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Rousing orchestral show

Michelle Sheares

THEY deserved the rousing applause and the shouts of "Bravo!" they received at the Putra World Trade Centre last night, performing in the single language understood by all - good music.

The Asian Youth Orchestra (AYO), belying the mere three week rehearsal period which was sponsored by the Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation (MYOF), put up a brilliant performance, the likes of which has not been heard in Malaysia for some time now.

Attended by Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah, MYOF patron Datin Seri Siti Hasmah, and MYOF chairman, Encik Mirzan Mahathir plus the talented guest performer, cellist Yo Yo Ma truly made it an "Evening of Stars".

In her speech, Siti Hasmah, who flew 12 long hours and 12,000 km to witness the gala performance in Malaysia, urged Asian and Malaysian composers and musicians to strive to find new ways of communicating through their own music. "After all, as Asia rises, so too will her music. The diversity and multi-culturalism in Asia will be a major challenge and contributor to reinvigorate a greater appreciation and love for orchestra music," she said.

"In pursuing economic development and material achievements, we must not forget the cultural and social dimensions of our youth which are essential for a balanced development of this nation. Children are gifts from God, even as our youths are the precious "heirs" of the nation," she continued.

Drawing attention to the Petronas Philharmonic Hall, which will be ready by next year, Siti Hasmah said she hoped in years to come that the MYOF will be equally active in promoting, commissioning and premiering local works for our very own orchestra performing in other class concert halls.

"This is an aspiration very dear to my heart. This is a special initiative for our youth," she said.

Mirzan told invited dinner guests that an orchestra is the embodiment of discipline, concentration, teamwork and the search for excellence.

"The Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation was created with the future in mind. We want to create a conducive environment for the appreciation and development of orchestra music particularly among our young," he said.

"Our long term aim is to build up an orchestra made up of Malaysians. We want to encourage those with talent in particular instruments to master them. We want to expose our budding musically-inclined youth to the many and varied instruments that one can take up by providing support financial or otherwise.

A good start and surely what must be an inspiration to others were the five particularly talented Malaysian youth, Tan Poh Joo (on the cello), Lo Mei Yoke (on the violin), Chan Lai Kheng, (violin), Eric Lee Yin Fah (trombone) and Ong Lin Fern (viola).

Chosen from among 1500 youth all over Asia, the five certainly did their country proud last night.

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