

The MIN-ON CONCERT ASSOCIATION

NAKAGAWA Shin

The MIN-ON CONCERT ASSOCIATION (hereafter ‘MIN-ON’) was founded in October 1963. It was later authorized by the Japanese Ministry of Education as an “Incorporated Foundation”. In 2013, it was recognized as a “General Incorporated Foundation”. The intended purpose is to promote human culture and to bring people’s hearts together in a network of peace through music, as envisioned by IKEDA Daisaku. The association has conducted major projects in a wide variety of social settings.

MIN-ON has two major activity types: public performances and the promotion of music awareness. Public performances that have been promoted by the association include a wide variety of genres performed around the country and surpass a total of 80 thousand in number. It has also promoted programs to support visitors from overseas, and has made cultural exchange with a total of 110 countries and/or regions possible.

The association’s promotion of music awareness programs includes music competitions, young people’s music-related cultural awareness programs, disseminating music and promoting international cultural exchange, and museum-related activities. The music competitions have provided young people with opportunity to break into the music world in the fields of vocal performance, directing, composition and chamber music - although currently only the field of directing is actively being pursued. The MIN-ON Modern Music Composition Festival - carried out 20 times in conjunction with the composition competitions - made especially important contributions to the development of modern music. In the young people’s music-related cultural awareness programs, students at more than 4,600 schools - elementary, junior high and high school - were provided with opportunity to perform school concerts. One especially noteworthy example of how the program promoted social inclusion was the *Tohoku Kibo Concert* in which elementary and junior high schools from Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures participated just a year after a major earthquake hit the region (the name of the concert means “Hope for the Tohoku Region”).

In the fields of disseminating music and promoting international cultural exchange, the association has promoted local municipal concerts, music events for exchange

students (in localities including Kyoto, Osaka, and Yokohama), and overseas activities, among others.

The association's museum-related activities focus on displays of musical instruments, library services, etc., at the MIN-ON Museum of Music- which houses around 30 thousand scores and music-related documents and is the largest private museum in the country devoted to music.

What attracted the attention of The Koizumi Fumio Music Awards Committee to MIN-ON was the field work trips that it made - together with ethnomusicologists - to various regions of Asia, and the invitations extended to and cultural exchange activities carried out with the same regions. These surveys were carried out in three rounds for a total of 141 days and lead to a number of new insights about the region's music. In the first (1977), parts of Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, Nepal and India were visited. Invaluable data was obtained that would seem to indicate musical dispersion routes, and especially in establishing the relationship of the Mongolian folk song style referred to as *urtyn duu* ("long song") and Japanese *Mago uta* ("horse-leading song") to each other on the one hand and the simultaneous presence of styles similar to both the slow-paced *urtyn duu* and musically measured *bogino duu* ("short song") to areas as far west as Iran and even Hungary. In the second trip (1980), China and Pakistan were visited. The first detailed surveys ever were made of wall paintings depicting music and dance at the Magao Caves in Gansu and at the Kucha ruins in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and comparisons made between the instruments depicted and the instruments housed in Shōsōin in Japan. Additionally, detailed surveys of performance and tuning techniques for the bowed string instrument *rewap* were carried out in Tianshan North Road (Ili and Ürümqi) and Tianshan South Road (Kashgar, Kucha), leading to indications of the origins of the Japanese stringed instruments *shamisen* and *biwa*. In the third trip (1982), Turkey, India and China were visited and observations made about the religious and aesthetic meaning of whirling dances performed in each region.

These three survey trips embody the philosophy and methodology fostered by the institution's overall academic approach to music. In the 1970's, cultural relativism - with its origins in the work of such scholars as Franz Boas - was a frequent topic of discussion, and exerted great influence on ethnomusicology. MIN-ON's surveys focused

on the history of interaction between music cultures in Asia (Eurasia), placing the music of Japan in an Asian context with the aim of putting it in a relativized context. This, in turn, also fostered greater interest within Japan for Asian music in general.]

An important point to be noted about MIN-ON's methodology is that it does not overly emphasize academic-based surveys - i.e., the merely stocking up of data for experts to use, but rather on 'giving back' to the public in the form of concerts, talks and workshops. Tallying numbers to take the later work on South-east Asia into account, the institution has promoted a staggering total number of 8,579 music and/or dance performances. These public performances are of such a large number that they draw attention away from the survey data aspects of the institution's work. These should not be forgotten however, and neither should the fact that the foremost runner was KOIZUMI Fumio. It would not be going too far to say that these surveys laid the basis for his talks and explains why they were so captivating. The surveys were nothing more or less than a miraculous collaboration between researchers at a private institution for the promotion of cultural awareness on the one hand, and a national university on the other. After Koizumi passed away, surveys continued to be carried out, with such distinguished researchers as TSUGE Gen'ichi, FUJII Tomoaki, KOSHIBA Harumi (Central Asia); MISUMI Haruo, TAMURA Fumi, YAMAGUTI Osamu and TOKUMARU Yosihiko (South-east Asia).

The activities of the MIN-ON Music Research Institute - a research division of the MIN-ON Music Museum - are unique indeed. The Institute is dedicated to the application of music-related research to the promotion of peace, and in addition to taking on symposiums on such topics as applied ethnomusicology and social inclusion at international venues with ICTM (the International Council for Traditional Music) and SEM (the Society for Ethnomusicology), it also extends visiting invitations to researchers around the world and promotes discussion of the role of music in the face of violence and conflict.

The awarding of the current prize to the MIN-ON Concert Association was decided based on its rich array of resources (as outlined above) and on its potential for future expansion.

(Specially Appointed Professor, Osaka City University Urban Research Plaza)