

LEADERSHIP IN CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Cultures can only realize / their further richness / by honoring other traditions,” SGI President Ikeda writes in his poem “The Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land.” This is the thinking behind all his cultural activities. Cultural exchange leads to greater understanding among nations, he believes, and, most importantly, among individuals.

President Ikeda founded the Min-On Concert Association in 1963 based on this principle. Over the years, Min-On has brought performing groups from 76 nations to Japan and organized many overseas tours of Japanese performers. From the Vienna State Opera to Herbie Hancock, Min-On’s family of performers encompasses great diversity. Similarly, the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, founded by President Ikeda in 1983, has created an international family of paintings, pottery, lacquer ware, calligraphy and sculptures from East and West. Exhibitions have included everything from the ancient Buddhist artwork of Dunhuang, China, to a retrospective of photographer Robert Capa’s work.

The SGI organization also has its own tradition of international cultural exchange through its culture festivals, where SGI members share their cultures and learn of others’ through song and dance. President Ikeda for 40 years has taught that we should not be locked into our own cultures; each of us should absorb what other cultures have to offer. Culture becomes, then, the antidote to war on a grassroots level. To make the 21st century truly new, President Ikeda’s vision of cultural exchange is vital.