

Tuning in to opera music

THE sweet sounds of opera music were heard at UCSI University's (UCSI) Blue Ocean Strategy Hall recently, as performers from Malaysia, Belgium, Italy, Thailand and the United Kingdom graced the stage for the Pro Musica concert.

Pro Musica, which means "in favour of music" is an ensemble of outstanding singers from the Flanders Opera Studio of Belgium who travel the world to perform for the international audience.

Their appearance at the university marks the third and final performance in Malaysia after stints in Penang and Ipoh earlier this month.

The main cast of the opera ensemble were singers Inês Madeira (Portugal), Enrico Casari (Italy), Andrew Ashwin (United Kingdom) and Sabine Conzem (Belgium), who were joined by Thai opera singers trained under OperaPlus.

They were accompanied on the piano by Hein Boterberg and part-time UCSI University School of Music lecturer, Geneviene Wong

Jen-Pei.

The production was under the artistic direction of Ronny Lauwers, a singing coach as well as a professor at the Brussels Royal Conservatory of Music, together with international vocal teacher, Loh Siew Tuan.

The concert also featured a special performance by Malaysia's own international dance maestro, Ramli Ibrahim and the Sutra dancers together with soprano Sabine Conzen.

The Pro Musica concert is UCSI's inaugural Music Maestro Annual Concert, a yearly event which aims to bring world class musical performances from around the world to Malaysia.

This effort marks the university's vast commitment towards expanding the music industry in Malaysia by letting its students, staff, graduates and the public witness world renowned music performances.

Among those in the audience were British High Commissioner



Sabine Conzen (right) sings while the Sutra Dancers perform at the concert.

Boyd McCleary, Belgian ambassador Dr Frank Van de Craen and Istana Budaya director general Mohamed Juhari Shaarani.

Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat, the concert's cultural adviser, lauded the event at the university's Kuala Lumpur campus as the best among the three that the college has held

in the country. "The reception at the university has been tremendous, and this encouraged the performers to give their best."

Many among the audience were UCSI music students including Oskar Musaev from Uzbekistan, a vocal major. "I hope to be of the calibre that I have seen tonight,

and it's great for the university to expose us to concerts of such a high international standard," he said.

Also in the audience were British High Commissioner Boyd McCleary, Belgian ambassador Dr Frank Van de Craen and Istana Budaya director-general Mohamed Juhari Shaarani.