

04/06/1997

Foundation launched to nurture musically gifted youths, says chairman

Michelle Sheares

THE Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation (MYOF), launched in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, aims to encourage and cultivate Malaysia's musically gifted youths through a variety of exciting and innovative programmes.

Chairman Encik Mirzan Mahathir said one of the objectives of the foundation is to create a conducive environment that strongly supports the development and appreciation of orchestral music, while developing and nurturing home grown talents.

"We hope the foundation will be able to hone the limitless creativity of our youth through the vast inspiration of music. We hope to channel the boundless energy of our youth in a way that is more positive, productive and creative," he said at the launching ceremony.

The foundation aims to create an artistic and cultural awareness among the youth through the inspiration and positive influence of orchestral music and the performing arts.

Mirzan said he believes it is good to expose Malaysian youth and adults to good local and world class performances of orchestral music.

"We hope to educate and assist young Malaysians hone their physical, mental and spiritual capacities through activities associated with music so they may become better members of society.

"We also hope to be a catalyst so that we can support and help young and would-be musicians to develop themselves, particularly in an orchestral setting," he added.

He said it is also good for the young to learn about teamwork, and be able to make positive contributions to the team.

Most importantly, Mirzan said, the foundation will help to provide talented individuals to further their musical development, either through providing financial assistance, instruments, books or even scholarships.

He said funding is required to carry out its programmes and activities, and made an appeal to corporate bodies and individuals who wished to play a role in the cultural and intellectual development of Malaysian youths, to come forward and contribute to this worthwhile cause.

He declined, however, to say how much the foundation has received so far, except to say that people are still pledging and the donations are coming in slowly.

"We are looking at providing continuing activity over the years, so corporations need to make a longer term commitment to support these activities," he said.

Even at this early stage, Mirzan is already thinking about the day when the Malaysian Youth Orchestra blooms into a full youth orchestra, performing in world class concert halls and being among the finest on the international music scene.

"In years to come, I hope our country will boast its very own full orchestra, the Malaysian youth orchestra. None of our orchestras are fully composed of Malaysians, and that is sad for a country with a population of 20 million," he said.

In the nearer future, however, Mirzan added that the foundation will go into musical activities which incorporate local culture. "I see this as a cultural uplifting of the nation and I am excited about it," he said.

"In pursuing material achievements, we must not forget the cultural and social development of the people. We don't want to create a one dimensional society. Other aspects of the maturing process of society must

not be neglected," he said.

Personally, Mirzan said he found orchestra music intriguing, for the way it brought musicians and those who appreciated music together. "The mark of a good orchestra is one which makes it seem effortless to make music. They make harmony so simple to achieve."

The MYOF's patron is Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, while the honorary advisors are Tun Ismail Mohd Ali and Toh Puan Dr Aishah Ong.

As its kick off initiative, the foundation will organise and host the Asian Youth Orchestra or AYO Malaysia Programme 1997. They will then perform in Hong Kong to celebrate the reunification of Hong Kong and China before embarking on a four week tour of China, South Korea and Japan.

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