

# Allegrow Music and UMS: Cultivating Music in the younger generation

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KOTA KINABALU: Allegrow Music in collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) held a classical recital called "A Song and Piano Recital" at the faculty recital hall on May 25.

The recital features two classical musicians – award-winning soprano, Ang Mei Foong and pianist/composer, Wong Chee Yean. Guest performer, violinist Grace Lee, who is currently a lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sabah, also joined the performance. In conjunction with the

recital, UMS music students were given piano and vocal workshops at the faculty the following day with piano and vocal masterclasses held for the public at Allegrow Music centre.

Co-founder of Allegrow Music, Rachel Lee said the aim was to cultivate the interest in music within our community.

Allegrow Music has collaborated with Woori Jib, an orphanage home located in Kampung Potuki, Putatan, to offer scholarships to the children in the form of free music lessons

and music books for five years.

"It is my intention to give the underprivileged orphans an opportunity to learn, cultivate and appreciate music. In future, I hope they will give back to the community too," says Rachel.

Woori Jib is a welfare home for orphans from poor Catholic families, mostly girls aged between seven to 17 years old (Primary One to Form Five).

The classical recital performance by Ang Mei Foong, Wong Chee Yean and Grace Lee consisted of a selection of Chinese, German and Malaysian art songs, as well as Italian arias and Chopin Piano Sonata No. 3. A few compositions by Wong Chee Yean were also performed that night.

The recital started with Wong Chee Yean performing Debussy's 'La Plus Que Lente'. He sets the ambience with a 19th century waltz which is known as "the even slower waltz". This piece embodies relaxation, elasticity of melodic line, syncopated rhythm and with a little jazz influence.

The performance continued with a piano solo by Wong Chee Yean taking on a sonata that is considered to be one of Chopin's most difficult compositions musically and technically – Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58. Consisting of four movements, the sonata lasts around 25 to 30 minutes and was delivered impressively and effortlessly by pianist Wong Chee Yean.

The second part of the recital awed the audience when soprano singer Ang Mei Foong mesmerized the audience with her powerful vocals, performing 'Du sollst der Kaiser meiner Seele sein' and 'È strano... Ah, fors'è lui... Sempre libera', with accompaniment by pianist Chee Yean.

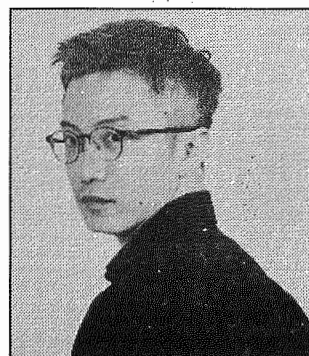
Among the songs lined up included Chee Yean's compositions, 'Wild Night! Wild Night!' and 'When We Two, Parted', which both had a mixture of bittersweet melodies that touched one's core. The recital ended with an expressive love song composed by Malaysian composer Yeo Chow Shern.

## Wong Chee Yean

Chee Yean graduated from Indiana University, Bloomington in the USA, where he was under the tutelage of Mr Emile Naoumoff, who himself was a student of the great pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. As a performer, Chee Yean has collaborated with some very fine musicians from the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra in their Chamber Music Series, both as a pianist and a harpsichordist. He frequently works with instrumentalists and singers alike, notably, with the internationally renowned clarinetist Ronald van Spandonck during his concert tour to Malaysia.

In 2013, a live recording of Chee Yean's performance of Mozart's 25th Piano Concerto in collaboration with High Winds Ensemble in Yogyakarta was issued by Arts Music Today in Indonesia.

As a composer, though never been formally trained, two of his orchestral works, Six Sketches and Triptych, were performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. Five of his songs for voice and piano published by



Wong Chee Yean

Chin Yong Music Society have received their premieres in Malaysia, Singapore, China and the U.K. On Huygen's Aria, commissioned by Joost Fiach for High Winds Ensemble was published in Germany by Floricor Edition in 2010. He also arranges music for the wind ensemble on numerous occasions, one of which is the arrangement of Mozart 25th Piano Concerto with himself as the soloist, performed at the Georgetown Festival of Penang in and at the International Chamber Music Festival of Yogyakarta. As a lecturer, Chee Yean has taught piano as well as theory at a number of institutions such as Universiti Malaya and Universiti Putra Malaysia. Two of his private students have won full scholarship to study at a music specialist school in the UK.

## Ang Mei Foong

Mei Foong's voice was described as mellow, dulcet and soothing to the listeners. A multiple awards and scholarships winner, she was trained at the National Taiwan Normal University under Prof. Ren Rong, Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia under Maestro Rebecca Berg, and the University of Melbourne under Merlyn Quaife. She is now a PhD candidate from University Putra Malaysia.

An award winning soprano, she was a recipient of numerous academic scholarships during her study notably the "Melbourne International Fee Remission Scholarships" (MIFRS) and "Melbourne International Research Scholarships" (MIRS) when she pursued her studies in the University of Melbourne.

Other notable awards include the first prize winner of NTNU Vocal Concerto Competition of year 2002 and "Silver Medal Winner Award- Outstanding Achievement" in the Global Music Award.

In Oct 2014, She was bestowed with "Ordine della Stella D'Italia, l'onorificenza Cavaliere" (The Order of Star of Italy, with the conferment of Knighthood), a prestigious recognition by the Italian government of her outstanding contribution to programming and performing vocal arts in the regions; and most recently, the Golden Medal Award from the Berliner International Music Competition in Sep 2018.

As an active recitalist, Mei Foong has given several well received solo recitals in Kuala Lumpur, Taiwan, Macau, Rome and Melbourne, where she performed Robert Schumann's Frauenliebe und Leben, Gabriel Faure's La Bonne Chanson, Richard Strauss's Vier letzte Lieder, Aldo Finzi's Art Songs, Alban Berg's Sieben frühe Lieder,



Ang Mei Foong



Grace Lee See Ling



The performers at the event.

Joseph Canteloube's Chants d'auvergne, and appeared as the soprano soloist in Handel's Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, Handel's Messiah, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

She is the founder and artistic director of The Song Weavers, the Malaysian first vocal ensemble that is dedicated to the performance and programming of Art Songs.

She has collaborated with a few major orchestras and ensembles in Malaysia, which include both the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), and the Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (MPYO), and the Virama Ensemble. She has worked with the conductors such as Lee Kok Leong, David Chin, Juan Montoya, Kevin Field, Ciarán McAuley, Fabio Mechetti, Sergio La Stella and Guillaume Tourniaire.

In 2013, Mei Foong made her Malaysia opera debut playing the title role in Bizet's opera Carmen with the EST opera company (now known as KL City Opera, KLCO), which had been received warmly at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Her other theatrical performances included "the mother" in Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors with KLCO in 2014, and both the roles "Carmen" and "Mercedes" in Bizet's Carmen with MPO in 2015.

In 2016, she performed with KLCO as Mimi in Puccini's La bohème with KLCO in Aug 2016; and most recently The First Lady in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte with MPO in Jan 2017, and the Contessa in Mozart's Le Nozze di Figaro with KLCO in Oct 2017.

Mei Foong is also an active researcher in the field of voice rehabilitation, specifically for patients with chronic diseases. Her present research work looks into the effects of singing on people with Parkinson's Disease. She is also a columnist in the local Chinese press, Sin Chew Daily.

## Grace Lee See ling

Currently a lecturer at University Malaysia Sabah, Grace graduated from University of Hull with both Bachelor of Music (HONS) and Master of Music, majoring in violin performance, second with piano accompaniment and ensemble performance.

Grace was appointed as concertmaster for the University of Hull Symphony Orchestra, University Chamber Orchestra, Gilbert and Sullivan Orchestra and also a joint leader for Hull Youth Symphony Orchestra during her study abroad. Despite her busy study schedule, Grace put together a charity concert combining Chinese music with Western Instrument in aid of Hull City Council.

Having returned to Malaysia, she was invited to perform in numerous performance as part of an orchestra, small ensemble, string quartet or as a soloist. Besides, she also taught in University of Technology Mara Shah Alam. Grace furthered her career in Singapore as a Senior Teacher in Edvox Music School, served as a music producer for Talento XI, putting together two orchestras and a junior string ensemble. After returning from Singapore, she served as the Tour Manager for Time Ensemble (an international project vocal ensemble consists of young elites) during their project in Malaysia and Singapore in 2012 and 2015.

Currently residing in Kota Kinabalu Sabah, Grace is lecturing in UMS and is actively involved with the Jesselton Philharmonic Orchestra giving masterclasses, workshops and performance around Sabah and Sarawak.

She also performed together with a number of international professional musicians, to name a few, Professor Alexander Souptel, Masako Suzuki White, Professor Mathias Boegner, Jeffrey Solares, Encik Mustafa Fuzer Nawi and Mr Yap Ling.