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Asian Youth Orchestra in rehearsal camp

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Asian Youth Orchestra, combining 102 musicians between the ages of 14 and 28, from 11 Asian countries, including five from Malaysia, are here for a three-week rehearsal camp before embarking on a six-week tour.

This is the AYO's eighth rehearsal camp and the first time that it is being held in Malaysia. Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation patron Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali launched the camp at the Mines Beach Resort today.

MYOF chairman Mirzan Mahathir said the MYOF decided to host the AYO rehearsal camp here as a kick off to the formation of its own youth orchestra.

"MYOF aims to have its own orchestra, but its a long process, as we have to search for a variety of talents which makes up the orchestra as well as preparing the necessary infrastructure," he told a Press conference at the resort.

To ensure this, he added the MYOF needed the support of organisations to help fund the orchestra's formation.

Mirzan said MYOF also planned to be the channel for upcoming talents to seek help.

"This includes financial support as well as musical instruments, which can be very expensive," he said adding that the problem with nurturing youths to indulge in classical music was centred on the high cost of instruments.

He said MYOF hoped to produce local talented classical musicians and composers of world-class standards in the future.

On the AYO, he said they would present a one-night orchestral performance on June 29 at the Putra World Trade Centre.

"Although they will be here for three weeks, the orchestra will only make a one-night public appearance.

"However, the rehearsals at the Mines Resort Beach Resort will enable young people to observe these sessions and learn how an orchestra is put together," he said.

Meanwhile, AYO executive director Richard Pontziuous said the orchestra would perform at 23 venues beginning July 1 in Hong Kong to mark the island's re-unification with China.

Earlier, the AYO gave a taste of their ability by playing its theme song, entitled Nimrod from Elgar's Enigma Variations, to about 50 other guests.

Meanwhile, in her speech, Siti Hasmah said global economic development had enabled Malaysians to be accustomed to high quality musical productions.

"It is a timely alternative that they be exposed to orchestra music to appreciate the extraordinary skills, team work, integration and high discipline, integral for the production of musical performances," she said.

Meanwhile, the five Malaysians in the orchestra are Tan Poh Joo, 13, on cello, Ong Lin Kern, 23, (viola), Lee Yin Fah, 24, (trombone), Lo Mei Yoke, 27, (violin) and Chan Lai Kheng, 15, (violin).

Lo, from Penang, said she was roped in to join the AYO after attending the audition here earlier this year. She was chosen from among 100 people.

"The competition was stiff as the others were equally good, but I was

the lucky one," said the part-time lecturer of Universiti Sains Malaysia.
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