

## MIN-ON CONCERT ASSOCIATION CELEBRATING THE 'PEOPLE'S MUSIC'

The Min-On Concert association was established in 1963 at the initiative of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda in the hope that the power of the musical arts can transcend cultural differences and unite people through shared emotion, thus creating an ever-expanding circle of friendship.

*Min-On* literally means “people’s music,” and Min-On’s intention has always been to share joy through music with common people. Its first public activity was a series of free concerts held in parks in Tokyo, Osaka, Sendai, Sapporo and Nagoya in 1964 and 1965. Its first sponsored music master class was held in January 1965 at the Toranomon Hall, taught by jazz drummer Art Blakely.

During its first five years, Min-On carried out cultural exchange with Israel, the (then) Soviet Union, the United States, France, Belgium and Hong Kong. Registered as an independent foundation in 1965, Min-On has since grown to become one of Japan’s leading music promoters.

The association strives to make a diversity of music of high quality — from classical to modern and from popular to traditional — available to as wide a range of music lovers as possible.

In addition, Min-On also sponsors musical competitions — for vocalists, conductors and contemporary composers — to encourage the development of new artistic talent. Its public service projects still include school concerts, free concerts, children’s theater and music master classes.

Min-On inaugurated a ballet series soon after its founding. In 1966, the association invited the Soviet National Academy Novosibirsk Ballet to Japan for the first performance in this series. The Ballet du XXe Siècle from Belgium came the following year, and the American Ballet Theater in 1968.

Min-On’s major project to mark the 10th anniversary of its founding was inviting the Bayerische Staatsoper München (Munich Opera) to perform in Japan for the first time in 1974. The 330 members of the Munich Opera company delighted Japanese fans with a program of four operas and four special recitals presented in a total of 22 performances.

Among its cultural exchanges during the 1980s, Min-On scheduled three large-scale projects: touring opera performances by the Wiener Staatsoper in 1980, by Milan’s Teatro alla Scala in 1981 and by the Royal Opera in 1986. The Japan tour by Milan’s Teatro alla Scala was Min-On’s most ambitious undertaking since its founding. Planning for the tour began in 1965, when an agreement was reached with Antonio Ghiringhelli, then Teatro alla Scala’s general administrator; but it was not until 16 years later that the dream of a Japan tour was finally realized.

The Association also launched a series of performances titled “A Musical Voyage Along the Silk Road,” tracing the cultural exchanges occurring along the historical main artery of trade in Asia. A study group researched the music and dance of Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India during visits to those countries in 1977. The first performances, in 1979, featured vocal music from India, Iraq and China. Each series brought together performers from different countries to explore the theme of cultural exchange along the Silk Road.

As a counterpart to the Silk Road series, another series was launched, titled “A Musical

Voyage Along the Marine Road”—a reference to the sea route linking the countries of Southeast Asia. This series began in 1984 with performances by the Thailand National Dance Group.

The Min-On Culture Center opened in September 1997, housing an extensive library and a collection of musical instruments from around the world. To date, the center has welcomed more than 250,000 visitors, including President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and former President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines. The association is committed to providing support for musical and cultural activities in the 21st century.

### **Min-On’s Guidelines**

1. To develop a multifaceted music and cultural movement that is firmly rooted among the people so as to share with ever more people the pleasure and inspiration that come from enjoying music and the performing arts.
2. To contribute to a flourishing of music and art in the new age by enhancing musical and cultural activities and developing musical programs designed to cultivate the artistic sentiments of children and youth.
3. To deepen mutual understanding and friendship among all countries by promoting global music and cultural exchange that transcends differences of nationality, race and language.

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