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THE International Society For Music Education (ISME) was formed in 1953 to further explore music and provide education on music from around the world.

This year, Malaysia had the honour of hosting the 27th ISME World Conference. About 1,500 participants, comprising academic musicians, exhibitors and performers gathered to discuss and explore music.

There were 50 performing groups from all over the world, an exhibition, some 500 papers discussed, posters and workshops at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC).

One of the performances held at KLCC was the Wind Orchestra final competition by boarding schools in the country.

Five schools were shortlisted from 18 participating schools. They were Sultan Alam Shah Secondary School (in Putrajaya), Seri Puteri School (Cyberjaya), and Datuk Abdul Razak School and Tunku Kurshiah College, both in Seremban, and Tun Fatimah School in Johor Baru.

Sultan Alam Shah Secondary School emerged as the winner as it dazzled the crowd by playing one local music and one international piece.

The second place went to Seri Puteri School, Cyberjaya, followed by Datuk Abdul Razak School.

All the schools which took part in the competition were quite impressive. Dressed in their best costumes, they mesmerised the international audience.

A performance of note was by Ballanta Academy of Music from Sierra Leone, Africa.

Named after Sierra Leone's most famous composer and musicologist, Professor N.G.J. Ballanta, the academy was inaugurated 10 years ago. From its modest beginnings, it is now a thriving educational institution.

Today, the academy continues to develop its curriculum to offer a wide range of musical activities and focuses on creating and strengthening its African music and dance curriculum.

Dressed in its national flag colour, academy members danced to the music. Concerts were also held in a few locations around Kuala Lumpur. Themed Festival Sentuhan ISME 2006, some of the performances were the Keystone State Boys' Choir, the Miaoli Children's Choir, Viva, The Operafest Children's Choir, Jit Sin Chinese Orchestra, Australian Voices and Koto Ensemble from Japan.

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