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“God’s Love Song for the Nations’:
Onnuri Church’s ‘Love Sonata’ ‘Cultural Evangelism Gatherings’ in Japan”

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Since its beginning in 2007 through 2019, Onnuri Church’s Love Sonata musical outreach extravaganza has been held 30 times in cities all across Japan (and four elsewhere in Asia). Capitalizing on the wildly popular 2002 “Winter Sonata” Korean TV drama (“Fuyu Sonata” in Japan), Pastor Ha Yong-jo instigated a “cultural evangelism” gathering involving Christian Korean musicians performing and himself preaching an evangelistic message. Hundreds of Onnuri Church volunteers have paid their own way to go and pray, make gift boxes, greet newcomers, and otherwise support each Love Sonata event.

As a Korean outreach to Japan, Love Sonata exemplifies a wounded victim ministering to its oppressor. Furthermore, Pastor Ha dramatically apologized publicly to Japanese attendees, asking for their forgiveness for Koreans’ failure to forgive Japanese for their atrocities committed against Koreans. Pastor Ha’s inspiring example and leadership have helped to heal deeply strained relations between Christian communities in Korea and in Japan.

Supported by qualitative research from interviews with both Japanese and Korean participants, this study examines Love Sonata’s origins, planning, execution, reception, effects, and prospects. The central importance of the wounded Korean Onnuri Church’s initiative to minister the gospel of Jesus Christ to its oppressor Japan runs throughout the study.