

ACOM CO., LTD.

Putting smiles on the faces of all those involved: ACOM Miru Concert Monogatari



Many people will have heard about Miru Concert Monogatari on TV commercials featuring Ms. Rika Adachi. Actually, this concert has been held for 30 years since 1994 as part of ACOM's mecenat activity. The company has held as many as 254 concerts nationwide, collectively bringing in 250,000 visitors. ACOM received the [Award of Making Everyone Smile](#) at the Mécénat Awards in 2018.

On one hot day in August 2022, I visited "[Miru Concert Monogatari: Peter Pan](#)" and interviewed staff from the Public & Investor Relations Office about what is happening behind the scenes.

In the first part of the concert, Premier, a female trio consisting of a pianist, a violinist and a cellist, played six traditional pieces familiar to everyone. Along with the music, an eye-pleasing shadow show that matched the theme of the music was performed.



First part: Premier Petit Concert

In the second part of the concert, the main program, Peter Pan, was presented by Shadow Play Theater Kashinoki. I found that the entire audience fell silent, absorbed and mesmerized by the narration, musical performance, and sensitive and ingenious shadow pictures projected onto a large screen. Tamaki Matsuda, who played the roles of MC and narrator, perfectly performed different characters by changing her voice.

Sign language that both hearing people and deaf people can enjoy

What left a great impression on me throughout the concert was the sign language. From the announcement before the programs and the interpretation during performances, Mr. Makoto Takei, who resembled an icon of the concert, gave interpretation using a variety of expressions. This caught my attention even though I'm not a hearing-impaired person. In one program where Mr. Takei and the audience collaborated in performing "Hey! Let's go" in sign language, all the people in the hall felt a feeling of unity despite being unable to sing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I was surprised to discover that sign language can be used to enjoy music in this way.

ACOM Miru Concert Monogatari (hereinafter referred to as "Miru Concert"), which is now a barrier-free concert, was not provided with sign language interpretation when it began. It was in 1997 that some people working at ACOM started interpreting programs in sign language on the stage for the first time in response to requests from visitors. After that, Mr. Takei, who was a college student at that time, and his friends and members of other colleges' sign language groups, started actively joining concerts as sign language interpreters.

Company staff creating concerts with their own hands

What characterizes Miru Concert is that it is a hand-made concert whose planning and management is completely carried out by ACOM's company members. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the members of the Public & Investor Relations Office took the initiative in organizing a concert while recruiting citizen volunteers locally in each region, and now about 20 company members are working as volunteers to manage the concerts.

“We enjoy setting up concert venues by ourselves. For example, estimating the flow of people visiting a concert, we determine where to check their temperatures, where to have them sanitize their hands, where to check their entrance tickets, and where to pass out brochures, and then we lay out tables, put up posters and set out thermometers.” (Mr. Okamoto)

“The meticulous work behind the scenes probably helps visitors to sense a warm and welcoming atmosphere.” (Mr. Hagiuda)



Volunteer company staff having a meeting before the opening of a concert

An environment enabling employees to comfortably join an event as volunteers is created within ACOM. The company provides transportation and accommodation costs for people to participate in Miru Concert as volunteers. A volunteer who took part in one of the events commented: “I felt refreshed after participating in tasks that are totally different from my day-to-day work. I had a good time.”

“In our daily work, we seldom interact with a lot of customers at one time. Since we are involved in financing service, we usually communicate with one specific customer over the phone without seeing their face. However, at a concert venue, we interact with our customers face-to-face, see their smiles and receive appreciative words from them, which gives us a refreshing feeling.” (Mr. Hagiuda)



Concert staff giving away gift products to visitors

Visitors feedback becomes an anchor

When the company management was in a tough situation, it seemed there was no option but simply to suspend the concert work. Yet amid ongoing business reorganization throughout the company, including streamlining of subsidiaries and reduction of social contribution activities, Miru Concert survived, which was largely thanks to visitors who responded to an audience survey as well as the strong sentiments of those working at ACOM.

Surveys are handed out to visitors at each Miru Concert, collecting a variety of opinions from visitors including children, elderly people and people with physical disabilities. Expressions of gratitude from visitors were preserved in their written responses, which led to the creation of shared awareness within the company that Miru Concert is an activity needed by society and one which should be continued, which in turn gave a boost to the continuation of concerts.

Visitors feedback has given field staff added motivation to work:

“I feel very encouraged when I hear visitors say things like ‘Thank you very much for giving the concert despite the pandemic,’ or ‘I came to the concert when I was a child, and this time, I came with my child.’ When I heard one visitor with physical disabilities say ‘I’m glad that I made the effort to come to this concert,’ I was really glad that we had put on the concert.” (Ms. Katsumura)

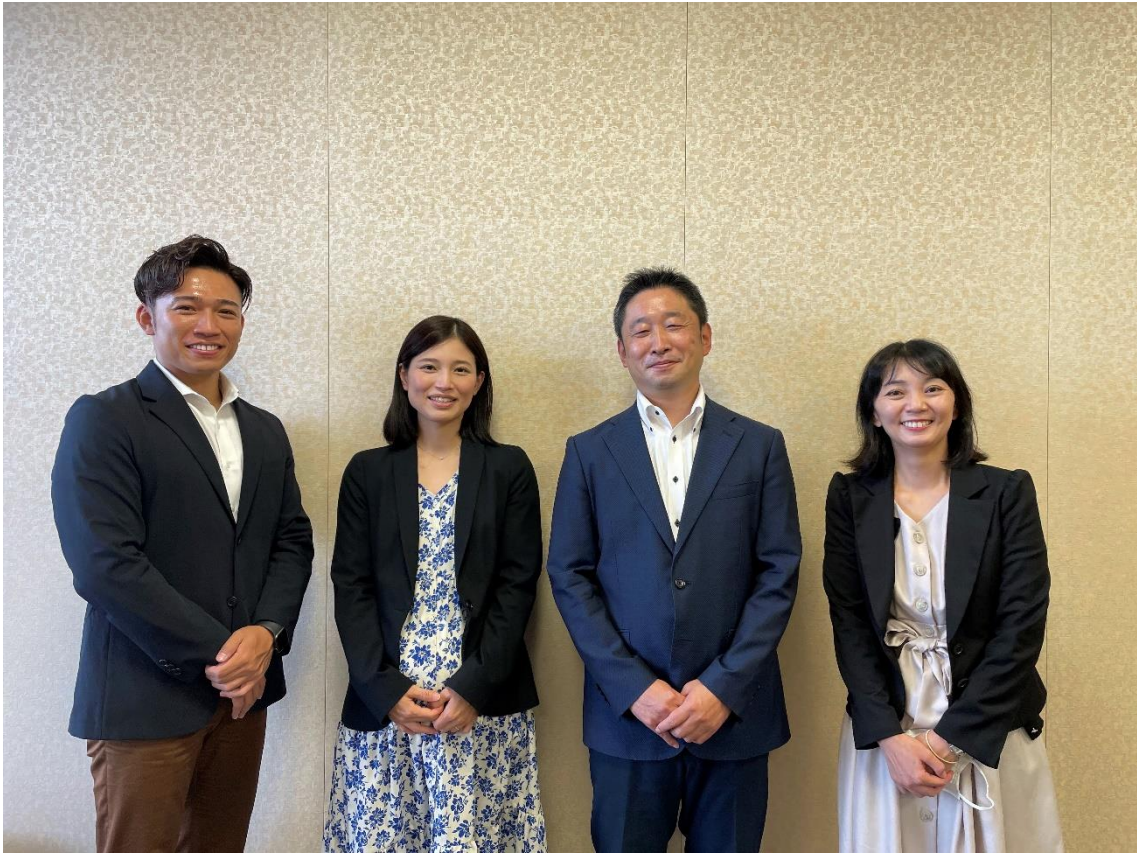


Guiding a visitor in a wheelchair in the auditorium

Something both organizers and visitors can enjoy

I asked one of the staff members what they thought made a good mecenat activity, to which the response was:

“I believe it has to be something both organizers and visitors can enjoy. If people who visited our concerts want us to continue this activity and if it receives a high level of recognition from society, I think it shows that we are doing a good mecenat activity.” (Mr. Okamoto)



Left to right: Mr. Hagiuda, Ms. Katsumura, Mr. Okamoto and Ms. Akiyama
of the Public & Investor Relations Office

Miru Concert, which has been held based on ACOM's three wishes to do something for others, to see other people's smiling faces and to establish a harmonious relationship with society, seems to have created a virtuous cycle that makes people in the community as well as people working at ACOM smile. As a result of 28 years of continuous efforts to hold concerts, there are many people who repeatedly attend their events. Their concerts held in various localities are gaining increasing number of fans across the country and are open to communities and people of all ages regardless of whether or not they have disabilities.

After the interview

I was hugely impressed by how all the company members I interviewed spoke so enthusiastically. Instead of outsourcing the planning and management of events, they have accumulated know-how and memories within the company, through which I felt these employees engaged in the project have developed attachment to their activity and enthusiasm for its continuation. This also highlights their approach in considering inclusive viewpoints, and I find it impressive that such an approach has been taken as a matter of course since the early stages of this activity, driven by the feedback of visitors and the company staff. I would like to pay close attention to how Miru Concert evolves in

the future, both for the audience and the company staff, while maintaining its underlying purpose of making everyone smile.

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