruments. A number of panels describe the origins and characteristics of the instruments with the aim

of educating children and their parents about world music. A special corner is provided where visitors can try playing the instruments, thus deepening their appreciation for musical instruments from different ethnicities.

Min-On has promoted this exhibition every summer for the past ten years, and it has enjoyed great popularity, giving young people the chance to experience the diversity of international musical cultures, opening their eyes to the world, and nurturing respect for cultural differences. This summer, once again, the exhibition hall will reverberate with the sounds of Chinese gongs and African drums,

and the cheerful voices of children will echo around the Min-On Music Museum.



Visitors can play some of the instruments on display

INSPi Performs for School Concerts in Okinawa

The Italian term *a cappella* literally means 'in chapel style', and is used to describe music of specifically solo or group singing without instruments. Although originally used in reference to religious music, a cappella in modern usage often refers to an all-vocal group performance of any style, including pop and rock.

The Japanese popular vocal group INSPi—a leading a cappella group of six male singers—took to the stage in Okinawa as part of the Min-On School Concert series. This series has been held sixty-three times in Okinawa prefecture since it was started in 1974.

On April 26, despite a tropical squall, a total of 760 students from Taira and Kita junior high schools on Miyako Island, together with their teachers, gathered in the Miyako City Culture Center. Everyone was thrilled and inspired by the beautiful harmony of INSPi's rich and dynamic voices as the group performed a number of popular songs.

The following day, INSPi visited the neighboring island of Ishigaki and performed at the Ishigaki City Civic Center for more than 800 students gathered from five different junior high schools. Besides the vocal performances, the members of INSPi gave a talk and some lessons in a cappella singing. Many students continued

practicing their vocal harmony skills afterward, making the event a truly memorable occasion that had captured the joy of music.



INSPi perform at the Min-On School Concert in Okinawa

Acting Head of Mission at Armenian Embassy Visits Min-On



Dr. Pogosyan and his wife meet with Min-On officials

Representing the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Japan, Dr. and Mrs. Grant R. Pogosyan, advisor and acting head of mission, accompanied by Dr. Arsen Arakelyan, the interim Charge d'affaires, visited the Min-On Culture Center for the first time on May 27. Dr. Pogosyan has also served as a professor and dean of the graduate school at the International Christian University in Tokyo, and has undertaken various activities in Japan over many years to help establish firm diplomatic and economic relations between Japan and Armenia.

After hearing an explanation of Min-On's founding principles and history from Min-On

President Hiroyasu Kobayashi, Dr. Pogosyan—speaking fluent Japanese—remarked, “There is no greater goal of humanity than living together in peace. And that goal will only be reached if mutual understanding and respect can be achieved between people of different nationalities. I completely agree with the thinking behind Dr. Ikeda’s founding of the Min-On Concert Association, and genuinely admire Min-On’s activities of promoting cultural exchange with so many different countries. Indeed, there is a great need right now in this difficult age of globalization.”

In the course of discussions about music, he shared his experience of friendship with students from various countries through music club activities while he was a student at Moscow State University, and reiterated the importance of Min-On’s mission in taking a leadership role in promoting music culture. In response to Dr. Pogosyan’s comments, President Kobayashi proposed inviting the Armenian Little Singers—a group that, by coincidence, Dr. Arakelyan had helped found—to tour Japan in 2012 with the aim of strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two countries through the opportunity for cultural exchange.

Armenian Little Singers



The Little Singers of Armenia choir

The Little Singers of Armenia choir was founded in 1992, under the initiative of Mr. Tigran Hekekyan. “During the dark and cold years of the early ‘90s,” Mr. Hekekyan remembered, “it was important to establish a children’s

choir to act as a light in the dark and help the kids overcome the hardships of that period. The group practiced by candlelight, warming their hands over a wood-burning stove. Yet the results amazed audiences and critics worldwide. We truly became ambassadors of what is best about Armenia.” Bringing together gifted children selected from music schools in and around Armenia’s capital city of Yerevan, the choir performs a wide variety of songs from genres spanning medieval, folk, sacred, classical, contemporary, pop and jazz. As an active participant in the cultural life of the Republic of Armenia, the choir participates in charity concerts at home and abroad, and has toured the world, winning prizes and medals in a number of international choral competitions.

From the Editor

- » In May 1975, at the height of the Cold War, Min-On founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda delivered an honorary doctorate acceptance speech at Moscow State University entitled *A New Road to East-West Cultural Exchange*. “At no time in history has there been as great a need for a spiritual Silk Road extending all over the globe,” he said, and expounded the importance of cultural exchange for transcending national and linguistic barriers, and uniting the hearts and minds of people around the world.
- » Four years later, in 1979, as a step toward realizing this spiritual Silk Road, Min-On initiated a concert series entitled *A Musical Voyage Along the Silk Road*. Since then, there have been 11 series, each featuring the brilliant performances of the *East-West Cultural Exchange*, and with the involvement of more than 400 musicians and dancers from 23 countries along the historical Silk Road. In the summer of 1985, despite concerns about Sino-Soviet conflict, artists from eight different ethnic groups from Turkey, Japan, the People’s Republic of China, and the former Soviet Union shared the stage and performed together in a friendly atmosphere. It had been ten years since that first speech by Dr. Ikeda.
- » During a recent visit to the Min-On Culture Center, Dr. Grant R. Pogosyan, Special Advisor for the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Japan, mentioned that he had been a graduate student at Moscow State University at the time of the speech by Dr. Ikeda. Although he had not known about the speech at the time, he expressed his deep respect for the Min-On founder’s farsighted wisdom and admiration for his courageous promotion of global cultural exchange through Min-On’s activities for the cause of world peace. Based on these same principles, Min-On recently organized a performance tour of Russian folk ensembles in Taiwan, and continues to journey along the Spiritual Silk Road laid by its founder.

From the Min-On Music Museum Collection



The "Pisa" harpsichord is still playable in its original condition

"Pisa" Harpsichord (1580-1600, Pisa)

The harpsichord is a keyboard instrument that produces its distinctive sound by plucking a string when a key is pressed. The earliest harpsichord designs date from the late Middle Ages—well before the invention of the forte-piano in the early 1700s.

Although widely used in Renaissance and Baroque music, the harpsichord

gradually disappeared from the musical scene during the late 18th century with the increasing popularity of the piano. More recently, however, the harpsichord—or the sound of the harpsichord—has become familiar once again, appearing frequently in popular music and soundtracks.

The "Pisa" Harpsichord was built between 1580 and 1600 in either Pisa or Florence. The fact that it has not undergone any structural or mechanical modification in more than 400 years and is still playable in its original condition makes the Pisa Harpsichord an extremely rare example. The ornately painted and carved décor adorning both the interior and exterior of the case is highly valued for its artistic quality.

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 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.

Come and Visit Us!

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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



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