

harmony

Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association

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A Golden Brilliance of Peace Delights Audiences

Myanmar, formerly called Burma, is rich in cultural heritage and natural resources; it is known as a devout Buddhist nation of gentle and peace-loving people. Myanmar is also famous throughout the world as “The Golden Land” due to the thousands of golden pagodas and the large golden paddy fields that have dotted the country since ancient times. The 20th century, however, witnessed the tragedy of disastrous wars in the country.

This year, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the conclusion of the postwar peace treaty and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Myanmar, Min-On hosted a special concert series entitled *A Golden Brilliance of Peace* featuring some of the most authentically traditional styles of music and dance. In

cooperation with the embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in Tokyo, 15 selected musicians and artists from the National University of Arts and Culture were designated as the National Cultural Troupe and officially dispatched to Japan by the Ministry of Culture of Myanmar. Its extended nationwide Japan tour of 10 cities started in Aichi prefecture on September 30 and concluded in Tokyo on October 16 at Nakano Sun Plaza Hall with a capacity audience that included many distinguished guests from a number of South Asian countries.

Throughout the troupe’s performance, the center of the stage was occupied by Myanmar’s unique musical ensemble called a *Saing Waing*, consisting of a circle of drums, a circle of brass, a frame of gongs, bass drums, an oboe-like instrument called a *hne*, large

and small cymbals and bamboo clappers. A unique feature of the *Saing Waing* is that the musical ensemble is entirely surrounded by decorative fencing made of gilded teak similar in color to those golden pagodas. The musicians who play the drum circle, the brass circle and the bass drums sat inside the golden frame, while singers and dancers entertained the audience outside of the musical ensemble. While the *Saing Waing* delivered the diverse sounds of classical Burmese music, singers and dancers showcased various types of regional traditions with unique rhythms and melodies. The performances also featured Myanmar’s most popular puppet show, the finely crafted puppets moving gracefully with the delicate manipulations of the expert puppeteers. The audiences were delighted and inspired by the exquisite performance of *A Golden Brilliance of Peace*.

Harp of Burma Recalls the Power of Music

The Myanmar harp, called a *saung-gauk* or simply *saung*, is one of the earliest instruments of the ancient land of Burma. A solo performance of *saung-gauk* onstage at *A Golden Brilliance of Peace* created a vivid image of the harp echoing in the rainforest of Burma, and many members of the audience were perhaps reminded of the famous Japanese novel *Harp of Burma* written by Michio Takeyama.

Harp of Burma is the story of Japanese troops who are losing battles against British forces in the harsh tropical jungles of Burma. It portrays the distress of the young soldiers and the emotions stirred by the senselessness of war. In the face of these overwhelming challenges and inevitable defeat, the men discover the power of music through their commander's ability to lead them in singing the songs of their homeland, which gradually revives their will to live. One of the Japanese soldiers who survives decides to become a Buddhist monk and remain in Burma after the war to dedicate his life to tending the graves of his fallen comrades and offering prayers for the repose of their spirits.

The idea of establishing the Min-On Concert Association came to Mr. Ikeda during his first visit to 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. Throughout the trip, he had been thinking about what was needed for humanity to break away from the tragedy of war and build lasting peace. He realized that some means of promoting mutual understanding among the peoples of the world was crucial, and that cultural exchange through music and the performing arts would be an essential part of this process. Thus, he decided to found the Min-On Concert Association.



New Music Research Institute Launched on Min-On's 51st Anniversary

On October 18 this year, commemorating the 51st anniversary of the founding of the Min-On Concert Association and the 40th anniversary of the Min-On Music Museum (formerly known as the Min-On Music Library), a brand-new Min-On Music Research Institute was established as part of the Min-On Music Museum housed in the Min-On Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo.

Min-On Founder Daisaku Ikeda wrote in his message to commemorate last year's 50th anniversary that "music is a tribute to the people's joy," it has the "power to connect the hearts of humanity" and to "provide hope and the courage to live." Based on these principles, the new Min-On Institute

launched with the following personnel appointments: Mr. Hiroyasu Kobayashi (Min-On president) director of the Institute; Dr. Olivier Urbain (director of the Toda Institute) senior research fellow; Dr. Michael Golden (prof. at Soka University of America, USA), research fellow; Dr. Craig Robertson (research fellow at Leeds University, UK), research fellow; Ms. Elaine Sandoval (PhD student at NYC graduate school, USA) associate research fellow. They will conduct academic research on the potential of "the power of music" from various angles including peace-building, the environment, society and education. And through conferences, publications and other activities, they will share the results of their research with the world.

Speaking about the significance of the Min-On Institute, Dr. Urbain, senior research fellow, said: "Academic fields such as music psychology and ethnomusicology are already well established, exploring the relationships between music and various fields of knowledge. But I think that an institute that focuses on the power of music for peace-building is something rare. In this sense, I believe that the establishment of the Min-On Institute is very meaningful, and I consider this as a new challenge. I would like to contribute to the creation of a century of peace, based on the power of music, with awareness and appreciation for the accumulated experience of Min-On in this area."

Sino-Japanese Friendship Dance Drama “Crested Ibis” Premieres in Tokyo

On the evening of October 7, the Min-On Concert Association, in collaboration with the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) and the Shanghai Media & Entertainment Group, staged a successful Japanese premiere of the dance drama “Crested Ibis.” The Shanghai Dance Theatre performed this Sino-Japanese friendship production at the U-Port Hall in Tokyo.

Chinese dance drama, a relatively new genre of performing art, emerged in the early 1930s in conjunction with the introduction of non-Chinese performing arts to China. Dance drama possesses elements of traditional theatrical drama, Western classical ballet, and contemporary music. This production of “Crested Ibis” was inspired by the true story of friendly efforts between Japan and China to mutually conserve this endangered bird species.

Crested ibises were on the brink of extinction in the latter half of the 20th century,

and in Japan they were thought to be extinct in the wild. However, in 1981, seven crested ibises were found in Shaanxi, China. Later, in 1998, then-president of China Jiang Zemin visited Japan and met the Emperor. At the meeting, Jiang Zemin promised to present a pair of crested ibises to Japan. In the following year, Yo Yo (a male) and Yang Yang (a female) traveled from Xian, China to Niigata Airport in Japan. From there, the two ibises were transported to Sado Island and released. Since then, Japan and China have cooperated in conservation efforts, and as a result, more than 1,800 crested ibises are now confirmed in the wild in Japan and China.

Ms. Li Xiaolin, president of the CPAFFC, conceived the idea of developing a dance drama based on the crested ibis as a symbol of friendship between China and Japan. The production was first staged at the Shanghai World Expo 2010. In the four years since, it has been realized by the finest production staff in China and the very best performers of the Shanghai Dance Theatre to create an

exquisite and vivid production. In April of this year, a brand-new dance drama production, “Crested Ibis,” was previewed in Shanghai to a capacity audience and glowing reviews. The distinguished guests included HH Princess Akiko of Mikasa and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, Li Xiaolin and Ambassador H.E. Cheng Yonghua of China, and many other ambassadors and diplomats from 25 countries. All were mesmerized by the sublime choreography and a drama that touches the soul.

After successful production previews this year in Niigata and Sado, the crested ibis conservation areas, the actual premiere tour across Japan will be launched in the spring of 2015. The same year also marks the 40th anniversary of Min-On-sponsored cultural exchanges with China. The Min-On Concert Association fully expects that the “Crested Ibis” will soar high into the sky across the two countries and further strengthen the bonds of friendship and mutual understanding.





Greetings from Min-On Founder Daisaku Ikeda On the Occasion of the Premiere of the Dance Drama “Crested Ibis”

I hold in the highest esteem, and other distinguished national leaders, including Vice Premier Li Xiannian and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping. I was also able to interact with some of China's sincere citizens and gallant students of all ages. These talks were conducted for the purpose of creating a golden bridge of peace and friendship to last for generations to come.

Starting in the following year of 1975, Min-On has to date welcomed an impressive 45 cultural and artistic groups from China as a means of promoting bilateral goodwill exchanges. Over that same period, Min-On has also presented 1,900 performances throughout Japan to connect the hearts of the people of both countries. We are truly happy to have been able to build this unshakable golden bridge of friendship with our Chinese friends, a bridge that will prevail over any and every surge of adversity that may come our way.

The grand drama to be performed this time in Japan by the Shanghai Dance Theatre would not have been possible without the invaluable efforts of President Li Xiaolin of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship

is a symbol of an eternal heritage passed on from generation to generation.

The path of peace and friendship must follow the same course. The efforts made by our revered pioneers must never come to a halt; they must be handed on resolutely, and we have the mission and responsibility to entrust their crystallization and perpetuation to posterity.

It is my heartfelt prayer that the youth of China and Japan, together with the youth of the rest of the world, will join hands to support and inspire each other so as to soar ceaselessly toward the happiness and prosperity of humanity, as well as toward the peaceful coexistence of people throughout the world. And it is my firm resolve to continue doing my utmost to help unfold the path toward this goal, along with our like-minded friends.

Finally, it is my sincerest hope that this performance, which sheds light on the unceasing flow of time and space, will proclaim the brilliant opening of a new century, a new millennium of friendship between China and Japan.

In closing, I would like to express once again my deepest appreciation to the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the Shanghai Dance Theatre, and all those who have made this historic performance a reality.

On behalf of the Min-On Concert Association, it is my great honor and pleasure to welcome to Japan the innovative contemporary dance troupe Shanghai Dance Theatre for the premiere of the dance drama “Crested Ibis.”

The Shanghai Dance Theatre has toured the world with its groundbreaking, exquisitely crafted performances, which fuse the timeless legacy of traditional Chinese dance with classical ballet and modern dance.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to the Chinese People's

“Creating a golden bridge of peace and friendship to last for generations to come”

Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries for the immense support it has provided to the Min-On Concert Association in realizing these performances.

Forty years ago, in May and December of 1974, I made my first two visits to China in the capacity of a private citizen wishing to promote enduring peace between our two countries. I engaged in heart-to-heart dialogues with Premier Zhou Enlai, whom

with Foreign Countries. The top artists of the Theatre have spent four years planning this magnificent and unprecedented performance to symbolize the abiding friendship that exists between China and Japan.

The crested ibis is one of the most treasured species on Earth; it can only flourish in a rich and beautiful natural environment nurtured by a desire to cherish the planet's precious and irreplaceable living things. As such, this bird



Exodus Steel Orchestra Brings the Caribbean to Japan



This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Trinidad & Tobago, one of the jewels of the Caribbean. It has also been designated as the Japan-CARICOM (Caribbean Community and Common Market) Friendship Year 2014. Min-On has happily joined in with the anniversary celebrations by inviting the Exodus Steel Orchestra, a distinguished steel drum band from the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago, for

a month-long tour of Japan, performing in a total of 21 cities.

Trinidad & Tobago is famous as the birthplace of steel pans—also known as steel drums—said to be the last acoustic instrument invented in the 20th century. The first steel pans from the late 1940s were used 55-gallon oil drums, but as the instrument gained in popularity, instrument makers started producing its note-patterned surface and resonant body to more

sophisticated technical specifications. This unique instrument, with its beautifully clear and melodically attractive sound, is beloved by the people on the islands and beyond. The steel pan has now been declared a national musical instrument of Trinidad & Tobago. Since then, steel pans have become increasingly popular in the rest of the world.

Exodus is four-time winner of Panorama, the largest steel-band contest in the world, which is held annually with the participation of over 100 contesting bands. Exodus' concert, held at Nakano Sun Plaza Hall in Tokyo on September 23 at the mid-point of the nationwide tour, began with the cheerful sounds of an authentic Caribbean song "Calypso Rising," followed by the group's award-winning popular numbers in Trinidad & Tobago. The latter half of the performance featured a wide variety of music, from Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love" to John Lennon's "Imagine"; from the classical work "Air on the G String" to the Japanese popular song "Hana Wa Saku", all played in breathtaking arrangements and with masterful technique. The music transformed the concert hall with its bright Caribbean atmosphere.

Lucky Audience Delighted by Peaceful Sounds of World Music

Since it was officially registered in Japan as an authenticated music museum in 2003, the Min-On Music Museum has periodically held a series of cultural lectures, workshops and mini-concerts as part of its admission-free public service activities with the aim of advocating and promoting music culture and education. On October 8, in conjunction with the Embassy of Israel in Japan, the internationally acclaimed Israeli artist Eyal Sela delivered a lecture and mini-concert entitled "The World of Woodwind Instruments" at the Museum Hall housed in the Min-On Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo.

Eyal Sela is an Israeli master artist of various woodwind instruments, who is often referred to as the Pied Piper of world music. During his lecture, Sela introduced a variety of ethnic woodwind instruments from around the world, including the Turkish clarinet, the Armenian *duduk*, the central Asian ethnic

instrument with a double reed called a *zuruna*, an Indian bamboo flute called the *bansuri*, the Turkish *ney* flute, the Irish penny whistle, the Norwegian *osterdal*, and many other modern woodwind instruments. He explained the origin and evolution of each instrument one by one, and played each instrument in turn with sensitive technique so that the audience could enjoy the unique sound of each.

The latter half of the event was designated a mini-concert, and Sela was joined by another distinguished Israeli artist, Idan Raichel, who is a master keyboard musician as well as a singer-songwriter who burst onto Israel's music scene in 2002. He is well known for his Idan Raichel Project, which creates distinctive collaborations with various artists of many different ethnic and musical backgrounds from around the world. Sela and Raichel have occasionally worked together in the Project and featured a few of their original pieces in this mini-concert, as well



as some improvisations. Some 200 people, lucky winners selected by lottery, made up the audience, and all were delighted by the peaceful melodies and tranquil sounds of the vocal, piano and woodwind performance.

Idan Raichel will embark on his first nationwide tour of Japan in autumn 2015 at Min-On's invitation in cooperation with the Israeli embassy in Tokyo.

Sururu na Roda Celebrates Friendship in the Rhythm of Samba

Brazil is recognized throughout the world as a superpower of music—one that has originated a wealth of popular musical genres and rhythmical dance styles. Among them, samba is perhaps the most popular cultural expression of Brazil, an internationally famous symbol of the country and especially of the passionate carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

Among the many talented musicians and artists in Brazil, Sururu na Roda is a leading group of musicians in Lapa, a district in the state of Rio de Janeiro that has a particularly rich samba tradition. In the 14 years since it formed, the group has won enthusiastic reviews around the world and was awarded the title of Best Samba Group in the 25th Brazilian Music Awards in 2014.

Min-On, joining the celebrations of National Samba Day of Brazil in December this year, is honored to invite Sururu na Roda for its first Japan tour, from the beginning of November to mid-December. The tour showcases some of the group's best music with the rhythms of samba, bossa nova, choro and several other genres to Japanese audiences in 22 cities.

On the evening of November 5, Sururu na Roda's month-long nationwide tour was launched in Tokyo at Nakano Sun Plaza Hall with more than 2,000 people in attendance. The program kicked off with the most

famous Brazilian samba piece, "Aquarela Do Brazil," commonly known simply as "Brazil," and featured a total of 38 popular Brazilian numbers in a variety of styles as well as the group's original pieces. Throughout the concert, the passionate performances played on various percussion instruments spontaneously captivated the capacity audience with the infectious rhythms of

Brazil, and many people were soon standing and dancing.

Sururu na Roda successfully concluded its nationwide tour on December 10 in the harbor city of Yokohama, having achieved the tremendous feat of generating the bright and joyful atmosphere of a Brazilian carnival, celebrating friendships among the people of the two countries.



From the Editor

- » Min-On Founder Daisaku Ikeda once remarked, "The basis of genuine world peace will be formed by the fostering of mutual understanding through a grass-roots exchange that transcends distinctions of race, nation and ideology. To this end, exchanges 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."
- » At a time when the painful memories of war were still fresh in Asia, Min-On came into the world based on the founder's strong conviction that culture could counter the violence of war and that cultural exchange could lead humanity in the direction of world peace. Since then, Min-On has welcomed more than 110 million audience members to experience cultures from around the world. Min-On's network of cultural exchange now spans 105 countries and territories. While enjoying *A Golden Brilliance of Peace* performed by the National Cultural Troupe of Myanmar, we were reminded about the power of culture—a power that Min-On has trusted for the past

half-century. Let us re-strengthen the conviction to further promote cultural exchange on a global scale.

- » The great path of Japan-China relations is one of culture, integrity and friendship. These are the values that have characterized our cultural exchanges with China for more than 40 years, and this has been the constant stance of the Min-On Founder toward China since 1968, when he issued his proposal for normalization of Japan-China relations. This proposal, which was announced at the height of the Cold War, caused great controversy inside and outside Japan, and he became the target of criticism from many sides. The late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, however, was different. He accepted the Founder's true intention, which was to state the pressing need for Japan to deepen friendly relations with China, its neighbor and cultural benefactor, for the sake of the peace and stability of the world. This year, in the course of preparing and holding the preview performance of "Crested Ibis" in Tokyo, we have vividly witnessed the beautiful significance of cultural exchange, which can strengthen the bonds of friendship, goodwill and mutual trust in the important area of Sino-Japanese relations, despite the recent political climate between the two countries.

From the Min-On Music Museum Collection



The Welte-Mignon Reproducing Piano
Bush & Lane, 1927, USA

The period from the end of the 19th century through the beginning of the 20th century was the golden age of mechanical musical instruments. During this period, the most mechanically sophisticated instrument was the automatic

reproducing piano. The first such instrument, manufactured in 1904 through the efforts of Edwin Welte of Germany and others, was the Welte Automatic Reproducing Piano, which utilized a paper roll.

In the early 20th century, these instruments were used to record the actual performances of world-renowned pianists and composers. Original masterpieces, including the specific pedal work and delicacy of expression, are preserved with stunning accuracy in perforations on the paper rolls.

The Min-On Music Museum has some 1,000 paper rolls for playing this Welte-Mignon Reproducing Piano, including performances by artists and composers such as Bela Bartok, Ferruccio Busoni, Teresa Carreno, Claude Debussy, Manuel de Falla, Enrique Granados, Edvard Hagerup Grieg, Theodor Leschetizky, Gustav Mahler, Vladimir Pachmann, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Raoul Pugno, Maurice Ravel, Camille Saint-Saens, Emil von Sauer, Aleksandr Skriabin, Richard Strauss and many others.

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

