

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NOV. 12 SPEECH—PART 1 WE ARE DEVELOPING OUR HUMANITY

‘Training that develops our humanity is very important,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘A person who is never challenged or tested is weak when a crucial moment comes.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 11th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, Nov. 12.

Thank you all for coming from so far away! And many thanks to those champions of kosen-rufu music, the Music Corps of our young men’s division! Founded in May 1954, the Music Corps has consistently inspired and encouraged people with its rousing tunes for almost five decades.

I dedicate the following poem in its praise:

*Even amid storms —
Ah, our Music Corps
Playing the melodies
Of the Buddhas and heavenly deities.*

In her eloquent speech earlier, Kansai Women’s Leader Emiko Nakao referred to the Osaka Rally, which was held on July 17, 1957 [to protest President Ikeda’s unjust detention by the Osaka District Prosecutor’s Office]. Music Corps members gathered from early that morning on the riverbank in Osaka’s Nakanoshima and played Soka Gakkai songs with all their might, hoping that their music would reach me where I was being held. And indeed, I could clearly hear them. I will never forget that courageous sound.

My thanks, too, to those heavenly emissaries of peace, the Fife and Drum Corps of the young women’s division! Let me praise them with the following poem:

*Shining brightly
In a tumultuous world—
The Fife and Drum Corps.*

One has but to mention the Fife and Drum Corps and everyone wants to hear them play. Its members have accumulated immense benefits as a result of steadfastly spreading the light of peace.

Thinking back, it was 45 years ago, in 1956, in our small, humble home in Kobayashi-cho in Tokyo’s Ota Ward, that my wife and I, along with several representatives of the young women’s division, discussed ideas for forming such a group for young women. That was the beginning of today’s Fife and Drum Corps.

**Kosen-rufu is a great cultural movement
placing supreme importance on music and the arts.**

Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, who appears in the Lotus Sutra, is said to be accompanied wherever he goes by the music of hundreds and thousands of heavenly musicians. [“The Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “The

lands that he [Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound] passed through on his way quaked and trembled in six different ways, and in all of them seven-jeweled lotus flowers rained down and the instruments of hundreds and thousands of heavenly musicians sounded of themselves without having been struck” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 293).

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “We can know a country’s prosperity by whether its tones are happy or sad” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 88). In other words, we can know a country’s future by its “sounds”—the sounds of the times and the age. The future of a country, whether it is destined to flourish or decline, is revealed in sound. This sound is the sound of human voices and, by extension, of the arts and culture, including, of course, music.

Kosen-rufu is a great cultural movement that places supreme importance on music and the arts. The Music Corps and the Fife and Drum Corps were founded based on this basic principle of Buddhism.

When I asked second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda to permit me to establish these groups, he said simply, “If you’ll take full responsibility, Daisaku, go right ahead!” I purchased a few instruments out of my own pocket and donated them to the original members—16 in the Music Corps and 33 in the Fife and Drum Corps.

Today, these groups in Japan boast some 20,000 members each. And, as you all know, many of their constituent groups have won top prizes in national competitions.

The SGI’s network of youth music groups has spread to 30 countries and territories.

On Jan. 20, 2002, the Japan Marching Band Championships will be held at the Budokan in Tokyo, and four Soka Gakkai bands have had the honor to be selected to participate: the Tokyo Soka Renaissance Vanguard Drum and Brass Corps, the Kansai Drum and Bugle Corps, the Chubu Drum and Bugle Corps, and the Kagoshima Marching Band. Congratulations!

In addition, our Kansai Young Men’s Chorus will participate in a national competition on Nov. 24.

Also, our Kansai Wind Orchestra won the gold medal at the All-Japan Wind Ensemble Competition on Oct. 21, while the Soka University Pioneer Wind Orchestra won the gold medal in the university division of the same competition on Oct. 20.

As for our Fife and Drum Corps, the Tokyo Metropolitan Marching Band and the Tokyo Metropolitan Baton Twirling Team will also compete in national championships on Nov. 24 and on Jan. 13 next year, respectively.

These achievements are remarkable. The activities of the members of these groups are in themselves a great artistic movement, a great cultural movement.

The SGI’s network of wonderful sound has today spread to 30 countries and territories. Many SGI Music Corps and Fife and Drum Corps groups around the world have played at important national events in their countries and won high acclaim, creating a superlative record of achievement. I wholeheartedly applaud them on becoming the best Music Corps and Fife and Drum Corps in the world.

No matter how smart we are, we cannot take decisive leadership if we are weak.

Training that develops our humanity is very important. A person who is never challenged or tested is weak when a crucial moment comes.

No matter how smart we are, we cannot take decisive leadership for kosen-rufu if we

are weak as human beings. Those who have undergone thorough training in faith in their youth, as members of the Music Corps and the Fife and Drum Corps have, are strong.

A quick look at our women's leaders shows that graduates of the Fife and Drum Corps are making outstanding contributions. [President Ikeda introduced a number of top regional women's leaders who are Fife and Drum Corps graduates.] SGI-Micronesia Chapter Leader Noriko Lopez, who is with us today, is also a graduate of this group.

In our SGI organizations in other parts of the world as well, members who have undergone training in the Fife and Drum Corps in their youth have grown splendidly and are wonderfully active today in our movement for kosen-rufu. From a young age, they worked hard and challenged themselves with noble dedication. They strove with their entire beings to inspire and impart hope to many. That is why they so brilliantly shine.

The Mystic Law is the fundamental Law that encompasses and moves the entire universe. Consequently, the actions we take for kosen-rufu adorn our lives with immense benefit.

The strenuous efforts of our Music Corps graduates are also most heartening. Some 15 graduates have gone on to become Soka Gakkai vice presidents. [President Ikeda introduced the 15.]

In fact, all the graduates of our youth music groups have achieved truly admirable growth. The same goes for other members who in their youth received training in the garden of kosen-rufu and worked hard behind the scenes. They shine and are winning in their lives.

Today, representatives of our famed arts division have also joined us to celebrate the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding, Nov. 18. Thank you very much!

Let us all continue to show our support for the worthy artists of the Soka Gakkai who are striving so earnestly for kosen-rufu!

In this year of great victory, let me say again to all our members, thank you so very much! The phenomenal development of the Soka Gakkai today has been achieved solely through your prayers, unity, perseverance and energetic efforts.

The Soka Gakkai is filled with cheerful music and art. High Priest Nikken Abe and Nichiren Shoshu were jealous and resentful of this enjoyable, beautiful realm of the Soka Gakkai and tried to destroy it. It was the priesthood that called Beethoven's Ninth Symphony "slander of the Law." Where else in the world could one find clerics who reject this magnificent cultural treasure of all humanity?

Shakespeare wrote in *The Merchant of Venice*:

*The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with
concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons,
stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus;
Let no such man be trusted....*

This is a penetrating observation of human nature made by one of the world's greatest writers.

To be continued in an upcoming issue.

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS
THE HAPPY SOUNDS OF KOSEN-RUFU
FROM THIS SPEECH:**

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “We can know a country’s prosperity by whether its tones are happy or sad” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 88). In other words, we can know a country’s future by its “sounds” – the sounds of the times and the age. The future of a country, whether it is destined to flourish or decline, is revealed in sound. This sound is the sound of human voices and, by extension, of the arts and culture, including, of course, music. Kosen-rufu is a great cultural movement that places supreme importance on music and the arts. The Music Corps and the Fife and Drum Corps were founded based on this basic principle of Buddhism.

1) SGI President Ikeda explains that in the above passage the Daishonin says that “we can know a country’s future by its ‘sounds’ – the sounds of the times and the age.” Based on your practice of faith, do you ever consciously think about the “sounds” you are creating with your voice in your daily activities? If so, in what ways? What type of “happy tones” do you think will contribute to creating a prosperous destiny for you and America? What do think are some of the “sounds” today that left unchecked, will bring about the decline of this country?

2) President Ikeda continues: “This sound is the sound of human voices and, by extension, of the arts and culture, including, of course, music. Kosen-rufu is a great cultural movement that places supreme importance on music and the arts.” Can you find other passages in *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* that explain the importance of sounds? Can you think of examples where music and art have been used to serve the authority of power rather than the happiness of the people? Do you think it is important to counteract this kind of negative influence? If so, in what ways?