7th Fleet Band performs first concert on island of Miyakojima

Story and photo by MC2 Kenneth R. Hendrix, C7F Public Affairs

The 7th Fleet Band Far East Edition performed its first-ever concert on the southern island of Miyakojima, Japan, before a sold-out crowd at the Matida Civic Center Dec. 12, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the United State-Japan alliance.

The concert came on the heels of a visit by the minesweeper *USS Defender* (MCM 2) to Miyakojima in September. Last year, minesweepers *USS Guardian* (MCM 5) and *USS Patriot* (MCM 7) visited the nearby island of Ishigaki.

The concert was originally slated to happen in September, but was canceled due to Typhoon Kompasu. The line outside the theater formed hours before show time with people like Masayoshi Takamori, a Miyakojima native, who said he has traveled to Tokyo and Yokosuka in the past to see the band perform.

"I really like the 7th Fleet Band, and I enjoyed today's concert," Takamori said.

As the band took to the stage at 4 p.m., the theater roared with a loud applause welcoming the band and lit up with digital camera flashes from mobile devices.

U.S. Consulate General Naha Deputy Principal Officer Claire Kaneshiro said the interaction between the band and locals was an example of the expression that music and culture are the great ambassador.

"A lot people who showed up are music enthusiasts and people who wanted to show that they understood we were also here as part of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the security alliance," Kaneshiro said. "These types of events have great synergy, and we were able to distribute lots of material orientated towards encouraging kids in Japan to think about opportunities to study in the United States."

The band performed a total of 14 songs. One of the highlights of the performance was during the performance of the song, "*Shima Uta*," when Lt. Jeff Wrenn, fleet bandmaster, walked onto the stage playing a Japanese *shamisen*. A *shamisen* is a traditional three-string Japanese instrument that is similar in length to a guitar with a rounded drum-sized rectangular body.

"We started putting the segment into our Japanese shows about three months ago as a special treat," Wrenn said. "We always get great reactions, and the crowd is surprised to see that we have a traditional instrument that we play in our concerts."

7th Fleet Band, Far East Edition member MU2 John Wylie shakes hands with a girl after the band's Friendship Concert at the Matida Civic Theater on the island of Miyakojima Dec. 12. The visit to Miyakojima was a first for the band and recognized the 50th anniversary of the United States-Japan alliance.

Then came "*Billie Jean*," a rendition performed by Musician 1st Class (SW) Christopher Sams, complete with all the Michael Jackson trimmings from the high kicks to the moonwalk.

"Tonight was special for me because this was my last performance with the Far East Edition of the band," Sams said. "'*Billie Jean*' is a Michael Jackson classic and audiences in Japan really love it, and they get a kick out of it when I do the moonwalk."

The band ended the show with an encore performance singing the popular Japanese song "*Il Yu Da Na*."

George Washington returns home to Yokosuka for the holidays

Sailors assigned to *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*) and embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 scrub the flight deck in preparation for the ship's upcoming selected restricted availability period Dec. 13. After a short but eventful three-week period out at sea, *GW* returned to its forward-deployed operating port of Yokosuka, Japan, Dec. 14.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Jacob D. Moore

By MC3 Marcos Vazquez, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

After a short but eventful three-week period out at sea, the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*) returned to its forward deployed operating port of Yokosuka, Japan, Dec. 14.

While underway, *GW* participated in an exercise in the waters west of the Korean peninsula with the Republic of Korea (ROK) navy and in the Pacific Ocean with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) as part of the exercise Keen Sword 2011.

"Our crew has done an outstanding job during this patrol which began almost seven months ago in May," said *GW* Commanding Officer Capt. David Lausman. "During that time, we've traveled more then 50,000 nautical miles across the western Pacific, and I know this region is safer and more secure today because of their service."

GW participated in other naval exercises during the 2010 annual patrol including exercise Invincible Spirit with the ROK navy, undersea warfare exercise with the JMSDF, which focused on the coordination of anti-submarine warfare, and the joint military exercise Valiant Shield, which was conducted to train the participants on various areas including maritime interdiction, intelligence surveillance, reconnaissance and personnel recovery.

The flight deck of the carrier was an extremely busy place during the 2010 patrol with 8,351 launches and recoveries. To keep those planes flying, the air wing used 16,125, 000 gallons of fuel. The Supply Department made 1.8 million meals with food they brought aboard during 34 separate replenishment-at-sea. The Supply Department also cleaned 365,000 pounds of laundry and kept the crew looking sharp with 22,000 haircuts.

The ship's Medical Department was responsible for assisting 9,485 patients, administering 10,354 immunizations and collecting 424 units of blood during a command blood drive.

The size of the *GW* crew increased by 22 U.S. citizens during the annual patrol as the Legal Department naturalized more than three dozen Sailors as new United States citizens.

"In some countries people are not allowed to speak about certain things, but now I am an American, and I can defend my country and use my freedom of speech whenever I want," said Culinary Specialist Seaman Jian Xu, one of the proud new Americans.

In 2010, *GW* visited Korea, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand. In these ports, more than 7,000 people had the chance to get a firsthand look at the Navy's only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier.

"It was a great opportunity for both the citizens to see what we do and for our own Sailors to showcase their pride we all share in this warship," said Chief Master-at-Arms Raymond Wendt, one of the ship's tour guides in the Philippines. "It helps you appreciate the ship even more by seeing the excitement in their faces."