

# Retro concerts for Merdeka

> The Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra is holding two retrospective concerts to celebrate Malaysia's 55th Independence Day

BY BISSME S.

**THE MALAYSIAN** Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) is in the midst of preparing two exciting concerts at Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (DFP) as a part of DFP's Seni Festival, a week dedicated to the celebration of music.

The first concert will see MPO mixing the Malay traditional music of keroncong into its repertoire.

Entitled *Keroncong Merdeka*, the concert will take place on Merdeka day at 8.30pm. It will feature legendary keroncong singers such as Datin Paduka Julie Sudiro and Datuk Yusni Hamid.

The 67-year-old Julie started her career as a child singer. At the tender age of five, she sang for her father's traditional Malay opera troupe and has performed in Hong Kong, Australia and Latin America.

Today, she only performs at private functions and special events. In her spare time, she teaches Quranic reading and does charity works in her capacity as the secretary-general of Karyawan, a non-governmental organisation set up to protect the welfare of local artistes.

Like Julie, 61-year-old Yusni (real name Aisah Mohd Shariff) also had a glorious career. She had released 15 album to date, including *Ku Tak Mergerti* (1979), *Aku Rindu* (1984) and *Kasih Ku Abadi* (1987), and is a frequent performer at official government dinner shows as well as at Istana Negara and state events.

The concert will be conducted by Ahmad Muriz Che Rose who has performed at various local and international art and cultural festivals held in Indonesia, Singapore, France and the US.

He has also worked with well-known local singers such as Adibah Nor, Anuar Zain and Ning Baizura.

For this concert, Ahmad plans to have seven keroncong musicians to accompany the MPO orchestra.

"We are ready to rock and roll in the keroncong way," he says, adding that he hopes this collaboration will open the eyes of the younger generation to the rich melodies of the keroncong so that they would begin to appreciate it more.

One of the younger performers for the concert is 17-year-old singer Jamilah Abu Bakar. She has been



MOHD. ASMIUL ARIF/THE SUN

(left) Keroncong singers (from left) Julie, Jamilah and Yusni.

(below, from left) Ramli; Ahmad; and David.



slowly making her mark as a keroncong singer, having had the privilege to receive mentoring from keroncong maestros such as Wawang Wijaya, Abdullah Safri and Mahzan Manan.

Besides singing at several government functions, she has represented the country at the Festival Kanak-Kanak Antarabangsa in Turkey recently.

Among the songs to be performed are *Jangan Ditanya Ke Mana Aku Pergi*, *Tinggallah Mustika Hati*, *Sayang Di Sayang*, *Madah Dan Kerenah*, *Kucupan Azimat* and Merdeka-inspired songs such as *Putera Puteri*, *Pahlawanku*, *Perwira*, *Tanah Pusaka* and *Sejahtera Malaysia*.

The second concert will take place the next day on Sept 1 at 8.30pm, and will feature a more retro theme.

This time, MPO will be collaborating with popular music

group Alleycats in an acoustic concert.

The band, which had performed in Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, England, Indonesia and Singapore, will be presenting its evergreen hits such as *Hingga Akhir Nanti*, *Senandung Semalam*, *Kerana Kau*, *Sampaikan Salam*, *Jika Kau Bercinta Lagi*, *Layang-Layang Terputus Tali* and *Seribu Bintang*.

Lead vocalist Datuk David Arumugam is eager to work on the new arrangements to his songs.

"Ramli has given us homework to do," he says. "We have to learn our songs all over again. But we love challenges."

Founded in 1968, Alleycats is listed in the *Malaysian Book of Records* as the longest surviving group.

"It is the media and the music fans who made us what we are today," he says humbly. "They still want to listen to our songs. Where

we are now is not because of what we did but what our fans have done for us. They should be given the utmost respect."

MPO will also be performing hits from the 70s and 80s with singers Jay Jay of Carefree and Fredo of Flybaits.

Jay Jay will present *Belaian Jiwa*, *Joget Mak Enon*, *Rindu Bayangan*, *Dendangan Laguku* and *Kini Baru Kau Sedar*, whereas Fredo will sing *Kenangan Lalu*, *Mengapa Perpisahan Yang Kau Pinta*, *Kasih Berubah* and *Gurisan Terakhir*.

The songs will be given new arrangements but conductor Datuk Haji Ramli M.S., who has 35 years of experience in the music industry, says he only hopes to give them a new twist.

He points out that the singers already have an established style of their own and he only aims to match the audience's expectations, if not do better.

## CELEBRITY WATCH

### GOING BACKSTAGE

DESPITE a series of box-office flops, Cecilia Cheung (pix) remains unfazed about her showbiz career.



She insists that box-office returns are not all that important; rather it is the performance of the cast. "I think if you had done your best, that should be enough."

Cheung also feels that it is time for her to move on, adding that she hopes to focus on backstage work in the future. "Although it is not exactly physically tiring, backstage work takes a lot of time and thus can be quite taxing on the mind."

But Cheung is confident that she can rise to the occasion.

### TIME TO CHANGE

WELL-KNOWN for his often intense roles, Tony Leung Chiu-wai (pix) feels that it is time for a change.



"After 30 years of such roles, it's enough," he said. "I have decided to attempt more sunny characters from now on."

Leung says he is by nature a mischievous person but often had to adhere to the subdued characters he plays. Where movies are concerned, he said he will try any genre - except horror.

"I will not do it, not for anybody," he said, claiming to have been scarred from horror stories he was told as a child. "You have to be happy in your work. If not, there's no point."

### IN THE WORKS

PRODUCER Arthur Sarkissian has revealed he is working on *Rush Hour 4*, which will reunite Jackie Chan (pix) and Chris Tucker.



Sarkissian said that he wants to return to the franchise's core values while adding new elements to it.

The film is still in its planning stage but news have it that Sarkissian plans on inviting best supporting actress Octavia Spencer on board.

Meanwhile, Chan has also spoken about the possibility of a *Rush Hour 4* during the Cannes Film Festival in May this year but said it would probably be five to 10 years in the future.

But for now, Chan said he is not interested in filming any more action movies.

### HOLDING BACK TEARS

FOLLOWING the success of the movie *Wedding Dairy*, the cast and crew have gotten back together for a sequel and filming was completed within a month.



When shooting wrapped up for the first film, lead actress Elanne Kong (pix) was crying uncontrollably, and to forestall that from happening again, bets were made and being the sport that she is, Kong held back any tears that threatened.

"The last time was bad because I was already missing everybody," Kong said. "But this time, the boss has said that if the box office hits RM6 million, there would be a third sequel."

"So, although I would still miss them, I can control my tears." - Compiled by Sharon Wong

## Aniston engaged to Theroux

FOR the first time after her much-publicised break-up with Brad Pitt, Jennifer Aniston is engaged to be married again - to a much less known actor-screenwriter, Justin Theroux, 41, his publicist announced recently.

"Justin Theroux had an amazing birthday, receiving an extraordinary gift when his girlfriend, Jennifer Aniston, accepted his proposal of marriage," Theroux's representative told *People* magazine.

According to the magazine, the couple (right), who both starred in the movie *Wanderlust*, started dating in May 2011.

It will be the second marriage for her and the first for him.

Aniston, 43, married Hollywood star Pitt in 2000, but the marriage ended in divorce in 2005 following reports that Pitt had been unfaithful to Aniston with another Hollywood mega-star, Angelina Jolie.

In the wake of her small-screen success in the sitcom *Friends*, Aniston starred in a series of successful movies like *She's the One*, *The Good Girl*, *Bruce Almighty* and *The Break-Up*.

Last February, she received her own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, a sign of industry recognition of her talent and achievement.

Theroux's career path is much more modest. He is best known for his work in the films, *Mulholland*

*Drive* and *Inland Empire*.

He played John Hancock in the 2008 HBO TV mini-series *John Adams* and directed his first film, *Dedication*, in 2006. The film made its debut in 2007 at the Sundance Film Festival, a venue for budding American filmmakers.

But the native Washingtonian has a stellar pedigree, being related to novelists Paul Theroux, Alexander Theroux and author Peter Theroux.

The engagement was largely expected as the couple was reported earlier this year to have purchased a mansion in Los Angeles's exclusive Bel-Air neighbourhood for roughly US\$22 million (RM69 million). - AFP

