



In harmony: (from left) Samuel, Andrew, Cleryn, Jyne, Evelyn, Aiden, Sharene, Emily, Ethan and Sean posing with their harmonicas.

High-five for maestros

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THE 10-member Fresco Harmonica musical group bagged five awards at the World Harmonica Festival in Trossingen, Germany recently.

Edging out nearly 1,000 contestants from more than 30 countries including North Korea, France, Switzerland and Germany, the ensemble emerged as champions in the Harmonica Group and Open categories.

They also took home the first runner-up title in Harmonica Duet, and were first and second runners-up in the Harmonica Trio category.

Fresco Harmonica founders and UCSI alumni Aiden Soon Hock Chuan and Evelyn Choong Seet Yee said the festival was the ideal platform to create greater awareness of the harmonica.

Aiden added that although the harmonica was not well received in the country previously, it has become more popular now.

When asked how they plan to

popularise the instrument, Aiden said besides performing for audiences, Fresco Harmonica has been giving music lessons at the school level.

"I'm glad we've sparked more interest in the harmonica here and that we're getting more requests to perform at events," said Aiden.

The group even had the honour of performing at Datuk Lee Chong Wei's wedding.

Teamwork however, requires bonding and Fresco Harmonica made this a priority during some of their long, grueling practice sessions by organising movie outings and meal gatherings.

In fact, the entire group, together with their families, had a dinner gathering just before boarding their flight to Germany.

However, things were not always a bed of roses as conflicts are bound to arise in a group.

Luckily, the members resolved their problems through discussions as they shared the common dream of becoming winners at the competition.

There was also not much parental support during the early phases but the situation soon changed.

"Initially, our parents were not quite supportive but once we won the Sixth Asia Pacific Harmonica Festival, they had a change of heart and were very supportive of our efforts," said Cleryn Wong Hui Yun, a UCSI University student.

Both Cleryn and fellow team member Sharene Tang Suat Ting are pursuing their classical music degrees at UCSI.

The other team members consist of Samuel Tan Han Yang, Andrew Chan Jin Shing, Jyne Lim Jin Yi, Emily Wong Suet Ling, Ethan Soo Weng Hong and Sean Choong Teck Foo.

The team's sheer determination to win was evident as the group made a trip to Genting Highlands before going to Germany so they could acclimatise themselves with the cold which can affect their breathing patterns and ability to play the harmonica.

Prior to the competition, the ensemble organised a harmonica concert on UCSI grounds themed "Towards the Glorious Path" as part of their efforts to raise RM85,000 to participate in the festival.

They managed to raise about RM60,000 from ticket sales at the concert and through other sponsorships.

They hope their win will inspire others to pick up the harmonica and create music with the instrument.