

18/08/1998

Opening of Petronas Philharmonic Hall

SYMBOLIC LAUNCH ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali striking rebana drums in unison to mark the opening of the country's first world-class concert hall, the Petronas Philharmonic Hall, at the Petronas Twin Towers yesterday.

Witnessing the glittering event was Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin (behind Dr Siti Hasmah).

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah later joined some 800 guests including Cabinet Ministers, dignitaries, ambassadors, cultural attaches and the public to witness the gala concert performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra led by its music director, Kees Bakels.

The MPO rendered an inaugural performance beginning with Strauss' Don Juan Symphonic Poem.

Earlier in her speech, Dr Siti Hasmah, who is the patron of the MPO, said the official opening of the hall was indeed an achievement of another Malaysian dream.

"This event is the culmination of efforts long awaited by Malaysians to foster a sustainable development of music in this country," she said.

She said the hall with its architectural and acoustic distinction would attract live performance of classical music from all over the world.

"We have indeed arrived at another major milestone in our progress towards achieving the cultural agenda set out in Vision 2020," she added.

The Petronas Philharmonic Hall, at the foot of the 88-storey Twin Towers, features an adjustable ceiling that flexes according to the acoustical conditions required by a fully-staffed orchestra or solo pianist.

A 44-stop pipe organ, stretching from floor to ceiling, towers over the orchestra pit.

The entire hall rests on thick pads that cocoon it from the din of shoppers striding through the country's largest shopping mall next door.

Designed by Cesar Pelli & Associates, the hall gets its inspiration from the traditional shoe-box shape of the great 19th century European concert halls, widely acknowledged as the finest acoustic environment for the performance of symphony music.

The concert hall seats an audience of 865, which includes box seats at Stalls level and 20 suites at Circle and Upper Circle levels.

Musical activities at the hall will be spearheaded by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, a 105-piece orchestra which also includes six Malaysian musicians.

The orchestra is under the musical directorship of Dutch conductor Kees Bakels, assisted by Malaysian resident conductor Chean See Ooi.

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