

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	21/11/2012

THEATRE

## Teater Tun Siti Hasmah a class act

NST- 21/11/12

**L**AST Saturday evening was the first time I stepped into Istana Budaya with an old classmate and her daughter to watch *Teater Tun Siti Hasmah*.

It was the first Malay musical of its kind that I have treated myself to. As the article "A fitting tribute" (NST, Life & Times, Nov 17) has narrated, I find it entertainingly informative and heart-warming.

Although I have watched musicals overseas before, this was a new experience and I loved every single scene. The actors and actresses all play their parts well. It was nothing short of a world-class act.

Both Lisa Surihani's and Eja's respective portrayal of the young and older Che Mah are beautifully convincing. Nazim Othman, who plays the young and dashing Che Det also did justice to the role. The most convincing act to me, however, is that of Esma Daniel who

plays the older Che Det.

As this is a tribute to Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, I was naturally following the thread of Che Mah's story from being the frisky medical student to the caring and enthusiastic doctor in a remote village in Kedah to becoming the devotedly charming wife of the prime minister. I felt and enjoyed her dynamic, strong and compassionate nature in Lisa Surihani while her sweet, gentle and quiet wife disposition and loving motherly qualities in Eja.

Among other things, Dr Siti Hasmah is portrayed as a champion of women's rights, her famous quote being "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world", and her role in raising awareness on the prevention of substance abuse.

This musical is also commendable in that it allows us to see Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a different light. We see him now as the con-



**Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali** with the actresses who portrayed her in 'Teater Tun Siti Hasmah', Lisa Surihani (left) and Eja.

scientiously diligent, humble and loving husband and father, all through the eyes of Dr Siti Hasmah.

In the war-torn Iraq scene where Dr Siti Hasmah and her group of medical volunteers arrived to give medical assistance, we observe Dr Mahathir's commitment to humanitarian causes to the extent of subjecting his own wife to the war zone. We witness Tun's noble sacrifice to allow the sharing of his wife with not only the rakyat but also the world. And reciprocally, we witness Dr Siti Hasmah's pillar of strength in her willingness to accept the sharing of her husband with the rakyat and the world.

The condemnation of Dr Mahathir by his own countrymen is enacted in the scene where a group of people hurl insults, slander and ridicule him.

I'm moved to tears when I think how disappointed Tun must be with the lot of his own *bangsa* who have reaped and are still reaping the fruits of his labours yet do not show gratitude. I cannot understand why my *bangsa* are so heartless. Show your love and respect for Dr Siti Hasmah and Dr Mahathir, please.

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