

harmony

Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association

No. 5

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‘Flower Songs in All Seasons’ Inspires with the Beautiful Fragrance of the Japanese Spirit

In response to requests from enthusiastic audiences during her last Japan tour, Min-On hosted a soprano recital entitled *Flower Songs in All Seasons* by the internationally renowned singer Charlotte de Rothschild to a full house at the Tsuda Hall in Tokyo during the cherry blossom season on April 14. De Rothschild is an acclaimed British lyric soprano who specializes in oratorio and the Art of Song in a wide range of musical genres. With her broad and extensive repertoire, she has created some wonderful themed programs,

the best known being *Family Connections*—all the songs are related to the Rothschild’s family history—which has been performed all over the world. As a global performer, she sings in 17 languages, and in this third tour organized by Min-On of five Japanese cities, she sang a number of Japanese flower-related songs, sensitively articulated in Japanese and characterized by her beautifully refined tone. Her graceful performance touched the Japanese soul and simultaneously drew both applause and tears from the audience.

“Music is an expression of the soul; music has the power of healing.”

Interview with Ms. Charlotte de Rothschild and Mr. Simon Over, accompanying pianist

Min-On: After your recital of *Flower Songs in All Seasons*, many audience members shared their impressions and comments via our questionnaire, praising how wonderfully and accurately you sang in Japanese, and expressing how deeply they were touched by the beautiful way you interpreted them.

Rothschild: Thank you very much for such heartfelt words. Japanese song is really special for me. For Japanese people, I think the poetry comes first, while the composer is almost secondary. However, composers of Japanese songs, such as Kosaku Yamada, Rentaro Taki and many others, have thought

very carefully about the meaning of the poems and have set them to melodies in such a beautiful way. *Kakkyoku*, or Western-style Japanese classical songs, have the most beautiful lines of music to which the words are set. Conveyed in each song is the true feeling of the Japanese spirit. There is a certain sentiment conveyed in the songs, a sense of belonging to the *furusato*—a remembering of the homeland. Being Jewish, I believe I have similar feelings. Of course, I have had wonderful Japanese teachers, but I have spent a long time not only learning the Japanese words but also learning the meaning behind each word in the poems.

Min-On: How did you start singing and how did your music career develop as a singer?

Rothschild: I started very young. When I was little, I loved dancing more than singing, and wanted to be a dancer some day. But at the age of 12, I went to a boarding school and had to stop dancing because there were no suitable dance classes. So instead, I started to take singing lessons. My mother always encouraged me to learn singing, and at the age of 17, she sent me to her home country of Austria to study music for three-and-a-half years at the Mozarteum University of Salzburg, the home of Mozart. After that, I

“Music and art know no boundaries; although flavored by national characteristics, they have a universal power to move people’s hearts.”

The following are excerpts from the novel *New Human Revolution*, volume 3, by Min-On founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda. The book is an ongoing historical novel in which the author—who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto, third president of the Soka Gakkai lay Buddhist organization—documents the organization’s development from the time he assumed the helm in 1960. The idea of establishing the Min-On Concert Association

came to Ikeda during his first visit to India and Southeast Asia in February 1961 as he was traveling over the battlefields of World War II from Burma (now Myanmar) toward Thailand and Cambodia, where his elder brother and many others died during the war. In chapter 4, ‘Light of Peace’, he describes the power of music and his intentions behind founding the Min-On Concert Association.

came back to England to study at the Royal College of Music in London for three years.

Min-On: Min-On has promoted various musical programs designed to cultivate the artistic abilities of young people.

Rothschild: Music is an expression of the soul, and a means of talking to others without speaking. I think it is very important for young people to have the chance to play music and interact with one another through music. This relates directly to my experience, and that is why Simon established the youth orchestra and has organized wonderful programs for young people from many different countries to promote music all over the world.

Min-On: The founder of Min-On has often written about the power of music and the arts, and the important role of cultural exchange. (See excerpt below.)

Rothschild: Music has the power to heal. Last year, right after the earthquake, I came to Japan for a concert in Sendai. It was—and still is—a difficult time for Japan, and I hoped

that the concert might support and promote healing. Afterward, many people told us that their spirit had been lifted through the music. I was very humbled by that, but it is true that music has healing power.

Over: I absolutely agree. One of the patrons of my orchestra in the UK has suffered terrible tragedy in his life. He is a medical doctor, yet he maintains that the best preventative medicine is music, which keeps people well and strong. And that is why he says he prefers to invest in music rather than drugs, supporting our orchestra as well as other artistic endeavors.

I work with people of many different nationalities, and I see and experience how people can communicate through music even when they do not speak the same language. This is my first trip to Japan, and I speak no Japanese at all. But it is clear to me—just by seeing the expressions on people's faces—that audiences are touched, and at the end of a concert, their faces tell how much they appreciated and were moved by the music.

In her program, Charlotte communicates with audiences through music with lyrics in their own language. But even without learning the language, music can transcend the language barrier.

Rothschild: After this Min-On tour, I will perform some of the same songs in Japanese in India. I even read in an Indian magazine how excited they were that this concert of Japanese songs was coming to India. I hope this will act as another bridge between India and Japan. Even though Indian people are from a completely different musical and cultural tradition, they enthusiastically embrace these Japanese songs even without understanding their meaning. And I suppose it is more amazing that an English person will deliver these Japanese songs to India!

This shows the power of music and the important role of cultural exchange. I am so lucky to be here in Japan for the third time on this Min-On concert tour, and deeply appreciate the Min-On Concert Association for tirelessly promoting the global exchange of musical culture.



Charlotte de Rothschild (above) and Simon Over (right)

"Whenever Shin'ichi thought of his brother who had died in Burma, he was reminded of *Harp of Burma*, a novel by Michio Takeyama. It is the story of a Japanese soldier who decides to become a Buddhist monk and remain in Burma after the war to dedicate the rest of his life to tending the graves of his fallen comrades and offering prayers for the repose of their spirits.

In one scene, a unit of Japanese soldiers—not knowing that the war is over and still on the run from the enemy—is surrounded by British forces. Owing to the influence of their captain, a music school graduate,

this particular unit often sang together. They were mid-chorus when they realized they were being encircled by the British. They had left a cart loaded with ammunition cases out in the open nearby. If fighting broke out and the cart was hit in the crossfire, all their ammunition would explode. It was imperative that they move it.

Hoping to convince the British troops that they were ignorant of their presence, the Japanese soldiers cheerfully continued singing

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Czech Philharmonic Brass Inspires Japanese Enthusiasts with Perfect Harmony



The Czech Phil Brass in concert

The Czech Philharmonic Brass has been at the pinnacle of the Czech cultural tradition of brass performance for several decades. This virtuoso brass ensemble was formed in 1973 at the initiative of Miroslav Kejmar, principle trumpet with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in Prague for over thirty years, and comprises Kejmar and five other master musicians of the orchestra's brass section. As fans

of classical music have long known, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra has evolved, since its debut performance under the baton of Antonín Dvořák in 1896, into one of the world's most prestigious orchestras, delighting global audiences with its unique sound characterized by the virtuosity of its brass section.

From April 10 through 27, this brass sextet, commonly known simply as Czech Phil Brass, toured fifteen cities across Japan at the first-time invitation of the Min-On Concert Association. The ensemble has six members: Miroslav Kejmar (flugelhorn and trumpet), Marek Vajo (trumpet), Stanislav Suchanek (French horn), Jiri Novotny (trombone), Karel Kucera (bass trombone), and Karel Malimanek (tuba). All are eminent brass instrumentalists and virtuoso soloists.

Japan is well known as a nation of brass enthusiasts, and the concerts attracted a capacity audience at each venue, responding to the performances with prolonged applause. Part one of the program comprised a variety of pieces in styles ranging from classical to tango, while part two covered jazz, as well as music from the Japanese animated film *Howl's Moving Castle* and from popular 'spaghetti' westerns. As an encore, the group played the Japanese songs *Furusato* and *Mother*, their tenderly harmonized brass sounds touching the hearts of the audience.



Folk Music Ensemble from the Kazakh National Academy of Arts Perform at the Min-On Culture Center



Kazakh folk music performance at the Min-On Music Museum

On the afternoon of April 25, President Mukhamediyuly Arystanbek and a delegation from the T. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts consisting of 15 music students

and five faculty members, visited the Min-On Culture Center for the first time as part of an educational exchange program to Japan. They were warmly welcomed in the museum hall by Min-On President Hiroyasu Kobayashi and the staff members of the Association before being given a tour of the Music Museum, viewing the exhibits of antique pianos and various instruments collected from around the world.

During a formal meeting in the reception room, President Arystanbek remarked that he deeply appreciated Min-On's long-running initiative of promoting the global exchange of music culture, and shared his memory of a wonderful experience attending the cultural exchange concert *A Musical Voyage Along*

the Silk Road in Japan as a Kazakh musician invited by Min-On in 1991, before his country's independence from the former Soviet Union.

On the evening of the same day, at the request of the Embassy of Kazakhstan, a Kazakhstan-Japan Goodwill Concert was held in the museum's classical piano room. The students performed Kazakh folk music and dance with traditional instruments such as the *dombra*, *kilkobyz* and *sazsirnay* to introduce the musical culture of Kazakhstan. The small concert in the exhibit room drew warm applause from the 80 or so people gathered, an audience that included ambassadors and diplomats of several countries and other distinguished guests.

Continued from previous page ➡

Home, Sweet Home and *The Last Rose of Summer* as they went about moving the cart to a safe place. When they finished their work, they stopped singing and prepared to attack. But, at that moment, they heard the strains of *Home, Sweet Home* resounding all around them. This time, it was the British soldiers who were singing. Though the lyrics were English, it was the same song. This was followed up by a

chorus of *The Last Rose of Summer*.

Both melodies were longtime favorites of the British that had made their way to Japan, where they were given Japanese lyrics. The Japanese unit's chorus of these well-known songs had struck a deep chord in the British soldiers' hearts.

Japanese and British soldiers alike raised their voices in song; in that instant they forgot all about distinctions of friend or foe. The fighting never started. The soldiers of both sides came out and shook

"The Min-On Vocalist Competition was the real beginning of my international career"

Dialogue between Ukrainian opera singer Victoria Loukianetz and Min-On President Hiroyasu Kobayashi

On Saturday afternoon of April 7, the Ukraine-Japan Goodwill Concert—a soprano recital given by internationally acclaimed opera singer Victoria Loukianetz—was held at the Oji Hall in Ginza, Tokyo to commemorate the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Japan. Victoria Loukianetz was born in the Ukrainian city of Kiev and studied vocal performance in the former Soviet Union from the age of 14. She was internationally recognized for the first time as a world-class soprano when she was a prize-winner at Min-On's Tokyo International Vocalists Competition in 1990. Since her international debut at the Vienna State Opera in 1993, she has been a regular guest at many prestigious opera-houses and international festivals, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, La Scala in Milan, the Royal Opera House in London, and the Salzburg Festival. Now residing in Austria, Loukianetz has become a favorite of Viennese audiences at the State Opera. The following is excerpted from her dialogue with Min-On President Hiroyasu Kobayashi at the Min-On Culture Center in Tokyo.



President Kobayashi shows Victoria Loukianetz photos from the 1990 Tokyo International Vocalists Competition

Kobayashi: Welcome back to the Min-On Culture Center. We are all very proud that you have developed such a successful career as an internationally acclaimed opera singer, and so happy that we could work together with Ambassador Kulinich of your home country of Ukraine to hold this commemorative concert. Many people still talk about your wonderful performance and how excited and inspired they were by your tremendous voice and beautiful, heartfelt singing.

Loukianetz: I am deeply thankful to Min-On. I cannot believe how you organized the concert and prepared all the details perfectly in such a limited time. I really admire the professional but courteous work of your staff. Although I was a little concerned about performing only two days after traveling the long distance from Europe, I am now very proud that I could sing with a strong voice as a winner of Min-On's vocalist competition, and I strongly feel I could do so because of my prayers and the kindness of your staff.

Kobayashi: This is the picture of you performing at the Min-On vocalist competition in Tokyo 22 years ago. We are very proud of you as the winner of one of our competitions, and that you are now flying high around the world.

Loukianetz: The Min-On vocalist competition was the real beginning of my international career as a singer. Everything started from there. I felt it was the most difficult competition program in the world at the time, and I remember I had to master a minimum of 20 arias in seven different languages as a criterion for participation. What's more, at that time in 1990, the Cold War had not yet ended and the USSR was in the midst of *perestroika*. There was no freedom, even among artists. The government agency of the Gosconcert, known as GOSCON in the USSR, controlled

all domestic concerts and artists' activities, including travel abroad. I had to win a domestic competition in order to be able to participate in any international vocalist competitions. Even after I won at the Min-On competition in Tokyo, I did not have the freedom to travel for my singing career, but had to go back to the USSR.

Kobayashi: I did not know you had to go through such difficult circumstances, but because of your wonderful talent and strong heart, you nevertheless built a lasting career as an internationally acclaimed opera singer.

Loukianetz: I was so fortunate, because thanks to winning the Min-On competition, I was able to participate in the International Mozart Competition in Europe a month later, winning first prize there in 1990. And a year later in 1991, I was awarded first prize at the International Maria Callas Competition. But still I had to go back to my country of Kiev after those competitions because of GOSCON's control, while many other winners from different countries immediately debuted at famous opera houses in Europe. Finally I made my debut performance at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, and from there, I was discovered by a famous opera house manager from Vienna and received an offer to make my international debut as Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Vienna State Opera. I am now a citizen of both Ukraine and Austria, and traveling around the world working at the great opera houses of many different countries. But I am so excited and deeply thankful to be able to come back to my third home country of Japan. I would like to thank you again for my first challenge at the Min-On competition, and I am very happy that, 22 years later, my dream of performing a recital that contributes to both the Min-On Concert Association and my homeland of Ukraine has come true.

hands with one another. The Japanese unit learned from the British that the war had ended three days earlier. The spiritual bond that had been forged between them through the power of song had prevented unnecessary bloodshed.

Music and art know no boundaries; although flavored by national characteristics, they have a universal power to move people's hearts."

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"The basis of genuine world peace will be formed by the fostering of

a mutual understanding through a grassroots exchange that transcends distinctions of race, nations and ideology.

To this end, exchange in art and culture will be indispensable. Music, dance and works of art occupy a dimension that transcends borders. While they may be distinctively ethnic in flavor, they also have a quality that makes them universally accessible. This quality is what prompts me to consider promoting exchange in music and the arts."

Music: The Common Culture of All Humanity

Interview with Dr. Grant R. Pogosyan, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Japan



Dr. Grant R. Pogosyan

Min-On: We are very happy to be hosting the upcoming Japan tour of the internationally acclaimed Little Singers of Armenia. The performances, which will take in 20 cities across Japan this summer, will make the Republic of Armenia the 105th country for Min-On to engage in cultural exchange.

Pogosyan: I am also looking forward to welcoming them to Japan. Although it is over 20 years since Armenia became independent from the former Soviet Union, people around the world still do not know much about Armenia. I have been in Japan for 20 years and have spoken to many Japanese people, but even here in Japan, most people know very little about Armenia—I hope this Japan tour will help people find out more. I deeply appreciate and admire the initiative of the Min-On Concert Association promoting such opportunities for cultural exchange with many countries, and strongly believe that it has great value for developing mutual understanding among different cultures. Especially for young people like the Little Singers, these cultural

exchanges are wonderful and precious experiences that develop mutual respect and friendship for the future of the world.

Min-On: Could you tell us briefly about your country of Armenia?

Pogosyan: There are many similarities between Japan and Armenia. We both have a very long history and treasure our own unique cultures. In our long history, there have been so many tragic and cruel incidents; however, our own traditions and unique culture have survived despite various events and difficult incidents. Armenia is a small but beautiful highland country surrounded by mountains. Mount Ararat is the highest mountain in the region and, although it now falls within the borders of Turkey, it is clearly visible from everywhere in Armenia. Historically, it is the spiritual symbol of the Armenian people, just like Mt. Fuji is

Armeniaca because it originated in Armenia. It is also related to musical culture: the *duduk*, a traditional woodwind instrument, is made from the wood of the apricot tree. The *duduk* is indigenous to Armenia and it has survived through the country's long history. There is evidence of *duduk*s from as early as 1200 BC. There are variations of the *duduk* in the Middle East and in Central Asian countries, and it is now becoming popular around the world—even in Japan—thanks to its tender and nostalgic sound.

Min-On: The Little Singers of Armenia were established in 1992 amid the turmoil of independence.

Pogosyan: Yes, we call that period the Dark Era. It was even physically dark because of the lack of electricity. The economy completely collapsed, and people struggled in the difficult

"After the dark period, a bright future could be created, and after a difficult time, a greater idea could arise."

for Japan, and it remains on the Armenian national emblem today. Because of the limited resources in the mountainous land, we have tried to raise environmental awareness and to conserve the treasure of nature for future generations. Beside the famous grape and wine production, apricots are a special Armenian produce; its Latin name is *Prunus*

political circumstances and multiple conflicts with surrounding countries. But people knew that giving up and losing hope in the darkness would mean that a bright future would never come. So people fought to perpetuate their own culture and spirit for the future. The founding of the Little Singers was one of those efforts by a wise man who thought it

Panoramic view of Mt. Ararat



important to establish a children's choir that could act as a light in the darkness and help those young people overcome the hardships of the Dark Era. I truly believe that after the dark period, a bright future could be created, and after a difficult time, a greater idea could arise, and that is universally true. The Little Singers of Armenia are a good example.

Min-On: When you were a graduate student at the Moscow State University, you were involved in some activities of a music circle based on the idea of international cultural exchange.

Pogosyan: People often say that music is the universal language; I think music is indeed the common culture of humanity. When I was a student at the Moscow State University, it was the so-called Beatles Era. They were so popular among young people around the world, even for students in the USSR. It was music from the other side of the wall, but actually there was no wall in the hearts of young people who loved the music. I myself played guitar and formed a band. I also initiated an international student club on campus involving students from various countries, including Japan, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Germany, Ireland, as well as African and South American countries. We called it the Inter-Club and organized a casual once-a-month gathering where people could eat, drink and talk. People would bring food of their own country, sing their own folk songs, and share their unique cultures in many different ways. I made so many friends from all over the world. I learned Japanese *enka* songs and discovered Japanese culture for the first time.

Min-On: You have dedicated yourself to education for a long time, and here in Japan you served as dean of the graduate school at the International Catholic University (ICU). What is the importance of education?

Pogosyan: I have been teaching in Japan for 21 years—Japanese students



The Little Singers of Armenia in concert

and also students from many different countries. I am proud of the fact that one of my students is now president of a university in Indonesia. ICU has opened itself to the world, and I emphasize to the students how important it is to develop an international mind. However, the number of Japanese students who want to study abroad has been falling, and young people typically wish to stay in Japan. I think that is not good for the future of Japan. Maybe some people misunderstand the term "globalization" and are afraid that accepting globalization means losing the Japanese cultural identity. But what is really important is to develop a globalized mind-set and gain awareness of different cultures as well as the different ways of thinking that exist around the world. In this sense, Min-On's cultural exchange activities have a valuable educational role in Japan teaching the true meaning of globalization.

From the Editor



» Mrs. Lale Manço Ahiskali, former wife of the late Turkish rock singer Baris Manço, paid a courtesy call on the Min-On Culture Center on April 17 together with 15 other members of the UNESCO World Heritage Cities Tour during their visit to Japan. Baris Manço was one of the most popular and influential artists in Turkey, contributing

to the advancement of human culture as an author, composer, singer, producer and TV personality. The name Baris means "peace" in Turkish, and he served as a guide to humanity to live in peace. He met Min-On founder Daisaku Ikeda once in Turkey and twice in Japan during the 1990s, and they made a strong bond of friendship through their heartfelt dialogues. During his fifteen-city tour of Japan organized by Min-On in 1995, Baris Manço dedicated a song titled *Toki no Tabibito* ('time traveler') to the Min-On founder as an expression of his determination as a pacifist. Today, Mrs. Manço Ahiskali shares his spirit with people around the world.

» Spring has arrived again, and people the world over have enjoyed the beautiful blossoms. Dr. Ikeda once wrote about a

dream he had during his youth of planting cherry trees all over Japan, because many trees were destroyed in the air raids during the war. "I have been true to this dream of my youth," he said, "planting commemorative trees in the fertile soils of countries around the globe, with a prayer for the growth and development of each nation and for the good health of my friends living there . . . Planting a tree is planting life; it is fostering the future, fostering peace."

» A cherry tree dedicated to Baris Manço was planted at the initiative of Dr. Ikeda in Makiguchi Garden in Hachioji, Tokyo after Mr. Manço's passing in 1999. Mrs. Manço Ahiskali with friends from Turkey visited the garden and for the first time saw the beautiful blossoms of the cherry tree on a bright spring day this year.

From the Min-On Music Museum Collection



Min-On's "Erard" Concert Grand Fortepiano

"Erard" Grand Fortepiano 1899, Paris, France

Erard was a great innovator who patented many technical advances in the history of the piano. Both Paris and London factories of the Erard company were producing large numbers of fortepianos equipped with his patented technologies throughout the mid-19th century, and in a sense, all modern grand pianos are descended from the "Erard" Grand Fortepiano.

However, in the late 19th century, after Steinway and other German makers rose to prominence with new technical innovations such as cross-stringing and cast-metal frames, production at Erard declined to the point where its London factory closed in 1890.

Min-On's "Erard" Concert Grand Fortepiano was known as "The Lady of Pianos" on account of its white exterior. The exquisite carvings on the legs and case suggest the style of Louis XIV, typical of the Palace of Versailles.

This beautiful Erard piano was manufactured in the company's Paris factory in 1899 when the company itself was in decline. It is a very rare piece because a part of its frame was of cast metal instead of the more typical timber frames of Erard pianos.

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 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 104 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



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