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SPEECH BY YANG AMAT BERBAHAGIA
DATIN SERI DR SITI HASMAH BTE HAJI MOHD ALI
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE 1997 ASIAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL CAMP
AT THE MINES RESORT, KUALA LUMPUR
ON SUNDAY, 8 JUNE 1997
AT 4.00 P.M.

Please allow me at the very outset to say what a great pleasure it is to welcome the Asian Youth Orchestra (AYO) to Malaysia for its three-week Rehearsal Camp. For this, I wish to thank the Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation and the Malaysian sponsors for organising and supporting the AYO Malaysia Programme.

2. I am happy to know that the Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation is collaborating with the Asian Youth Orchestra on the various programmes to promote and develop orchestral music appreciation and performance among Malaysian youths. The initiative to support the performing arts and to nurture the creative talents of our youths is truly commendable.

3. Today, the influence of technology, culture and the arts has enabled a large group of young people to find a common bond and understanding in their social lives compared to their previous predecessors. Even before the dawn of the Information Age, music as a medium of expression has transcended national boundaries to exert a powerful influence on mankind.

4. With global economic development, more people are enjoying the benefits of greater material comfort and quality education. Asian audiences including Malaysia have been inundated and are now accustomed to high quality musical productions. Therefore I feel it is a timely alternative that they be exposed to orchestra music to appreciate the extraordinary skills, team work

integration and high discipline which are integral for the production of beautiful musical performances. While some may regard classical music as old-fashioned, it should by no means be elitist. An appreciation of classical music will open up an entirely different world altogether to the individual, and will engender a sense of being in touch with history, mankind and the creative arts.

5. To pursue a musical career is a great responsibility in that one should always have respect towards one's own music and composition, yourself as the artist, and eventually the public, especially family audiences. I wish to urge all of you to strive to find new ways of communicating with all of these in a fast changing world for artistic growth and renewal.

6. In recent years, the Malaysian Government has initiated various programmes to increase the arts and cultural literacy of our people. Music is offered in the curriculum of our education system. Thus music awareness and creativity can be nurtured, in our children's lives from an early age. Children are gifts' from God, thus parents must play their roles in moulding the characters and interests of their children. I hope the parents can inspire their children to at least listen to orchestral music, if not take up a musical instrument as a hobby.

7. The nation needs more than industrious men and women to stay competitive. It needs also the enthusiasm of creative imagination as expressed in the performing and creative arts - as expressed in music.

8. I hope all of you will enjoy the warmth and hospitality of Malaysians during your stay here. I would also like to thank once again the corporate sponsors for their invaluable support to the Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation who together have made it possible for Malaysia to host for the first time the AYO Rehearsal Camp.

9. Lastly, to all the young musicians of the AYO, I would like to quote from your Principal Conductor, Sergiu Commissiona in his definition of a true musician: "They are professional only if they cannot be without music. If they are mesmerized, they will succeed."

10. On this note, ladies and gentlemen, I wish you success on your tour and hope you will cherish the memories you have on Malaysia.

11. We look forward to seeing you again when Malaysia will have its own state of the art concert hall with the completion of the Petronas Philharmonic Hall in mid 1998.

12. With that note I declare the 1997 Asian Youth Orchestra Rehearsal Camp officially open.
