

GROOMING YOUNG MALAYSIAN MUSICIANS IS WHAT UCSI SCHOOL OF MUSIC DOES BEST



Joanne Yeoh in action

Musical talents may be in-born, but refined musicians are produced under the tutorship of great teachers.

Ever since its inception in 1990, UCSI's School of Music has been producing well-refined musicians, according to Elizabeth Lou, the Head of School.

"We believe in giving personal attention to our students," she said. "Each student is different in his or her strength, and unless we are willing to spend time on each individual, we will not be able to produce good musicians."

Some of UCSI's music students have gone on to perform in the international arena. Musicians like violinist **Joanne Yeoh** have

performed with Hong Kong superstar Jackie Cheung during his Music Odyssey Tour 2002/03, covering over 40 concerts around the world.

Another UCSI alumni is **Ho Chee Kin** who, in 2004, was invited to China to perform in Hang Chou and also by the Hong Kong Harmonica Association to perform at the 5th Asia Harmonica Festival and Competition as part of the Asian Rising Powers Concert held in the Yueng Long Auditorium.

According to the former Head of the Contemporary Music Department, Associate Professor Dr. Jeffrey Rowlands, Ho had started playing the harmonica when he was 14 in a high school club, and his teacher was Chan Kit Yip. He also had private lessons with Mr. Lee Nam Sou. "These continued for one year and, since then, he has been self-taught," said Dr. Rowlands.

“Before taking up music full time, Chee Kin had won many prizes such as First place in the trio category and First runner up in the solo chromatic open category of the 1997 National Harmonica Championship,” he said.

“This is a great achievement for Ho. He also won many prizes in the 1998 Second Asia Pacific Harmonica Festival, including second place in the Blues Harp and third place in the Chromatic Solo open categories.”



Elizabeth Lou counting the success stories of her students.

When Ho joined UCSI, he took composition as his major study. During his time at UCSI he took part in the 3rd Asia Pacific Harmonica Festival in Korea, winning the 1st runner-up prize for chromatic harmonica solo and two Perfect Awards in the Blues Harp and Trio categories.

He also took part in the World Harmonica Championships held in the UK, and won three Championships prizes and became the Overall Champion for the New Millennium. “Upon his return to Malaysia, UCSI awarded him a full scholarship to continue his studies and this greatly encouraged Mr. Ho in his study of music,” said Dr. Rowlands.

In 1998, he was also a participant in the Longest Harmonica performance, playing non-stop for 24 hours. This was recorded in the Malaysian Book of Records. He also achieved a World Record for this feat. In 2002, Ho won Gold and Silver Medals in the 4th Asia Pacific Harmonica Competition and Festival. That same year he graduated with a diploma in contemporary music from UCSI.

Another contemporary of Ho was **Isaac Chia Teng Hwang**, who is contemplating to continue his advanced study in the field of music composition.



Isaac Chia conducting the philharmonic orchestra at a recent event.

“I have known Isaac for more than 6 years, first as one of our music students and then as one of our faculty members,” said Lou. “Isaac has been very talented since young.”

At school, Chia had been a student conductor and music arranger for the school band since 1994. In 2000, he was the First runner-up for the Formula One Malaysia Song & Lyrics Composition Competition, and also the First-runner up for both the Music Composition Award and the Music Arrangement during the National Anti-Ecstasy Song Composition Competition.

“In the original musical entitled Green Tea produced by the School of Music in 2002, Isaac was the main music director in charge of composing, arranging, and conducting music for the entire production,” Lou said. “The musical received much public acclaim and was re-created on a bigger scale and performed again with great success in 2003.”

Besides composing and arranging, Isaac is also active as a performer. He has been selected as a participant of the Asian Youth Orchestra (AYO), conducted by Sergiu Comissiona in the years of 2000 and 2001. He also became the principal Trumpeter of Petaling Jaya (PJ) Youth Symphonic Band, Kuala Lumpur Symphony Orchestra, and the co-principal of JUST BRASS Brass Quintet.

“He has also performed regularly with the National Symphony Orchestra,” said Lou. “With his great potential and passion for music, I am confident that he will do well with his further education in music.”

UCSI’s School of Music offers two undergraduates courses, namely the Classical Music and the Contemporary Music programmes.