

Gold for UCSI University's choir

> The first such achievement for a Malaysian university

UCSI University's Concert Choir stamped its mark recently at an international event held in Beijing. It was awarded a gold medal in the Mixed Adult Choir category and was conferred the Friendship & Peace Award at the 11th China International Choral Festival and the IFCM World Choral Summit.

Yet another feather in its cap: the choir also won gold at the Orientale Concentus III at Yilan, Taiwan (2010)—making the university the first in the country to have obtained such achievements.

Founded in 1992, the festival is held every two years and is China's most prestigious choir assembly of its kind. Many world-class choirs from China and the rest of the world participated in the festival, including the Young People's Chorus of New York City from America, Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana from Slovenia, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Choir from Africa, Gondwana Voices from Australia, and La Schola Cantorum de Caracas from Venezuela.

Through competitions, concerts, workshops, and discussions, choirs and choral leaders had the opportunity to exchange and share their musical talents, perspectives, and passion with one another. Besides that, it was a good opportunity for the UCSI University Choir to meet with renowned conductors, musicians and choirs from other countries.

"Winning this competition is gaining recognition for all the hard work we have put in throughout the year. It's not just about the theory but learning new things together as a group—and this means a lot to the choir," said choir president, Gan Hui Wan.

The choir performed three songs at the competition. The members had practised together at least three times a week for several months before their departure to China, amidst their busy class and performance schedules.

Another member of the choir,

Glenn Tan said, "I have been interested in choral music since early on because of how the colours and vibrant voices blend together. After coming to UCSI University, I realised 'choir' was a core subject in Music that rekindled my passion. This competition was definitely not just about the win but the entire experience."

Thirty-eight music students from the university participated in the competition that saw about 50 choirs in the Mixed Adult category. The festival attracted 166 choirs from 33 countries.

Associate Prof Ian Lim, who led the choir to China, said, "In a land with 5,000 years of history, not only will you enjoy the wonderful music of China and the world, but also the experience of Beijing, China's capital. It was a wonderful highlight for all the participants. You literally walk through the history of China as you enjoy the spectacular views of the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, Temple of Heaven and more. The unique culture of China will amaze you as you interact with the locals."

"As musicians and artists, we experience how the power of culture, history, and the arts may transform an individual," he added.

"We believe this experience has been inspirational and has contributed to an even better world of choral music," said Prof Dr P'ng Tean Hwa, head of the School of Music at the university.

"It's also beyond theoretical training but more on character

building; opening our students to the possibility of becoming great musicians and composers. I'm sure that this has changed their perspectives drastically, forcing them onto a greater level."

Those keen to find out more about UCSI University's School of Music programmes can pay the university a visit any day (Monday to Saturday, 9am–6pm) for course counselling.



The choir from UCSI University deliver their winning performance at the festival.