

# harmony

Newsletter of the Min-On Concert Association

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## Performance of Ekatatva Celebrates Solidarity Among the People

The Sanskrit word *ekatatva* means ‘unity’ or ‘one essence’. “Ekatatva,” says Uma Dogra, a virtuoso of Indian *kathak* dance, “is a common principle of our thought that strings together three dancers, three choreographers and three classical dance styles—*odissi*, *kathak* and *bharatanatyam*. It is about celebrating the use of the body through all of its movements to reach beyond the mundane in search of a higher existence.”

In celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and India, Min-On hosted a concert series entitled *Dancing of the Lives on Mother Earth—A Creative Integration of Indian Classical Dances* featuring some of India’s most prominent classical dancers and musicians. Their extended nationwide tour of 12 cities started in Hiroshima on November 26 and concluded in Tokyo on December 14 at Nakano Sun Plaza Hall with a capacity audience that included Indian ambassador H.E. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa and many other distinguished guests.

The concert was specially produced and choreographed for this Japan tour based on the concept of *ekatatva*—a new collaborative fusion of different forms of Indian classical dance—and featured performances of East



*Ekatatva*—a collaborative performance of *odissi*, *kathak* and *bharatanatyam* onstage

Indian *odissi* by Daksha Mashruwala, North Indian *kathak*—including a piece by award-winning *kathak* dancer, choreographer and teacher Uma Dogra—as well as South Indian *bharatanatyam* by Vaibhav Arekar, and classical music performances on the sitar, sarangi and tabla by acclaimed Indian musicians. For the finale, all the performers together dramatically and harmoniously performed a touching piece entitled *Ekatatva*,

which drew both enthusiastic applause and tears from the audience.

Forty years since the first exchange in 1972, this Japan tour of Indian artists marked the 22<sup>nd</sup> occasion of cultural exchange between Min-On and the Republic of India. With the success of this nationwide tour, the Min-On Concert Association has commenced in style a year-long celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding.

## “Everything in India is different and colorful.”

Interview with Uma Dogra, Vaibhav Arekar and Daksha Mashruwala

**Min-On:** Thank you for such wonderful performances. You came all the way from India to introduce Indian culture. What, for you, are the unique characteristics of India?

**Vaibhav Arekar:** One thing I would say about India is that it is “unique in diversity” in all aspects of life. For example, when you travel from one state to another across the vast country of India, you will probably feel that there are many different countries existing within one India. Indeed, you will experience a different culture in each state. There are 30 to 40 official languages, plus many more spoken languages and dialects across India. Often, people from different states cannot understand each other, and even look quite different. People in northwestern India are

more European-looking, but in the East, they look more Asian. This variety is also evident in the performing arts of music and dance. There are basically seven major classical dance styles and two systems of classical music. This diversity is one of the most fascinating aspects of India.

**Daksha Mashruwala:** To me, “spiritual living in an ancient civilization” is also a characteristic aspect of India. Everything spiritual that exists in India—from temples and monuments, to rituals and traditions—are all hundreds or even thousands of years old. So there is this sense of continuity in all the different traditions and rituals. Even though the modernization and globalization of India has blended these differences, many things are still deeply rooted

in traditions that date from ancient times. The traditions remain intact despite modernization, and they are still relevant even today. This, I think, is one of the charms of India.

**Uma Dogra:** Everything in India is different and colorful. There are many different religions and spiritual movements, each one unique and precious. I believe the most important and beautiful point is that they don’t exclude each other. Rather, they mutually accept and respect each other, and coexist harmoniously. That kind of open-mindedness is, for me, the most beautiful aspect of the spirituality of India, and comes from Buddhist concepts of interdependency and peaceful coexistence—concepts that originated in India.

**Min-On:** You mentioned that there are seven different classical dance styles, and today you performed three of them. Please tell us about unique characteristics of each dance style you performed.

**Dogra:** The name *kathak* is derived from the Sanskrit word *katha* meaning 'story', and *katthaka* in Sanskrit means 'he who tells a story', or 'relating to stories'. This dance form traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, and contains traces of temple and ritual dances, as well as the influence of the religious movement of *bhakti*. The northern parts of India where *kathak* developed are relatively prosperous, and those who came to colonize India mostly settled in those areas. During the colonial period under the rule of the British, *kathak* was transformed into the current dancing style of strong steps and movements to show their spirit of challenging authoritarian forces in the cause of freedom. The people fought for peace not with violence but rather through the art of *kathak*.

**Arekar:** The differences between dance techniques like *kathak*, *odissi* and *bharatanatyam* developed from differences of culture and language in geographically disparate areas. Different cultures, religions, ethnicities and languages naturally brought about a variety of techniques, styles, and forms of dancing. Also, the spirit or soul of those dance styles came from different religious beliefs and philosophies; however, the content or intent of any performance is universal, I think: that is the theme of universal love.

**Min-On:** Your innovative piece *Ekatatva* is a beautiful fusion of three different dance styles.

**Dogra:** *Ekata* means 'oneness', so the title of our performance, *Ekatatva*, means something like 'becoming one'. One with the environment—each living being equally has a beautiful and precious life within it that can shine equally like a jewel; it is the oneness of yourself and the environment; a oneness of your mind and body; and we are all connected to each other—you and me as one. Everything can come together as one. That was the theme of *Ekatatva*, and indeed, this idea was learned from Min-On Founder Dr. Ikeda, who has said that music and arts have the power to bring us together as one.

**Mashruwala:** When I first got involved, we discussed what we should do and how we

should express the concept of *Ekatatva*—becoming one. We got together and tried, but it was not easy to bring three different techniques of classical dance together. Each one has a different tempo, rhythm and movement. Yet the idea of *Ekatatva* allowed us to achieve our common goal. We were very lucky because there was no sense of competition or conflict. Often, artists want to project their own style of dance in a particular way, but instead, each of us concentrated on how we could change our part to fit with the others and to realize the concept of *Ekatatva*—becoming one.

**Arekar:** Realizing any collaboration requires mutual respect from the very beginning. There must be respect toward *our* movements, not

**Min-On:** Please share with us your impressions of this concert tour and your views on Min-On's cultural exchange program.

**Arekar:** This tour has been the experience of a lifetime for me. It is one of the most professional concert tours I have ever been a part of. The artists were able to leave everything to the Min-On staff and concentrate only on the performances. I was greatly inspired by the efficient and exact work done by Min-On.

**Mashruwala:** I agree completely. It was a dancers' dream. I was able to concentrate on connecting with the audience at each venue. And I am very happy that we could all touch the hearts of the audience members—even those far up in the balconies. Everyone involved in the performances—not just the three of us,



Left to right: Daksha Mashruwala (Odissi), Vaibhav Arekar (Bharatanatyam), Uma Dogra (Kathak)

just *my* movements or *your* movements. I think dances are paintings of movements in space and time. We always have to think about how our movements affect the audience's view, because if each of us only thinks about our own movements instead of our movements as a whole producing one beautiful painting for the audience, the audience will be looking at three different paintings, which cannot be enjoyed all at once.

After our performance of *Ekatatva* was accomplished, we all experienced something very deep and spiritual. Our challenge was to combine three distinct dance techniques, but it ended up as something more than just technique; it was a very spiritual and philosophical experience.

but all the younger dancers and musicians too—felt blessed to be a part of them. It has been a truly unique experience and a superb tour for all of us.

**Dogra:** I truly admire the founder's philosophy and Min-On's accomplishment of building such great bridges of friendship with so many different countries. I felt from the audience that Min-On is truly an association of the common people. Performing arts are often commercialized just for showcasing, but Min-On has brought high quality performances from all over the world to millions of ordinary people in Japan with the aim of bettering humanity. So we are all proud to participate in the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Min-On Concert Association's founding.

## Greeting from Min-On President Hiroyasu Kobayashi on the Occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



President Hiroyasu Kobayashi

“Min-On aims to deepen mutual understanding and friendship among all countries by promoting music and cultural exchanges that transcend differences of nationality, race and language.” This is one of the founding principles of the Min-On Concert Association. Through the untiring efforts of tens of thousands of our sustaining members in Japan, who have shared those founding principles and promoted our cultural activities, as well as the tremendous

support given by a great number of individuals from around the world, Min-On this year celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. On behalf of the Min-On Founder, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely express our deepest appreciation to all of those people for their long-standing contributions to the advancement of our Concert Association for the last 50 years.

On October 18, 1963, the concert celebrating the founding of the Min-On Concert Association was held at Bukyo Civic Auditorium in Tokyo, featuring a choir, a musical ensemble and performances by a leading violinist and cellist, as well as an introduction to the founding principles. Since then, over the course of the fifty-year history of Min-On, we have been able to expand our cultural ties worldwide, forging friendly relations by inviting the finest musicians and artists representing the culture of each country, as well as dispatching a number of artists who represent our proud culture of Japanese traditional music and performing arts to a total of nineteen nations around the world. We are so fortunate and very proud to be able to continue promoting cultural exchange activities on a global scale. To date, cultural exchanges have been organized with 105 countries and territories; more than 75,000 concerts and performances have been realized with a combined total audience of more than 113 million.

By experiencing these cultural events, we have witnessed and learned about the great value of cultural exchange and the magnificent power of music and art in concrete terms. Artists from distant countries express their spirit through exquisite performances to people in Japan, and audiences respond with their enthusiastic applause and cheers. I myself attend some of these events and witness the wonderful heart-to-heart communication between artists and audience. Even though it happens in the limited time of a concert lasting some two hours, a performance of music and art allows them to communicate and respond to each other’s inner-most feelings, a process that can translate into mutually friendly feelings for the rest of their lives.

Min-On Founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda says, “Music speaks directly to the heart. The response, this echo within the heart, is proof that human hearts can transcend the barriers of time and space and nationality. Exchange in the field of culture can play an important role in enabling people to overcome mistrust and prejudice and build peace.”

On this occasion of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we have set ourselves the objective of dispatching more Japanese artists abroad to promote mutual exchange with more countries and further strengthen our determination to build a spiritual Silk Road extending all over the globe, binding together the hearts of people in the pursuit of lasting peace. I wish to express my sincere thanks for your continued support and courteous cooperation in the future activities of the Min-On Concert Association.



Guest conductor Hidemaro Konoye



**Left:** Fuji women's chorus sang an Italian folk song *Reginella Campanula*; **Right:** The Soka Ensemble perform selected masterpieces from around the world

## Japan-Argentina Friendship Celebrated with Dramatic Tango

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Min-On's founding as well as 115 years of amicable relations between Argentina and Japan. During the past 50 years of Min-On's history of cultural exchanges, Min-On has created especially long-lasting cultural ties with Argentina—one of the most geographically distant countries from Japan—holding the annual *Min-On Tango Series* events since 1970. The series has featured many of the great Tango maestros, who together constitute the 'Golden Age' of Argentine Tango. At the same time, the series has given upcoming, next-generation artists the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and skills.

At the beginning of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, Min-On hosted the 44<sup>th</sup> installment of the acclaimed series, featuring the Orchestra Nicolás Ledesma, singer Maria Vivian, as well as three pairs of dancers. The 42-concert nationwide tour, entitled *Daramatic Tango—Virtuosos of a New Golden Era*, began on January 16 with a celebration at the Kanagawa Prefectural Hall located on the water-front in Yokohama.

At every venue in 34 cities across Japan, enthusiastic tango fans gathered for magnificent performances, and the tour successfully concluded on March 14 playing to a capacity audience at Nagano Prefectural



Argentina's top-class dancing pairs performed with the Orchestra Nicolás Ledesma

Culture Center in central Japan.

Among the two-dozen tango pieces selected by maestro Nicolas Ledesma for the two-part performance was one of his original pieces, *Niji no Hashi* (A Rainbow Bridge), which was dedicated to Min-On founder Dr. Ikeda. During the tour, Mr. Ledesma visited the Min-On Culture Center in Tokyo to present the original music score. "Min-On's tango series began," said Mr. Ledesma, "when tango was on the decline in Argentina during the 1970s.

A number of great maestros from Argentina were invited to Japan by Min-On, and since then, tango has come back to life in Argentina and has gained popularity around the world." He went on to express his deep appreciation for Dr. Ikeda, who had consistently supported Argentine tango, building a bridge of friendship that arches across the world like a rainbow. The performance of *Niji no Hashi* brought resounding acclaim in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Min-On's founding.

## Exhibition of Shoka Music Takes Museum Visitors Back to School

From January 1 through April 14 this year, the Min-On Music Museum in the Min-On Culture Center in Tokyo is hosting a special exhibition entitled *Recalling Nostalgic Melodies of Japanese Shoka Songs*.

'Shoka' refers to songs written especially for the purpose of music education in Japanese elementary and junior high schools from the beginning of the Meiji period—a new era in the history of Japan that emerged in 1868 after the demise of the feudal Tokugawa regime. An important part of the modernization undertaken by the new Meiji Government was the founding of the Ministry of Education and a new school system, which coincided with the Westernization of Japanese music education. In the 1880s, most of the songs in *The Shoka Book for Elementary Schools* were modified versions of folk songs and carols

from European or American songbooks, but later, during the early 1900s, many songs were written by Japanese composers, including the first internationally known composers Rentaro Taki, Kosaku Yamada, Sadaichi Okano, and Shipei Nakayama. These original Japanese shoka songs were included in later editions of the shoka books for different grade levels. At one point, shoka songs were sung by the Japanese to boost the militaristic morale. After the war, however, the Japanese government abolished all the militaristic songs. Since then, shoka songs have become a symbol of Japanese values, and although not now called 'shoka', the songs themselves are still sung today.

This special exhibition showcases over 100 years of shoka history with panel displays and a variety of original shoka books published during different time periods, as

well as a recreation of an old school music classroom. Immersed in the atmosphere of bygone schooldays, visitors are invited to take a trip back in time to the nostalgic melodies of shoka songs.



Shoka exhibition at the Min-On Music Museum in Tokyo

# A Country of Stunning Diversity

Interview with H.E. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa, Ambassador of the Republic of India



“There is a wonderful concept in India: ‘the entire world is one family’. It’s an important belief we all should have.”

**Min-On:** It was a wonderful performance to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India. As Ambassador of India to Japan, please share with us your impressions of this auspicious occasion.

**Ambassador Wadhwa:** The first thing I would like to say is that it was quite overwhelming in every way. I have never seen such an audience. Any ambassador would love to be able to fill a large hall like this one with more than 2,000 people for a performance from their country. I would also like to mention that the artists themselves came from different parts of India, and they performed items from several streams of Indian classical dance, yet were able to bring them together harmoniously as a sort of fusion of different classical forms. This is very unusual, even in India. The interaction and rapport that existed between the artists and the audiences were wonderful and special. I heard some of the artists saying how inspiring the audiences were—you saw how emotional they were at the end of their performance. I have seen different kinds of performances in many parts of the world, but this was the first time I have seen artists cry like that on a stage. It was a wonderful experience for them as artists and for us the audience, too. I deeply appreciate this precious opportunity.

**Min-On:** Thank you so much for mentioning the audience. Indeed, the Min-On Concert Association has more than a million members who understand the value of cultural exchange and consistently support Min-On’s activities with their participation.

**Ambassador:** I am still new to Japan, but Min-On was one of the first things I learned about from the embassy staff here in Japan, because

my embassy has been associated with your organization for a long time. This year, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries, is coming to a close, and I am very happy to be ending this significant year with such a wonderful collaboration with Min-On. You have been doing a wonderful job of showing Japanese people many different cultures from all over the world. Naturally,

**Min-On:** This performance is entitled *A Creative Integration of Indian Classical Dances*, and its theme could be described with words such as “unification,” “collaboration,” and “solidarity.” They have harmoniously combined different forms of dance and song, some of which were even sung in different languages.

**Ambassador:** India is an incredibly diverse country. There are different religions, languages and cultures—even in today’s performances



Kathak dance piece *Tarana* performed by Uma Dogra and the new generation of kathak dancers

you introduce those classical and traditional forms of culture from each country, but also you have been able to innovate new styles of performance, like tonight’s performance, which is in line with Min-On’s philosophy of making different cultures of the world accessible to the common people in Japan.

there were many wonderful forms of dance and song for different Indian gods. There is one type of song called *sufi*, which is actually an Islamic song; however, *sufi* music is not confined to the Muslims of India, but also enjoyed widely across India by Hindus too. So Indian culture is very diverse, and we are very happy to bring our wonderful culture to

people around the world. We are all different in looks, in character, in culture, and so on, but fundamentally we are all same. There is a wonderful concept in India: 'the entire world is one family'. It's an important belief we all should have. I think today's performance beautifully realized that concept onstage.

**Min-On:** Your embassy has its own culture center and theater attracting audiences for a wide range of cultural events. Please tell us about the significance of your culture center and forthcoming activities.

**Ambassador:** Several Indian embassies around the world—including the one here in Tokyo—have their own Indian Culture Center. Its presence is an indication of the close cultural ties between India and Japan. Neeharika Singh, the Culture Center director, efficiently runs various activities at the Center. We have dance classes, *tabla* classes, vocal music, and many other kinds of activities. These classes are very popular and are often fully subscribed. This is such a wonderful way to attract Japanese friends to our embassy and to spread understanding about India.

Today, we had a very interesting event. It was a book launch for a Japanese *manga*-style comic for Japanese children to learn more about India. The hall in the Culture Center was used for the presentation ceremony, just as it is used for various such events. When people come to the Center and learn something about India, they become a friend of India. Then they tell their friends about the Center and what

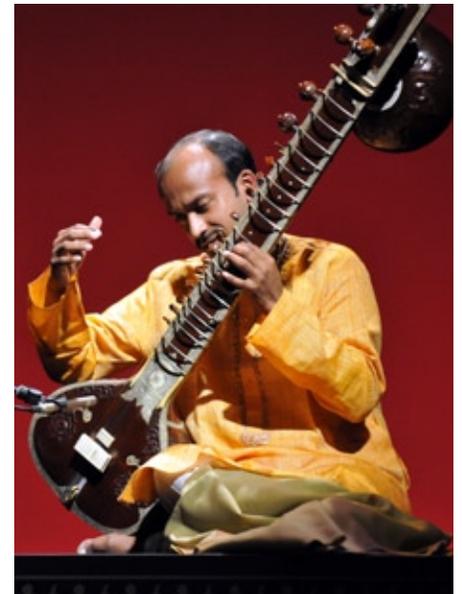
they learned about India. So as you can see, it has a multiplier effect.

**Min-On:** Min-On's Founder, Dr. Ikeda, has been advocating the important role and value of cultural exchange in fostering mutual understanding and friendship among people of different countries.

**Ambassador:** I completely agree. Understanding among people is of the utmost importance. Looking at the relationship between India and Japan now, we have excellent relations at the political level, and the political leaders on both sides want to deepen relations further. Business relations too are growing. But when it comes to people of the two countries understanding each other better, nothing much has changed. When people from two countries meet, they have to understand each other, respect each other, and appreciate each other's culture in order to establish firm and genuine relations. I believe this is one reason why what Min-On has been doing is so important, and I hope you continue to promote cultural exchanges with many different countries.

I am really interested in reaching out to young Japanese people. Although older Japanese people know about India to some extent, the younger generation under 30 is less certain. Young people in many countries these days are only really familiar with what we call 'global culture'—a single, common globalized culture of the world. They often do not know anything about particular cultures of other countries, or differences of culture

among different countries around the world. I would like to see some kind of program aimed at the youth of Japan to communicate how long the cultural connection between our two countries has lasted—a connection that dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century. There have been constant movements of people between the two countries; ideas from India came to Japan, and ideas from Japan reached India, influencing each other. I hope my embassy continues to work closely with Min-On to strengthen further the bonds of friendship that bind our two nations together.



Sitar performance with *sarangi* and *tabla*

## From the Editor:

» The cover-page photo of this issue is the performance of Indian *kathak* exponent Uma Dogra, entitled *Dedication to Mother Earth*. Ms. Dogra told us that she drew inspiration from the lyrics of the song *Mother* written by Min-On Founder Dr. Ikeda, creating this original dance piece exclusively for this concert series, entitled *Dancing of the Lives on Mother Earth*.

» The words to the first and third verses of the song *Mother* read: (1) *Mother! Ah, mother! What a richly mysterious power you possess! Without you in this world, we would lose our ties to the great embracing earth, and*

*be forced to wander forever without direction or purpose.* (3) *Mother, may songs of dignity and peace be performed with your wisdom and philosophy on the surface of this planet that yearns for the arrival of spring. Then you, mother, will live on as the one who gave birth to a new era of humanity.* Her performance touched the hearts of the audience and moved them to tears.

» As the finale to a Dramatic Tango concert in response to an encore, the Orchestra Nicolás Ledesma performed the song *Mother* as a tango arrangement, beautifully sung in the original Japanese by Maria Vivian. Her

clear and enveloping voice left a lasting impression on myself and surely on many members of the audience.

» During our interview with Indian ambassador H.E. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa, she shared with us a wonderful concept from India: that the entire world is one family. This idea is perfectly matched with the idea of a concert celebrating the joy of living on Mother Earth as a global family, and inspired our confidence on the founding principles of the Min-On Concert Association on this auspicious occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### From the Min-On Music Museum Collection



"Orchestrion" in the Melody Hall of the Museum

#### **Mechanical Organ "Orchestrion" 1900, Germany**

*Among mechanical organs, the Welte Orchestrions were the premiere automatic musical instrument of choice for royalty and the very wealthy, a trend that began in the 1850s, when Michael Welte exhibited his immense automatic pipe organ, receiving critical acclaim and numerous awards for the device.*

*At the time, his invention was an astounding advance in technology. The instrument was nicknamed "Orchestrion" because it successfully imitated a many-voiced orchestra. Since that time the term orchestrion has become synonymous with any automatic musical instrument that imitates a small to large orchestral ensemble.*

*This Orchestrion Welte Style 3 produces the performance of an entire orchestra. It has a complete mechanical pipe organ with 180 metal and wooden pipes, as well as drums of different sizes, triangles and other sound-making devices built into its elegant oak cabinet. Owning a fine Welte Orchestrion was truly a status symbol of its time, sought after by royalty, wealthy industrialists and fine commercial establishments alike.*

### The Min-On Concert Association Celebrates the People's Music

The Min-On Concert Association was founded in 1963 by Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, as a nonprofit, independent nondenominational organization to promote the global exchange of musical culture. Min-On aims to develop mutual understanding and respect among people of different races and nationalities. In 1965 it became an incorporated foundation, which is now supported by more than one million sustaining members nationwide. Min-On literally means "people's music," and its aim is to share the joy of music and to unite people through shared emotion, thus creating an ever-expanding circle of friendship among people around the world.

Today, Min-On sponsors some 1,100 performances each year, attracting a total audience of more than 1.5 million, and making available diverse music of high quality—from classical to modern, from popular to traditional—to as wide a range of music lovers as possible. Min-On also sponsors various musical programs, including free concerts in schools and the Tokyo International Music Competition to encourage the emotional development of young people and foster the growth of new talent.

Since its foundation, Min-On has hosted almost 75,000 cultural performances and concerts, with a total audience of more than 110 million. Through these various musical activities Min-On has successfully initiated cultural exchanges with 105 countries and regions around the world.

### About The Min-On Music Museum and Music Library

The Min-On Culture Center is home to the Min-On Music Museum and Music Library. The collection includes more than 120,000 vinyl records, CDs, and DVDs, as well as 45,000 musical scores and 33,000 reference books and other materials, all of which are freely available. On display in the museum are

a number of antique harpsichords and classical pianos, various music boxes and gramophones, and a variety of ethnic instruments collected from around the world. The museum also hosts various special exhibitions and cultural activities on different musical themes. Entrance to the museum is free of charge.

### Come and Visit Us!

**Address:** Min-On Culture Center  
8 Shinano-machi, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 160-8588  
**Tel:** 03 5362 3400 **Fax:** 03 5362 3401

#### **Exhibit and Shop**

**Open:** 11:00-16:00 (Tuesday-Saturday)  
10:00-17:00 (Sunday & public holidays)

**Closed:** Every Monday (If Monday is a public holiday, next day is closed)

#### **Music Library**

**Open:** 11:00-18:30 (Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday)  
(Closed on public holidays)

**Closed:** August 1-15, Year-end / New Year

