

Chinese music, Scottish drums

The Singapore Chinese Orchestra will collaborate with Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie, US-based violinist Siow Lee Chin and other musicians

Lim Min Zhang

The Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) yesterday announced a star-studded lineup of performances for the rest of the year, including collaborations with acclaimed Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie, home-grown United States-based violinist Siow Lee-Chin and Singaporean a capella group MICapella.

Its musical direction is also assured for the next four years, as music director Yeh Tsung has renewed his contract with the country's only professional Chinese orchestra till the end of 2019.

The six-month list of concerts comes with a "heavy dosage" of celebration, timed for the nation's golden jubilee and featuring local artists and a free concert to be held in the build-up to this year's National Day Parade.

The Shanghai-born Yeh juggles his SCO job with the music directorship of South Bend Symphony Orchestra in Indiana, the United States, where his family lives. He says he did not have an idea of how long he was going to stay for when he first came to Singapore to helm the orchestra in 2002.

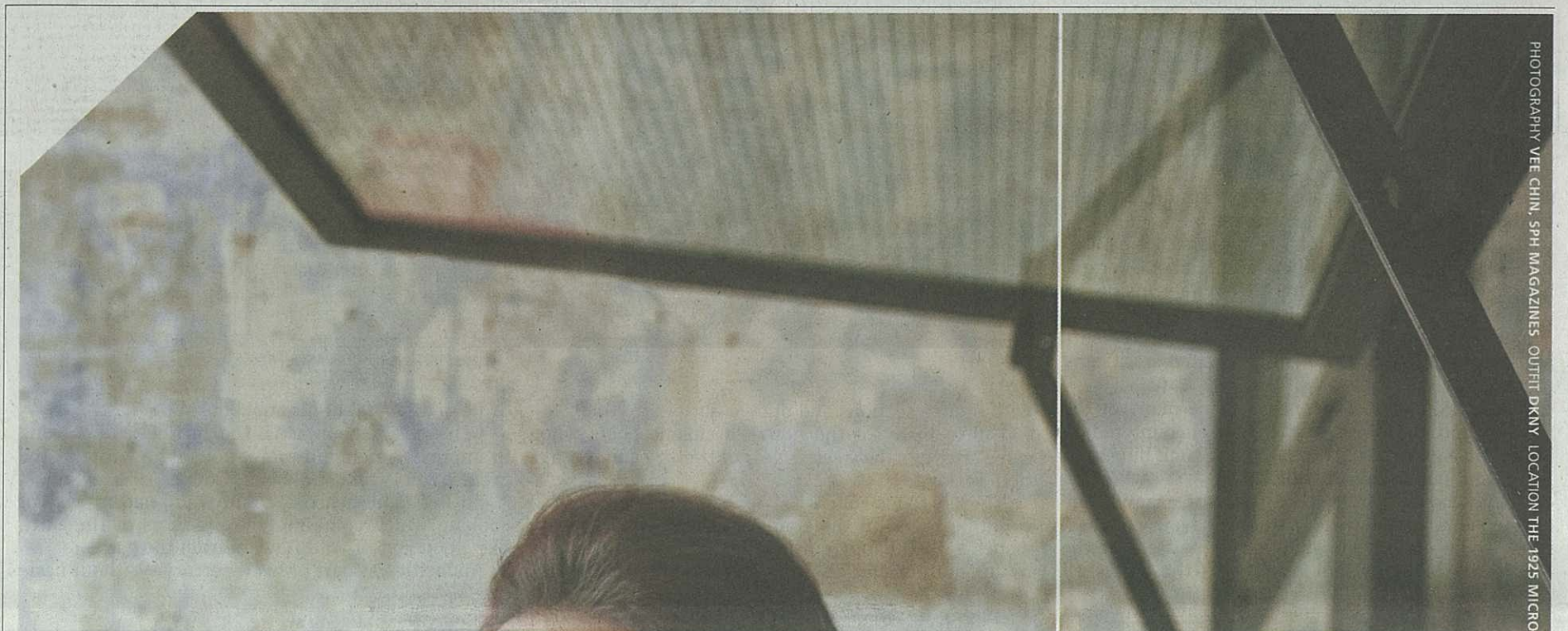
He said: "I told them, let's try three years, but now, how many years already? 13 years. So Singapore must treat me very well and I must take this opportunity to thank all friends of SCO and the Singapore society."

"I feel I fit into this country well and this country offers what I need too, and it's just a match."

The 2013 Cultural Medallion recipient is an American citizen and Singapore permanent resident. He is credited with expanding the orchestra's repertoire and bringing in more collaborations with international artists.



The Singapore Chinese Orchestra will partner Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie (left), Singaporean a capella group MICapella (top) and Singaporean pianist Serene Koh (above). PHOTOS: SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA



The orchestra's new season kicks off on July 3 with Towards The Future – SCO Celebrates SG50. Tsung described this as “a retrospective concert that goes through the whole history of Singapore”.

There are four parts to the concert and each part corresponds to a period in the nation's history.

The highlight is a commissioned work by British composer Eric Watson, who won the first Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition in 2006, organised by the SCO.

His work, titled An Independent Note, was composed based on late founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew's post-independence speech. Parts of the speech will be narrated by actor Lim Kay Tong, who plays Mr Lee in upcoming movie 1965.

The orchestra's SG50 focus also extends to giving special discounts for Singaporeans sharing the country's birthday year.

Those born in 1965 can enjoy 50 per cent off this season's tickets for concerts held at the Singapore Conference Hall, home base of the orchestra. Joining as a friend of SCO costs \$50, which is \$30 cheaper than usual. They will also receive six concert vouchers worth \$50 each, up from the usual four.

Other highlights include Symphonic Gifts on July 24, which will be the first joint concert between Singapore National Youth Orchestra and Singapore Youth Chinese Orchestra, with Siow on the violin.

The International Masters Showcase: Strumming Heartstrings in September will feature Glenie and erhu virtuoso Yu Hong Mei.

The free concert at Marina Bay Sands Waterfront Promenade, SCO Concert By The Bay, will be held on Aug 8.

The 85-member orchestra will not only perform evergreens such as Tamil folk song Munnaeru Valiba and the Dick Lee ballad Home, but also appeal to the younger crowd by performing with the pop-influenced MICapella, who will sing their own Singapore medley.

Yeh, who will be conducting the outdoor event, says people who make the effort to go down on that day will be in for a treat.

“The highlight of the event will be the fireworks and we talked about how we were going to coordinate (the concert with the fireworks).”

“I'm sure we're not going to play 1812 Overture, but I'm going to come up with something else even better than (Russian composer) Tchaikovsky,” says Tsung.

In the past year, SCO has held 108 concerts and activities. There were 34 ticketed concerts, and an equal number were free. More than half of the ticketed concerts sold out.

With next year being the orchestra's 20th anniversary, more events are in the pipeline, and the music director “promised that the line-up won't let you down”.

✉ mzlim@sph.com.sg

Book it

TOWARDS THE FUTURE – SCO CELEBRATES SG50

Where: Esplanade Concert Hall
When: July 3, 7.30pm

Admission: Tickets at \$38, \$48, \$68 and \$78 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg) or go to the Singapore Conference Hall box office at 7 Shenton Way, Monday to Friday between 10am and 6.45pm (call 6557-4034)

Info: Go to www.sco.com.sg/concerts-events/jul-dec-2015-concert-season/



AS AN EDITOR OF A LUXURY MAGAZINE, I HOB NOB WITH THE RICH AND FAMOUS. BUT BENEATH THE GLAMOROUS FAÇADE, I AM A CREATIVE THINKER, A SOULFUL WRITER WITH THE PASSION TO BRING THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE TO PEOPLE.

Germaine Cheong
FEATURES EDITOR, THE PEAK
SPH MAGAZINES

PEOPLE
WITH
PASSION

sph