

## SCO News 新加坡华乐团讯息

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Records were made and the nation's hopes were seen at the new National Stadium's first concert

### Review Concert

#### OUR PEOPLE, OUR MUSIC

Singapore Chinese Orchestra  
National Stadium, Singapore Sports Hub  
Last Saturday

#### Chang Tou Liang

**F**or years to come, this concert by the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) to celebrate the opening of the newly completed National Stadium and Sports Hub will be popularly referred to as the "Mega-Concert".

In terms of numbers involved in performing live music and sheer magnitude, there have been few equals. In 1978, a choir of 4,000 sang under the direction of the late Paul Abisheganaden at the Billy Graham Crusade, while a combined chorus of more than a thousand from Singapore, Australia and Scandinavia performed Handel's *Messiah* with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 1988.

Both events were held in the old National Stadium, a venue where the nation also greeted Pope John Paul II and pop icon Michael Jackson. Fond memories of those escapades linger, but the new National Stadium is a sight to behold. A first concert there had to be equally memorable.

The SCO is no stranger to mass participation concerts, having staged a smaller-scale mega-concert with 2,400 performers at the Singapore Indoor Stadium in 2004. This evening's numbers surpassed that as it involved no fewer than 128 school and community Chinese ensembles and choirs.

The orchestra's commitment to audience outreach also mandated that this evening's fare was popular and approachable. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's baton provided the down-beat for the opening fanfare to Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, adapted for Chinese instruments by Tan Kah Yong and the amplified sound of the augmented orchestra was close to deafening.

Each work programmed and conducted by SCO music director Yeh Tsung for the concert reflected some facet of the nation's psyche, hopes and aspirations. Nostalgia was represented by Blue



The orchestra played a mix of tunes that were nostalgic, such as a medley of Teresa Teng hits, and fast, such as the popular *Horse Racing*. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

# Mega night to remember

*Memories*, a medley of Teresa Teng hits arranged by Kuan Nai Chung, which included the evergreen *The Moon Represents My Heart*.

A martial arts display by Singapore's world wushu champion Vincent Ng, accompanied by music to the Jet Li movie *Once Upon A Time In China* (1991), provided the adrenaline rush.

Fast music of the evening included the popular *Horse Racing*, which saw SCO young assistant conductor Moses Gay lead massed erhus in a headlong charge assisted by Clarence Lee providing the beat and cadenzas on an electronic piano.

The orchestra's resident conductor Quek Ling Kiong then flexed his biceps on

the *dagu* (large bass drum) in *Power Singapura!*, the work for drums of all sizes co-written with Phang Kok Jun.

As auditors from the Guinness World Records hurried to crunch the numbers, a Mexican wave rippled through the ranks and files of the ensemble as well as in the lively audience.

Composer-in-residence designate Phoon Yew Tien's *Variations On Singapura* was a departure from the usual compositional form. It worked through motifs and fragments of the popular National Day Parade song, revealed bit by bit in short phrases before its full glory was unfurled a single and definitive time.

There was a hush of anticipation as

two Guinness World Records were established and awarded to the nation. An orchestra of 3,345 Chinese instrumentalists set a new global landmark, while 4,557 was the number to better when it came to amassing a Chinese drum ensemble. A pat on the back was due for all the students and aspirants who participated.

The evening closed on a sentimental note when veteran musical-meister Dick Lee was invited to sing what is arguably his most popular song, *Home*.

Its memorable lyrics and poignant melody will always resound in the hearts of many as to what it means to be a Singaporean.

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