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Publication : NST

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Headline : Mozart's spellbinding flute

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Byline : By Dennis Chua

Text :

AS a tribute to legendary classical composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac) presents Mozart's The Magic Flute, from March 22 to 25.

One of Mozart's last and most popular operas, The Magic Flute was first performed in Vienna in 1791.

The production is directed by executive producer Datuk Faridah Merican and narrated by artistic director Joe Hasham. It is produced by Marge Chew with Chong Kok-Ting as music director.

The production will feature young and talented classical singers who will be complemented by the 40-piece KLPac Sinfonietta orchestra.

The stars include Peter Ong, Irma Lailatul Munira, Tan Sin Sim, James Long, John Tan, Kho Mei Ling, Wang DiXia and Janet Lee. Brian Tan is the conductor.

KLPac's latest production aims to present opera in a more accessible and innovative form, with the aid of visual projections and narration.

The Magic Flute's story begins with the evil Queen Of The Night (Sin Sim) convincing Tamino (Ong) to save her beautiful daughter, Pamina (Irma), who is kidnapped by Sarastro (John). As a reward, she promises to make Pamina his wife.

With bird-catcher Papageno's (Long) help, Tamino sets out to save Pamina. The Queen's three maidservants give him a magic flute to protect him from danger.

Papageno is given magic bells, and three young assistants. Along the way, Papageno meets a girl, Papagena (Lee).

Sarastro is actually protecting Pamina from the Queen and has put Tamino to the test, to see if he is worthy of Pamina.

Chong, ofould Ipoh, graduated from the Trinity College Of Music in London, Britain. He is also a singer, who counts as his mentors Elizabeth Hawes of Britain, Angelo Marenzi of Italy and South Korean baritone Chung-Kyun Lim.

As a pianist, he has performed in music festivals and clubs in Britain, Sweden, Italy, Singapore and South Korea.

Chong's frequent appearances in local classical concerts led him to set up his own performing arts company, The Artists Platform.

Last year, it organised a tribute concert to Mozart - Mozart 250 - at the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall in Jalan Maharajalela, Kuala Lumpur.

Brian studied music in Ellesmere College and the Birmingham Conservatoire in Britain. A Bachelor of Arts graduate in violin and piano from the Birmingham Conservatoire, he also holds a music education certificate from the Beijing Conservatory of Music in China.

He has a Master's in violin performance from the London College of Music and Media and was taught by renowned violinist Mayumi Fujikawa.

He regularly organises music seminars and workshops around the country and has been on the panel of examiners for the London College's examination board since 2003.

Brian has also served as the conductor of the Penang State Symphonic Band from 2000 to 2004.

He currently teaches violin at Universiti Putra Malaysia in Serdang, and is also the university orchestra's resident conductor.

As music director and conductor of the KLPac Sinfonietta, he uses his experience to nurture amateur musicians and build a strong community orchestra in Kuala Lumpur.

Ong was a singer with the Operafest Children's Choir and later joined Lyric Opera Malaysia in its premier production of Tosca in 2003 at Istana Budaya in Kuala Lumpur.

He starred as the narrator in Farah Sulaiman's musical Jalan Impian and Solomon in Saidah Rastam's M! The Opera. He has also performed in various operas in Malaysia and Singapore.

Sin Sim was a member of the Suara Mas Golden Voices Choir Group of City Hall and performed in Australia in 1993. A Performing Arts graduate from Universiti Malaya, she sang in the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra's Organ And Voices concert in 2003.

She has trained under vocal teachers Cecilia Yap, Armando Chin Yong and Cha Seng Tiang.

Lee appeared in Tosca (2003) and M! The Opera (2006) among others. She also starred in Dama Orchestra's Butterfly Lovers The Musical last year.

She performed with the Young KL Singers in their debut concert in 2002. Her current project is Red Street Diner, a musical film set to be released at the end of the year.

Irma, of Kangar, is a Universiti Teknologi Mara graduate in music performance, and studied under the guidance of Syafinaz Selamat.

Long has won numerous international and national singing competitions, including the National Singing Competition 2003. He was, at 19, the youngest male competitor to win the said contest.

He is an active member of a group called The Dithyrambic Singers.

John, a student of Cecilia Yap and Armando Chin Yong, is the choral conductor of the Klang Presbyterian Church.

Tickets: RM50, RM40 and RM30 (students, senior citizens and the handicapped). Time: 8.30pm (March 22 to 24) and 3pm (March 24 and 25). KLue readers are entitled to a 10 per cent discount for purchases prior to March 18. Call 03-4047-9000 or 03-2094-9400.

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