

A man with glasses, wearing a dark tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a dark bow tie, is captured in a conducting pose. His right hand is raised high, with fingers spread, and his left hand is partially visible near his chest. He has a focused expression with his eyes closed. The background is a theater with rows of red seats, and the ceiling is dark with several small, circular lights.

# TSUNG YE H

& His 20 Years with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra

LEONG WENG KAM



# TSUNG YEH

& His 20 Years with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra

2002-2022

葉聰  
音樂總監 20年  
新加坡華樂團



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## *about the writer*

Leong Weng Kam, an independent writer and editorial consultant, started writing about Singapore's Chinese music scene when he was a journalist with *The Straits Times* (1977–2017). His books include *The People's Orchestra: Singapore Chinese Orchestra 1996–2016*, *Art and Soul: 80 Years of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts* and *SCO Hidden Gems: Celebrating Singapore Chinese Orchestra's Silver Jubilee*, which won the Best Custom Publishing Title at the Singapore Book Awards 2022.

A co-author of *Men In White: The Untold Story of Singapore's Ruling Political Party*, he also translated *Leong Tian: His Extraordinary Adventures and Legacy*, from Chinese into English. He is on the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and ISS International School boards and an independent director of the Singapore Chinese Dance Theatre.

message

## Ng Siew Quan

SCO Board Chairman



**W**E join the musical fraternity in celebrating maestro Tsung Yeh's 20<sup>th</sup> year as music director and conductor of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) in 2022.

Under his charge, we saw the transformation of SCO from a national orchestra to a world-class Chinese orchestra renowned for its rich and wide-ranging repertoire.

When the maestro joined SCO in 2002, he made history as the first music director in the world to lead a symphony orchestra and a Chinese orchestra across two continents concurrently. He only retired as music director of the South Bend Symphony Orchestra in the United States in 2016, after leading it for 28 years.

His milestone achievements and musical breakthroughs are many – from his symphony fantasy epic *Marco Polo and Princess Blue* for the opening of Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay in

2002, to *Daybreak*, a three-movement modern work he created to mark Esplanade's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022.

To chronicle his achievements of the past two decades and share his success story, we published this commemorative book, *Tsung Yeh & His 20 Years with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra*, written by former Straits Times journalist Leong Weng Kam.

The book, in English and Chinese, also trace maestro Yeh's growing up years in China and music education in New York where he got married, raised three children and began his conducting career.

May I, on this occasion, thank maestro Yeh for his 20 years of leadership, remarkable achievements and contributions which helped SCO grow into a uniquely Singapore Chinese orchestra well-known to the musical world today.

Enjoy reading the book and remember to scan the QR code for videos of the maestro's concerts.

*chapter 1*



*A maestro's  
life-changing  
friendship*



*“Yes, if it wasn’t for Aik Yew Goh, I wouldn’t have led the orchestra for the past two decades! I have to thank him for that.”*

— MAESTRO TSUNG YEH



**I**T all began with a friendship.

When Tsung Yeh met Aik Yew Goh in Hong Kong for the first time in the early 1990s, little did he realise that it marked the beginning of a friendship that would change his life and music career.

Not in his wildest dreams would he have imagined that in the year 2022 he would have led the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) for 20 years, overseeing its transformation from a community music company to a uniquely Singapore and world-class Chinese orchestra.

For all his Singapore accomplishments

in the past two decades, the music director acknowledged his debt of gratitude to Aik.

So where and when did the friendship begin, and how did Aik put Yeh on the road to Singapore and the SCO?

Shanghai-born Tsung Yeh, in his early 40s and as music director of the South Bend Symphony Orchestra in the United States, was making frequent visits to the then British colony for concerts and gigs in the 1990s. He was also making a name for himself, conducting regularly for Hong Kong Sinfonietta, then a small, semi-professional symphony orchestra.

Singaporean Aik Yew Goh, a few years younger, was a music entrepreneur with a big following and founder of Hugo Productions, a Hong Kong-based recording company known for its high-quality audio productions.

Their paths crossed when Aik sought Yeh’s help to work on his recordings which ranged



from Western classical albums to modern and ancient Chinese pieces. Among them was *Ode to the Red Flag*, a symphonic overture in praise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) – the title album recorded with the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. Others in the album included China’s national anthem and evergreen Chinese tunes.

They became good friends after a few more recordings which included two albums in 1994 with the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra in Moscow. They were *Sheherazade*, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s four-part symphony based on stories from the Arabian Nights, and *Fei Xu*, meaning willow catkins flying, a pipa concerto by Luo

Yonghui featuring Chinese virtuoso Wang Jing.

Yeh recalled he was impressed by Aik’s exceptionally good ear for music, high standard of recording skills and passion in promoting traditional Chinese music. Aik was struck by Yeh’s superior musicianship, both in Western and Chinese music.

They could not pin down the exact date of their first encounter. Yeh believed they met sometime after 1991 when he was invited to guest-conduct the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. Racking his memory, Aik said: “Probably in 1992 when I was introduced to him by my general manager Chow Fa-fu.” Aik had set up Hugo in 1986 after working in the colonial government office promoting Chinese music for several years.

Aik was a self-taught musician who played the violin, cello and erhu. Before he moved to Hong Kong in 1977 to join the newly-formed Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, he was briefly an erhu player with the former People’s Association Chinese Orchestra in Singapore, the predecessor of SCO.

As fate would have it, in September 2000, Aik was appointed to the SCO board when the Singapore orchestra’s founding music director and conductor from China Hu Bingxu left at the end of his three-year contract. A search for his replacement began.

“It was because of Yeh’s versatility in both Western and Chinese music and passion to raise the standard of Chinese orchestral music that I recommended him to SCO.”

— AIK YEW GOH



SCO's favourite candidate was Yan Huichang, a China-born naturalised Singaporean music director and conductor at the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. But he could not take up the Singapore offer because of contractual obligations to the Hong Kong orchestra which he still led in 2022.

Yeh was never on SCO's radar because of his Western symphony background. It was Aik who saw the potential in him.

As a first step, he arranged for Yeh to guest-conduct SCO for a two-night concert at the SCO Concert Hall on September 7 and 8, 2001. The

concert of mainly traditional Chinese wind and percussion music went well.

On his way home to the US on September 11, Yeh had a most dramatic and nerve-wracking trip. His Singapore Airlines flight was disrupted by the Al-Qaeda terrorist attack which brought down the Twin Towers in New York. His plane was diverted to Toronto, Canada.

On his safe return, negotiations with SCO began in earnest. Yeh had to fly back to Singapore for a week when he was finally convinced to take up the job offer.

To cut a long story short, he reported for



Yeh as guest conductor at SCO's two-night concert on September 7 and 8, 2001.



Yeh was the founding conductor of Hong Kong Sinfonietta.

work at SCO as its new music director in January 2002 after giving up a similar position he held at the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Fast forward to 2022, in an interview for this commemorative book, Yeh said: “Yes, if it wasn’t for Aik Yew Goh, I wouldn’t have led the orchestra for the past two decades! I have to thank him for that.”

Aik, who remained a SCO board member until September 2004, said he was proud of what Yeh had done for the Singapore orchestra in the past 20 years. In a phone interview from his Shunde studio in Foshan city, Guangdong Province, China, he said: “It was because of Yeh’s

versatility in both Western and Chinese music and passion to raise the standard of Chinese orchestral music that I recommended him to SCO.”

Yeh’s achievements, he pointed out, have proven him right. “He has successfully transformed SCO from a community orchestra to a uniquely Singapore and world-class Chinese orchestra during that period of time.”

## Hong Kong prelude

Perhaps what paved the way for Yeh’s SCO appointment was his Hong Kong experience which re-connected him to the world of Chinese music.

He was no stranger to the British colony having made his first trip there in 1979 as a pianist with Beijing’s Chinese Oriental Song and Dance Troupe.

His career received a big boost in 1991 when he was invited to conduct two weekend concerts with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra which has its roots in the now-defunct Sino-British Orchestra formed in 1947.

His memories of the event have since faded. All he could remember of the concerts’ programme were two heavy pieces: Beethoven’s *Symphony No 3, “Eroica”*, and a Tan Dun’s contemporary work.



The Hong Kong Sinfonietta grew from 20 members to 60 in 1999 when Yeh (centre) became its music director.

As he reflected, his frequent visits to Hong Kong then rekindled his interest in Chinese music, re-connected him with acquaintances from his early years in China and updated his knowledge of Hong Kong's Chinese music scene.

He met top music makers from mainland China and Hong Kong Chinese music pioneers such as Doming Lam, Chan Wing Wah and Law Wing Fai. All these experiences and encounters stood him in good stead when he joined SCO later.

Hong Kong in the early 1990s was an

exciting place to work especially for Western-trained Chinese musicians like himself, he said. "I was flying to Hong Kong and mainland China between five and eight times a year as there were more jobs than I could cope."

As Hong Kong Sinfonietta's founding conductor, he saw the orchestra grew from 20 members, comprising mainly graduates from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, to more than 60 when he became its music director in 1999.

One performance with the orchestra he conducted at the Hong Kong City Hall in November

1996 was *Symphony: the Hero with Great Eagle* based on the theme song of the famous Chinese martial arts novel of the same name.

“Both the best-selling martial arts novelist Louis Cha, his young wife then and the composer Wong Fu-tong were present when we played to a full-house,” Yeh reminisced.

Another was the orchestra’s performance to celebrate the handover of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre on June 30, 1997, just hours before the ceremonies took place after midnight.

“I have forgotten what we played that evening, but I remember it was raining very heavily and everyone blamed Chinese President Jiang Zemin who was present because his surname Jiang in Chinese means river,” he quipped.



Novelist Louis Cha (left) and Yeh at *The Hero with Great Eagle* concert in 1996. The composer Wong Fu-tong is behind them.

## Growing up in China

Let’s get to know the maestro better by tracing his background. He was born in Shanghai in May 1950 – the only son of businessman Ye Zhujiu and vocal teacher Zhang Renqing. His sister, Ming Yeh, came in 1961.

His birth took place just months after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in October 1949 following the Communist’s victory over the Kuomintang in the Chinese civil war.

His parents hailed from distinguished families in Shanghai. His paternal grandfather, Ye Lu, was a Japan-trained gynaecologist and maternal grandfather, Zhang Jinshu, studied in a German-medical school to become a doctor.

Yeh showed talent in music early and started learning the piano when he was five, encouraged by his mother who was a Russian-trained vocalist teaching at the Shanghai Music Conservatory. She is still teaching privately when she turned 97 in 2022. Her husband, who retired as a professor at Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade, passed away in 1996, aged 75.

Yeh was enrolled in the music conservatory’s elementary school in Shanghai in 1960 when he was 10, in preparation for training as a concert pianist. But his studies and career plans were disrupted by the Chinese Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, a proletarian movement

which sought to purge the country of values perceived as bourgeois.

In 1972, he was sent to teach piano at an arts school in Hefei, Anhui province, in north-east China, playing Western music pieces as well as tunes of revolutionary songs. Later he was placed in a village in Dingyuan county in Anhui to help improve the well-being of the villagers.

The time he spent in the village proved to be the most difficult period of his life. There was no electricity, water supply and proper sewage system in the village. He had to live like the rural



Yeh with his mother and father when he was three.

poor, planting rice, feeding chickens and drawing water from the well. After enduring poverty and hardship for about a year, he was sent home after contracting malaria.

The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 and



Yeh (squatting second from right), with other students at the Shanghai Music Conservatory in 1979.



Yeh on the piano with soprano Gao Manhua at the Oriental Song and Dance troupe's performance in Singapore in 1979.

Yeh joined the Oriental Song and Dance troupe in Beijing as a pianist the following year.

In 1979 he travelled with the troupe to Singapore and Thailand on a month-long tour. It was his first overseas trip which planted in him the idea of leaving China to see the world.

By then he wanted to be an orchestra conductor more than a concert pianist perhaps after his exposure to symphony orchestra music. "I was already close to 30, my best years to be a concert pianist were over and conducting would be a better career choice for me," he said.

So he quit playing the piano with the national troupe to take up a course in conducting at the Shanghai Music Conservatory in 1979 with hopes of becoming an orchestra conductor.

## Scholarship in New York

In 1981 he won a full scholarship to study at the Mannes College of Music in New York. After 30 years in China including living through 10 years of the Cultural Revolution, he could not wait to leave China to pursue his dreams.

His younger sister, Ming Yeh, had left a year earlier to study the violin at the Eastman School of Music in New York, also on a scholarship. Having made her home in the US, she was still playing the violin for musicals in Broadway in 2022.

On his early days in New York, Yeh said he was fortunate to meet Victor Lui, the music director of the True Light Lutheran Church in New York. "He offered me free lodging at his house's attic. In exchange I played the piano for him whenever he wanted to sing at home and for the church choir on Sundays."



Yeh and sister Ming Yeh with their parents in their Shanghai home in the early 1980s.



Yeh's early days in New York in the early 1980s.

Victor was also instrumental in match-making him to a young pretty chorister in the church, Wong Sau Lan, a secretary six years younger and daughter of immigrants from Hong Kong. They married in 1983 soon after he graduated with a bachelor's degree from Mannes College of Music, and before he started post-graduate studies at Yale University.

A year later he won the Exxon/Arts Endowment Award which came with a three-

year contract as assistant conductor of the St Louis Symphony Orchestra in Missouri which marked the beginning of his career as an orchestra conductor.

For a while he had to juggle between work and study on top of raising a family. His eldest daughter Mona was born in 1984, second daughter Melina in 1992 and son, Joseph in 1997.

Mona, a media professional, married an American from the banking sector Jamaal Rahji Byers in Los Angeles in 2015. They have a son, Moonji, who turned one in 2022. Melina, a marketing executive, married German mathematician Lukas Wessels in Berlin in August 2022 and they are living in Europe. Joseph who graduated with a degree in international relations from George Washington University in 2018, is now working and living in Chicago.



Victor Lui (standing) with the newly-weds, Yeh and Sau Lan, on their wedding day in 1983.





Yeh's daughter Melina's wedding in Berlin in August 2022. The family photo also shows son Joseph's girlfriend Laura Gilbert (extreme right).

Yeh's career in the US took off impressively. In 1987 he was appointed resident conductor of the Florida Orchestra in Tampa Bay. The next year, he got the job as music director of the South Bend Symphony Orchestra in Indiana, a position he held for the next 28 years until 2016.

In 1989, he was also appointed principal guest conductor of the Albany Symphony Orchestra in New York for a year.

In April 1991, he won a mentorship programme with the celebrated pianist and conductor Daniel Barenhoim. A few months later in November, he was thrown into the limelight

when he replaced an unwell Barenhoim at the eleventh hour to lead the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a programme which included the world-renowned pianist Alfred Brendal.

That took place less than a month after he returned from guest-conducting the Hong Kong Philharmonic in the British colony where he met Aik Yew Goh, the good friend who head-hunted him for the SCO in 2002.

The year 2022 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule. To mark the event, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Singapore



SCO's Hong Kong-born sheng player Kevin Cheng performing at *Twin Cities Melodies* at SCO Concert Hall in June 2022.

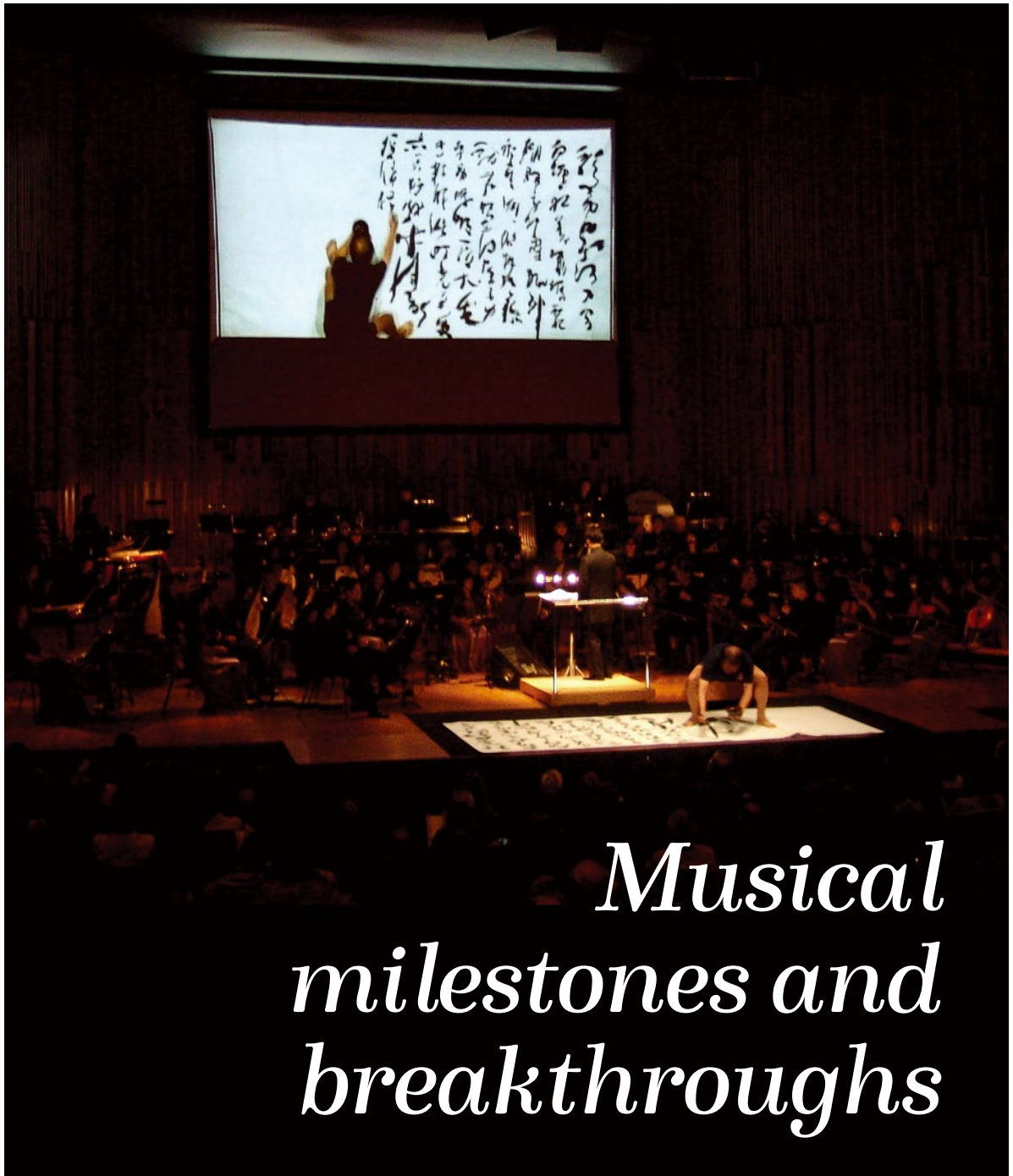
commissioned SCO to stage a special concert, *Twin Cities Melodies*, playing mainly music from Hong Kong television dramas and movies, at the SCO Concert Hall conducted by SCO Resident Conductor Quek Ling Kiong on June 24.

The year also coincided with the maestro's 20<sup>th</sup> year as music director of SCO.

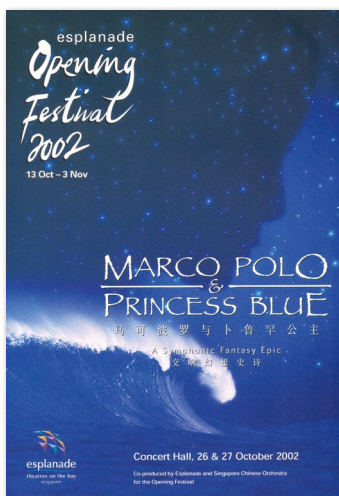
Reflecting on the two anniversary events, Yeh said: "From Hong Kong to Singapore, it all happened in a flash and I am glad I am still going strong after all these years."

How did Yeh shape the development of SCO when he took up the baton? What were his musical breakthroughs and milestone concerts? Find out more in the next chapter.

*chapter 2*



*Musical  
milestones and  
breakthroughs*



the old name for Singapore.

He could have exclaimed “Eureka!” for it was exactly the material he was seeking for a Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) performance in the opening festival of the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

The \$600-million arts centre with a 1,600-seat concert hall and 2,000-seat theatre, better known as “The Durian” for the pointed triangular metal sunshades fitted all over its two dome-shaped roofs, was scheduled to open in October.

The invitation to perform came from chief

**W**HILE on a flight from Chicago to Singapore in early 2002, maestro Tsung Yeh picked up a copy of the National Geographic magazine featuring a lushly illustrated feature on Marco Polo and his travels.

He found himself totally absorbed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Venetian adventurer’s sea journey home from China with the beautiful Mongolian princess Kokejin, a gift from Yuan emperor Kublai Khan to the Persian King Arghun.

Examining the maps in the article, he was surprised to see Marco Polo’s vessels passed through the Straits of Malacca and Temasek,



Craig Schulman played opposite Wu Bixia in the two-character opera epic.



The 2002 opera performance's finale at the Esplanade came with fireworks on stage as well.

executive Benson Pua of the Esplanade. It was a make-or-break event for Yeh as he had just taken over as SCO music director in January 2002.

There was no time to waste. Even before the plane touched down at Changi airport, he had gathered some dramatic ideas for the special performance, inspired by the National Geographic magazine's article and German composer Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, a three-act opera about doomed lovers and forbidden love.

Nobody really knew if Marco Polo fell in love with the Mongolian princess, but Yeh believed that given the circumstances – being in

close contact over a long sea journey – they could have developed a relationship while stopping by sunny Singapore some 1,000 years ago.

After returning to Singapore, he immediately got Chinese composer Liu Yuan, his old friend from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, to write the music for a seven-movement opera with Liu's wife Wang Yiyan as librettist.

Then he signed on Broadway musical veteran Craig Schulman to play Marco Polo and sing in Mandarin for the first time opposite prize-winning Chinese soprano Wu Bixia as the princess in an innovative, two-character opera.

He also assembled a 200-member strong

chorus group comprising singers from the China National Symphony Orchestra, the Singapore Youth Choir and school students conducted by Cultural Medallion recipient Jennifer Tham.

The efforts culminated in *Marco Polo and Princess Blue*, SCO's first ever symphonic fantasy epic, which played to full houses at the Esplanade Concert Hall on October 26 and 27, 2002. On the opening night, then Deputy Prime Minister and SCO Patron Lee Hsien Loong was the guest-of-honour.

With nearly 300 performers on stage, including 80 members of the orchestra, the opera on the couple's journey between China and Singapore, was hailed as a never-before-seen performance.

It was a memorable highlight at the Esplanade's 23-day opening festival of some 600 performances featuring 1,300 artistes from 22 countries. Other top acts included the New York Philharmonic with Lang Lang on the piano, and the National Ballet of China performing Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern*.

Billing the show as the first of its kind, Esplanade chief executive Puah said "we will get to hear exciting sounds one would not normally expect from a traditional Chinese orchestra" in the festival's official magazine.

Among the many rave reviews, one came from Singapore's national English daily, The

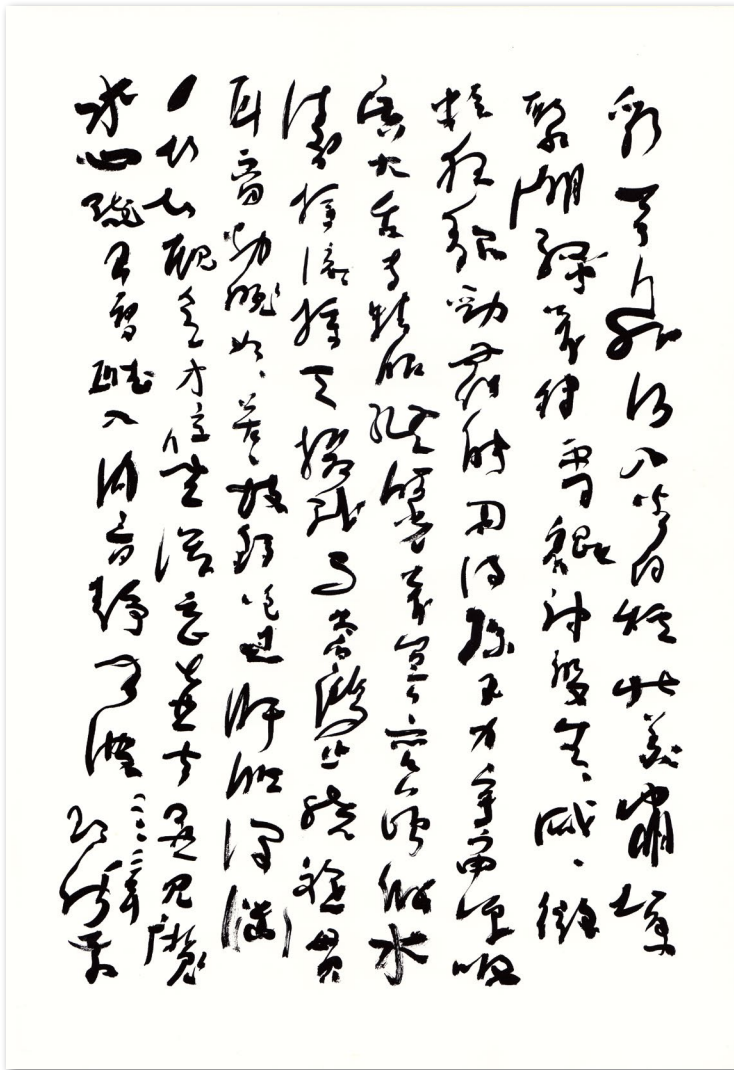
Straits Times, which said that SCO's East-meet-West maiden effort sought to "break new ground in the young tradition of Chinese instrumental music".

The performance was described as a breakthrough which "pushed the frontiers of Chinese orchestral music to greater heights" by former SCO board member and then chief executive of the National Arts Council (NAC) Choo Thiam Siew. "It was spectacular, especially the finale which came with fireworks," he said.

In interviews for this commemorative book, Yeh recounted that the performance was something no Chinese orchestra in the world had ever done. "I did it even at short notice because the opening of the Esplanade was an excellent occasion and the opening festival a good platform to showcase SCO to the world," he said.

Yeh, who was then a newcomer in the Singapore music scene, was surprised that Esplanade's Puah had so much confidence in him that he agreed to stage the large-scale production costing \$400,000. "I must thank him for it, but I also took a great risk, for had I failed, I would need to pack up and go," he said.

The success, Yeh noted, was shared by all SCO musicians. "I remember them walking away after the performance looking very confident and the expression on their faces showed as if they were born again," he recalled.



Text of Tan Swie Hian's 110-character poem he wrote in calligraphic script, for *The Yellow River at Hukou*.

### Multi-disciplinary collaborations

Buoyed by the success, Yeh wanted SCO to go into more unexplored territories through multi-media and multi-disciplinary productions.

So when SCO was invited by NAC to take part in the Singapore Arts Festival in 2003, he proposed a Chinese “calligraphy concerto”, something no orchestra, Western nor Chinese, had ever attempted.

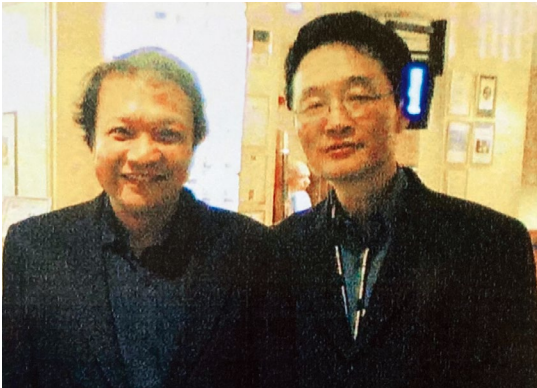
It was Choo, then SCO board member and NAC chief, who introduced him to Singapore's leading multi-media and multi-disciplinary artist Tan Swie Hian, a 1987 Singapore Cultural Medallion recipient, for a possible collaboration.

Sparks flew when the two men met, followed by an intense exchange of ideas. The original proposal for a calligraphy concerto soon expanded into a musical dialogue with Tan's poetry, fables, paintings, sculptures and philosophy.

Four composers – Law Wai Lun and Phoon Yew Tien from Singapore, Law Wing Fai from Hong Kong and Qu Xiaosong from China – put music to words in poems recited, fables sang, paintings and artworks flashed on screens and calligraphy written by the artist live on stage with the orchestra, in five separate works.

The first-ever multi-media and multi-disciplinary Chinese orchestral concert was in the making, supported by a 200-member combined chorus group, two recitalists, digital video artist Casey Lim and special lighting designer Tommy Wong.

The final product, *Instant is a Millennium – A Musical Conversation with Tan Swie Hian*, was



Yeh (right) and Tan in 2003.

*“They kept me coming up with new ideas to push SCO to greater heights and grow from a community to a national orchestra which is of world-class standard.”*

— MAESTRO TSUNG YEH

picked as the Singapore Arts Festival’s opening gala performance at the Esplanade Theatre in May 2003.

In an interview with the Singapore Chinese-language daily, *Lianhe Zaobao*, Tan said the concert “enables the streams of consciousness of both the visual arts and music to move together”. “All forms of art are inter-related. Cross-disciplinary practice is like mutual visits among neighbours,” he explained.

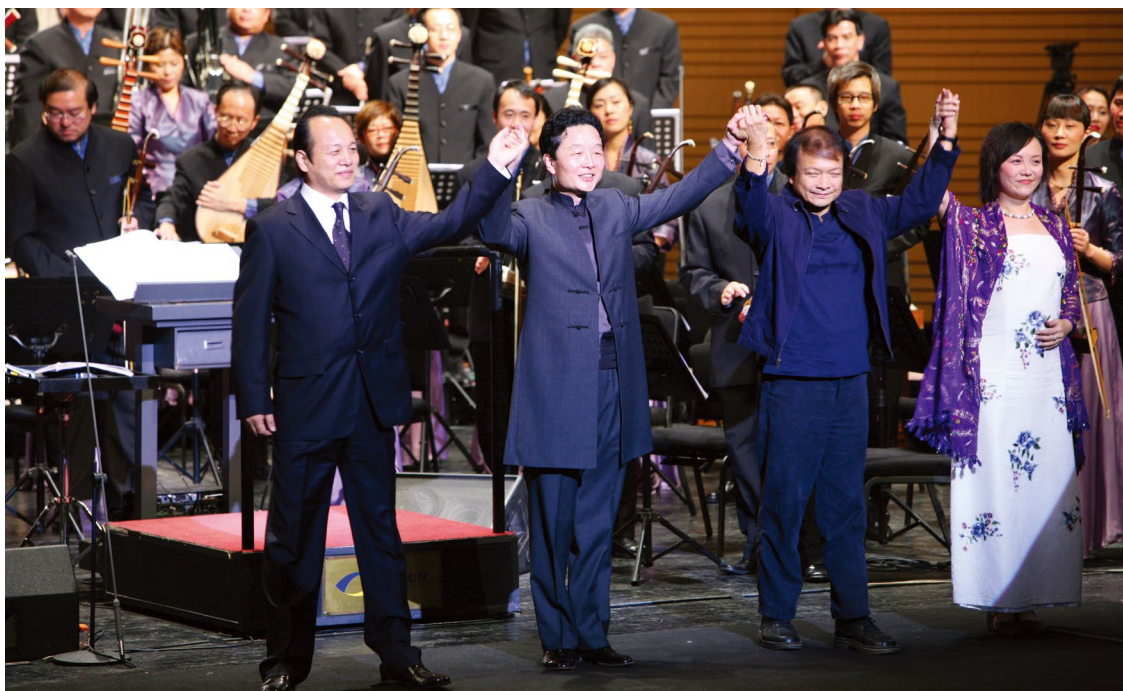
To Yeh, the mega concert was another milestone which convinced him that SCO “must play more than traditional Chinese instrumental tunes and evolve with the changing times”.

After nearly 20 years, all five modern compositions in the multi-media, multi-disciplinary production are still among SCO’s popular signature pieces.



*The Divine Melody* was performed at the Barbican Centre in London in 2005.





Yeh (second from left) with Tan Swie Hian (second from right) and the two recitalists Wang Wen & Leanne Ong after performing *The Celestial Web* in Beijing in 2007.

The first, *The Celestial Web*, by Law Wai Lun was performed in Beijing, Macau, Guangdong and Shanghai in 2007 when Yeh brought the orchestra on its China tour.

The last, *The Yellow River at Hukou*, by Hong Kong composer Law Wing Fai with a segment showing Tan writing his 110-character poem on stage was performed at the Barbican Centre in London in 2005 when Yeh led SCO on its first European tour.

In yet another milestone, SCO staged its first

mass concert, *Our People, Our Music* (OPOM), as part of Singapore's National Day celebrations at the Singapore Indoor Stadium in late July 2004, just days before the country's 39<sup>th</sup> birthday on August 9.

Under Yeh's baton, the orchestra led more than 2,400 musicians from tertiary institutions, schools and the community to play together in the *SCO National Day Concert* which also included the participation of several choir groups from all over the island.



*Our People, Our Music* at the  
Singapore Indoor Stadium in late July 2004.



Click to watch  
*Our People, Our Music*  
2004



Chinese tenor Fan Jingma played the leading role in *Zheng He – Admiral of the Seven Seas* for the Singapore Arts Festival's opening at the Esplanade in 2005.

The programme of mainly patriotic and celebratory music by local composers and music arrangers such as Phoon Yew Tien, Ho Chee Kong, Yeo Puay Hian and Sim Boon Yew played to a capacity crowd of 8,000. Then Deputy Prime

Minister and SCO Patron Lee Hsien Loong was the guest-of-honour.

“Such mass concerts help to reach out to the people and popularise Chinese orchestra music and we must do so periodically,” said Yeh.

## Blending traditional with the popular

In 2005, SCO made news again when Yeh staged the historical epic, *Zheng He – Admiral of the Seven Seas*, for the year's Singapore Arts Festival at the Esplanade Concert Hall in June.

The music in the seven-movement opera on the Ming dynasty admiral's voyages in Southeast Asia and the West in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with a 280-ship fleet was written by Law Wai Lun. He was also one of the opera's two librettists too. The other was former Singapore television drama scriptwriter Yue Meiqin.

Chinese tenor Fan Jingma played and sang the leading role as Zheng He, bass Liu Yueming

as Sultan Mansur Shah and Hong Kong-born soprano Nancy Yuen as Princess Han Libao. They were supported by the China National Symphony Orchestra Chorus and Victoria Junior College Choir, as well as the People's Association Malay Dance Group and dancers from the Tampines Arts Troupe.

The opera, linked to Singapore's ancient past, was performed to mark the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Zheng He's adventures. It proved to be another SCO success, Yeh noted.

Earlier in February, SCO had presented its first concert opera, *Thunderstorm*, based on Chinese dramatist Cao Yu's 1933 play of the same name. It was part of the Huayi Festival staged at



*Thunderstorm*, based on Chinese dramatist Cao Yu's 1933 play, was staged at the Huayi Festival at the Esplanade in February 2005.

the Esplanade Concert Hall.

For this play-turned-opera about a woman's search for freedom and love in feudal China, Yeh collaborated with Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble's artistic director Goh Boon Teck.

With the music written by Hangzhou-born Chinese composer Mo Fan, originally for a symphony orchestra, the two-act opera was performed by singers from the United States, China, Malaysia and Singapore, led by Shanghai-born soprano Gao Manhua. They were supported by the Shanghai Opera House Chorus, the National University of Singapore Choir and Victoria Chorale.

The next year, SCO came up with another novel performance for the 2006 edition of Esplanade's Huayi Festival with the concert, *SCO Goes Pop!* featuring SCO Suona/Guan Principal Jin Shiyi's *The Dark Sky* for suona, kouqinzi and kaqiang (all traditional Chinese wind instruments) and orchestra, based on the popular Taiwanese Hokkien song *Ti Or Or*.

"It was wonderful and a fusion of traditional and popular music," Yeh said.

As the maestro recollected, his first five years as SCO's music director had been hectic but creative. "They kept me coming up with new ideas to push SCO to greater heights and grow from a community to a national orchestra which is of world-class standard," he said.



MEPAAN, a collaboration between SCO and a Sarawak creative group, is a concert of indigenous Southeast Asia music presented as part of Singapore International Festival of Arts in May 2022.



SCO Executive Director Terence Ho noted that Yeh's efforts had made the orchestra a popular group for local music events. One such event was the Singapore Arts Festival, which began in 1977 and renamed the Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA) in 2012.

The orchestra had performed frequently at the festival. Its last appearance in SIFA was MEPAAN, a collaboration with Tuyang Initiative – a Sarawak-based creative group of native performers to present a multi-media concert of indigenous Southeast Asian music, rituals and heritage at the Pasir Panjang Power Station in May 2022. Composers commissioned to write the music for the 90-minute performance included Eric Watson, Wang Chenwei and Koh Cheng Jin.

SCO has been a regular fixture at Esplanade's Huayi Arts Festival too since it made its debut in 2003, a year after the festival began, with a concert featuring the best of traditional Chinese music titled, *Treasures of Tradition*.

The Esplanade turned 20 in 2022, and for the anniversary celebrations, it invited Yeh again to present a joint special programme to mark the occasion.

He came up with *Daybreak*, a modern three-movement multi-media, multi-sensory display of sound, music, lights and projection mapping three Chinese mythological figures – Pan Gu, who separated heaven and earth; Nu Wa, who created



*Daybreak*, a concert with multi-sensory display of sound, music and lights was staged at the Esplanade on October 21, 2022.

mankind; and Huang Di who brought civilisation to the world.

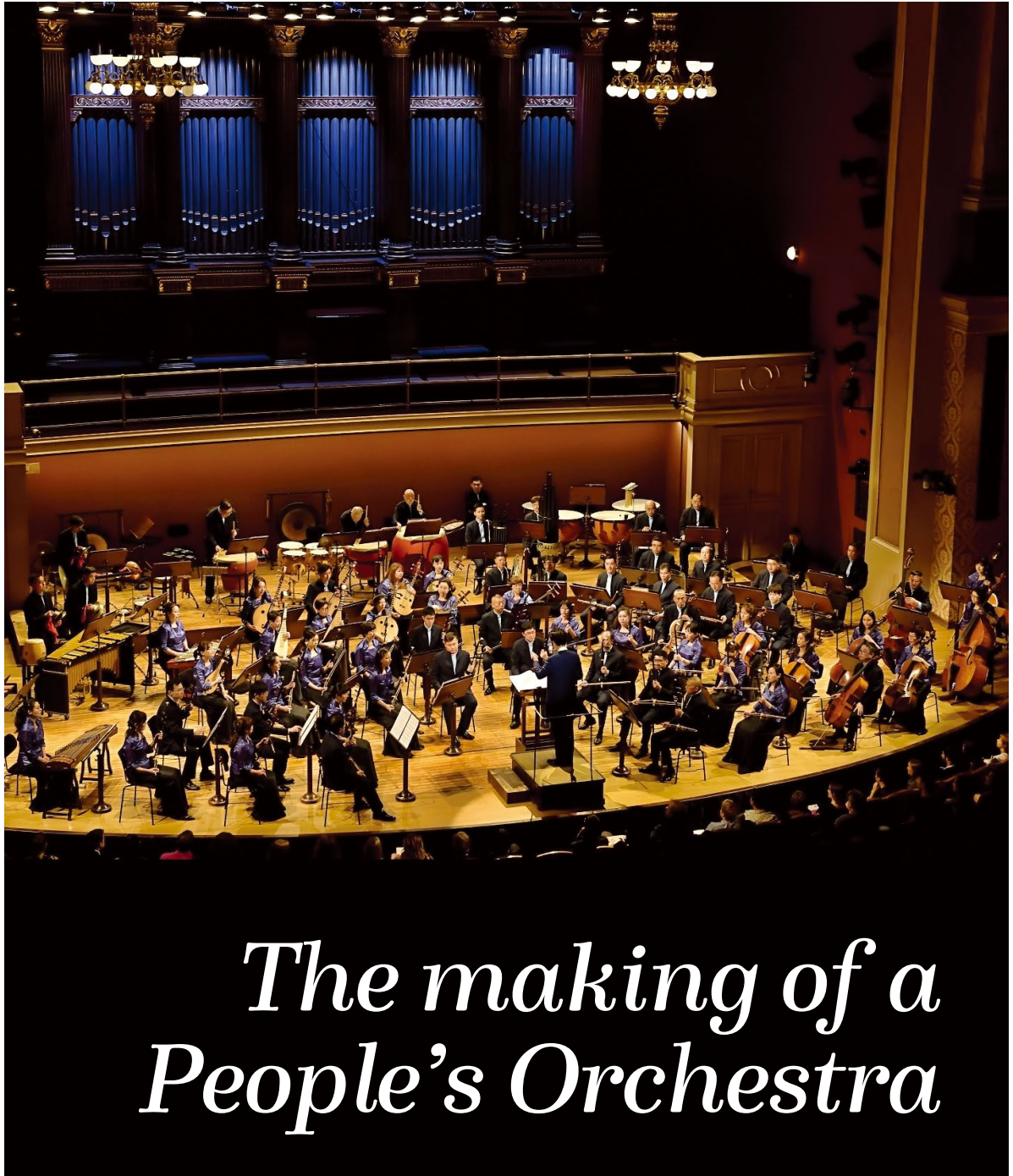
With music written by Law Wai Lun and Malaysian composer Chong Kee Yong for an ensemble of 27 SCO musicians, it was led by Associate Conductor Moses Gay and performed at the Esplanade Concert Hall on October 21, 2022.

Yeh said: "The concert is special to me because I was invited to present a programme for the Esplanade's opening 20 years ago and I am now back again."

Let's find out how the maestro transformed SCO into a People's Orchestra in the next chapter.



*chapter 3*



*The making of a  
People's Orchestra*



**C**AN a Western-trained musician who has not led a Chinese orchestra before take up the baton for the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO)?

That was the foremost question in the minds of many at the SCO Concert Hall on January 25, 2002 as the newly appointed music director went on stage for his first concert aptly billed, *Tsung Yeh's Opening Gala*.

Just three weeks into the job in Singapore, the maestro had put together a line-up of mostly modern contemporary works, not the usual traditional Chinese fare, for the performance

to signal change in SCO's direction.

Yeh began the evening with the rousing folk tune, *Tao Jin Ling*, re-written for the concert by Chinese composer Yang Qing. It was followed by works of contemporary Chinese composers such as Tan Dun, Chen Qigang, Guo Wenjing and He Xuntian.

To ease the transition from old to new, he surprised the audience by chatting with them and giving brief explanations, both in English and Mandarin, of the pieces throughout the evening.

The interaction worked so well that by the time Hong Kong composer Chen Mingzhi's music was played to the recital of a poem on modern city life titled *As Ant-Life*, by Singapore poet Pan Cheng Lui, Yeh had already won over his audience.



Yeh conducting at his Opening Gala concert on January 25, 2002.



Yeh (right) greeting President S. R. Nathan backstage after the Opening Gala concert.

He had allayed the concerns of the skeptics and put any lingering doubt over his controversial appointment to rest. After all, Yeh was greatly influenced by Chinese music and musicians in China in his early years, and also in Hong Kong during the 1990s.

The VIPs and Who's Who in Singapore Chinese music in the audience were impressed, so was guest-of-honour President S. R. Nathan,

who was attending his very first Chinese orchestra concert. He was so bowled over that he went on stage to congratulate Yeh.

In his interviews for this book, Yeh revealed that the President surprised him by suggesting he guest conduct the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO), a proposal which was promptly accepted by the orchestra's then chairman Cham Tao Soon, who was also at the



The Straits Times Page 1 story on Yeh's inaugural concert on January 25, 2002.

concert. "I did an all-Mozart concert with SSO later, and enjoyed it," he said.

Yeh's concert was hailed as a success by Pan, the poet and a retired Chinese newspaper editor in an interview for this book. "Inviting me to write a poem to go with the music by a contemporary Hong Kong composer was a bold attempt. It showed the limitless possibilities and the new direction the Chinese orchestra was heading," he said.

Amid the strong support and praises, what jolted Yeh was Esplanade chief executive Benson Puah's somewhat prophetic proclamation at the end of the concert: "SCO is a truly People's Orchestra!". This was the first time he heard the orchestra being described in those words.

Yeh's 2002 concert debut made front page news in The Straits Times. In an interview with the Singapore national English daily, the maestro announced plans for the orchestra which included "avant-garde works on the regular concert programme, new and adventurous genres of music into the traditional Chinese genre, East-meets-West cross-over acts and popular concerts".

Things got to be very different under his charge and "Singapore, to me, is a perfect meeting point of East and West," he declared. "SCO cannot be another Chinese orchestra, it must be different," he added.

He wanted SCO to expand its audience base, appealing not only to the traditional Chinese music diehards, but also to the rest of the community.

Yeh's inaugural concert was also covered extensively by the Chinese daily, Lianhe Zaobao. It published a preview on January 18, 2002, with the headline, "Let Chinese music be the sound in a modern city".

So began Yeh's efforts to make SCO "The People's Orchestra". To put his plans into action, he launched its first Chinese opera in concert, *Stars of Peking Opera*, in July 2002, to attract Chinese opera buffs to opera concerts in which the performers do not act but only sing, even though



Click to watch  
*Huayi: An Evening of  
Huangmei Opera Delights*  
2007

some come dressed in their costumes with heavy make-up.

The new performing art form proved to be a hit among local opera fans. So more similar concerts, including those sang in Cantonese, Hokkien and Teochew dialects and the Yue, Huangmei and Kun opera types, followed.

A “win-win” for all – that’s how Tianjin-born Singapore Peking opera actress Tian Ping who performed with China’s top *hualian* actor Meng Guanglu in SCO’s *Peking Opera Extravaganza I & II* concert in 2013, summed up the collaboration. “These opera concerts will not only attract more audiences to the concert hall, but also help to promote Chinese operas,” she said.



*Peking Opera Extravaganza I & II* featuring Tianjin-born Singapore actress Tian Ping and China’s actor Meng Guanglu in 2013.

## Fusing East-West music and more

One of Yeh's earliest forays into East-West fusion music was the concert, *Eurasian Journey of the Yangqin*, staged in January 2003, when he invited two East European cimbalom soloists, Viktória Herencsár and Katherine Anokhina, to perform with the orchestra with pieces by Hungarian and Spanish composers.

Then came the concert, *East Plays West* in September of the same year in which Russian

composer Alexander Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances* and American composer Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* were played by the Chinese orchestra.

He later ventured into jazz following the concert with the American jazz trio, Triple Play, led by Chris Brubeck, son of the legendary jazz pianist Dave Brubeck, in August 2007.

Yeh found jazz music blending so well with the Chinese orchestra that he engaged Singapore's top jazz pianist and composer



Cuban guitarist Manuel Barrueco (centre) and Chinese zhongruan virtuoso Liu Xing (left) with Yeh at the *When Guitar meets Zhongruan* concert in 2009.



Traditional Japanese flute masters Yamamoto Hozan and Yamamoto Shinzan performing at the *Treasures of Japan* concert in 2009.

Jeremy Monteiro and his regular drummer Tama Goh to perform with SCO from around 2010.

From jazz, he moved on to Scottish music when he invited Celtic violinist Christopher Stout to play with the orchestra in the 2008 concert, *Flavours of Scotland – Go Celtic!* Stout came again in 2012, and played together with Russian violinist Alexander Souptel and Chinese erhu virtuoso Wang Xiaonan in the concert, *Fiddle Fiddle International*, at the Esplanade.

Next came American blues featuring singers Kimberly Eileen Jones and Lawrence Mitchell-Mathews and pianist Leon Bates

performing with SCO at the *Mostly Gershwin* concert in July 2013.

Other East-West cross-over acts included appearances by popular Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie in 2012, 2015 and again in 2019. Cuban guitarist Manuel Barrueco also came earlier to perform with Chinese zhongruan virtuoso Liu Xing for the concert, *When Guitar meets Zhongruan*, 2009.

Another big name was Grammy-award winner and violinist Joshua Bell who came for SCO's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala concert at the Esplanade in 2016. He returned two years later



Click to watch  
*DRUMatic Fusion*  
2019



Yeh conducting *Rhapsodies of Spring* with DJs from FM 95.8 in 2008.

to play the violin concerto *Butterfly Lovers*, with the orchestra, also at the Esplanade.

The orchestration of many cross-over acts for the Chinese orchestra were written by three Singapore-based composers, Law Wai Lun, Eric Watson and Phoon Yew Tien, all former SCO composers-in-residence.

Yeh said choosing the right work to play was important as they needed to blend well with the Chinese instruments. Not all Western compositions were suitable, he noted. “For example, the orchestra has yet to play a Beethoven symphony because I am not

comfortable to do so yet,” he pointed out.

From the East, Yeh invited traditional Japanese flute Shakuhachi masters Yamamoto Hozan and Yamamoto Shinzan for the concert, *Treasures of Japan*, in 2009 and staged a K-pop concert, *Korea, New Waves*, in 2016.

As part of the Huayi Festival in 2011, SCO staged the popular concert, *Kit Chan – My Musical Journey* at the Esplanade, and another, *An Evening of Xinyao* later in 2017, also at the Esplanade, to cater to the younger generation.

Earlier, to appeal to a larger audience, Yeh started *SCO Mother’s Day Concert* in 2004. It



Click to watch  
*Korea, New Waves*  
2016





Click to watch  
*An Evening of Xinyao*  
2017

is staged once a year in May, featuring mostly Mandarin and Canto pop singers both from Singapore and overseas.

This was followed by SCO's Chinese New Year concert, *Rhapsodies of Spring*, in 2008, hosted by MediaCorp radio DJs, including Singapore comedian-singer Marcus Chin and Mark Lee. The turn-out for the annual concert became so overwhelming sometimes that the venue had to be switched from the SCO Concert Hall to the Star Theatre in Buona Vista.

Then there are the community and outreach concerts SCO staged at public parks, public housing heartlands' open spaces and amphitheatres, schools and community clubs. The free concerts, usually performed by an SCO ensemble of between 30 and 40 musicians, started in the late 1990s. When Yeh came on board in 2002, they were expanded to hospitals and tertiary institutions as well.

"They are important because as the People's Orchestra, we must go into the



Yeh conducting SCO's outdoor concert at the Botanic Gardens in 2006.

community, not just wait for them to come to the concert hall,” he said. As he noted, before the pandemic, 70 per cent of SCO’s 100 to 120 programmes a year were these community and outreach concerts.

### **Birth of Nanyang repertoire**

With its wide spectrum and diversity of programmes, it would appear that SCO as the People’s Orchestra had most of the ground covered. But to the maestro, it was not enough.

What’s more crucial, he insisted, was to produce music with histories and stories about the people. “A truly People’s Orchestra is not only one for the people, playing what they like to hear and enjoy. It must also reflect and describe the character of the people here and in the region,” he explained.

Soon after he arrived in 2002, he began searching for compositions about the lives and history of Singapore but found few in the SCO library. They included early works by local composer Leong Yoon Pin and popular Malay and Indian tunes, re-arranged even before the orchestra was formed in 1996, by former SCO musician Sim Boon Yew, including *Di Tanjong Katong*, *Chan Mali Chan* and *Suriram*.

Perhaps the most substantial among

“Singapore, to me, is a perfect meeting point of East and West. SCO cannot be another Chinese orchestra, it must be different.”

— MAESTRO TSUNG YEH

them was Chinese composer Liu Xijin’s gaohu concerto *Legend of the Merlion* commissioned by Yeh’s predecessor Hu Bingxu in 1999 for a special concert at the Victoria Concert Hall to usher in the new millennium.

Among the first composers Yeh commissioned to write local compositions was the Shanghai-born Law Wai Lun, a 2017 Cultural Medallion recipient. He wrote the symphony poem, *Prince Sang Nila Utama and Singa*, for the SCO concert aptly titled, *Nanyang Musical Voyage*, of mostly Malay and Indian music and dances, at SCO Concert Hall in 2003. It was followed by *Village Pasir Panjang*, by another Singapore composer and Cultural Medallion recipient Phoon Yew Tien in 2005.

That signaled the beginning of Yeh’s venture into local music, later called Nanyang, which he hoped all Singaporeans would identify with and enjoy.

To enlarge the repertoire, he launched the first Singapore International Competition



Prime Minister Lee (5<sup>th</sup> from left) gave a personal donation of \$750,000 to SCO at the prize presentation of the Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition in 2011.

for Chinese Orchestral Composition in 2006 to inspire works with strong local content as well as those of the Southeast Asia region.

The winner of the inaugural competition was Singapore-based British composer Eric Watson with his work, *Tapestries: Time Dances* about multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies in Singapore and the region.

Two more editions of the competition, in 2011 and 2015 respectively, were held attracting entries from Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and the United States.

Yeh's efforts to build up the Nanyang-style compositions received a big boost from SCO Patron and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong when he donated \$750,000 in 2011.

The special gift came at the competition's second edition and SCO's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrated with a gala concert featuring top percussion players from China including former SCO musician Wang Jianhua. It also marked Yeh's 10<sup>th</sup> year with SCO.

After 16 years and three editions of the competition which began in 2006, SCO now has



Screenshot of the National Day Rally in August 2022 showing Prime Minister Lee praising SCO's Nanyang-inspired works.

a rich collection of more than 70 winners' works, often played by the orchestra in Singapore and overseas.

PM Lee, an ardent supporter of SCO's Nanyang repertoire first praised the orchestra for the multi-racial, multi-cultural compositions as uniquely Singapore at his National Day Rally Mandarin speech in 2014.

At the same rally eight years later in August 2022, he went further to say, also in Mandarin, that the Nanyang-inspired works, which included elements from the different races and cultures helped to strengthen the Singapore identity and Singaporeans' confidence as a nation.

He even played a short clip of SCO's first

virtual orchestral piece *Confluence* composed by Wang Chenwei which weaved together Indian, Malay and Western musical styles played by musicians with Chinese instruments.

They were literally and metaphorically music to Yeh's ears as he watched PM Lee's National Day Rally speech live on television at home in August 2022. "Maybe we should resume our Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition soon to get more of those works," he said.

How did a national orchestra conductor become a Singapore music icon? Let's find out more about his amazing transformation in the next chapter.

*chapter 4*



*Tribute to a  
music icon*



“*Tsung Yeh is best known for his stewardship of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) and his pivotal role in its transformation into a major orchestra of international acclaim.*”

*As music director of the SCO since 2002, Tsung Yeh has demonstrated strong artistic vision in pushing the envelope of Singapore’s Chinese orchestra music, and developing a Nanyang style body of musical work...”*

**T**HIS tribute marked the beginning of the 300-word citation read out at the Istana on October 22, 2013 as the Singapore Chinese Orchestra’s music director received the Singapore Cultural Medallion from President Tony Tan.

By winning the Republic’s highest cultural award, Tsung Yeh had reached the pinnacle of his music career in Singapore. It accorded full recognition to his decade-long contribution to SCO and the country.

Up to 2021, the maestro is one of only 29 musicians to have received the much coveted award given annually to Singaporeans and permanent residents for artistic excellence in the fields of visual and performing arts, literature and film since 1979.

The musicians included founding music director of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) Choo Hoey, his successor Lan Shui, second-generation Chinese music pioneers Tay Teow Kiat and Yan Huichang, composers Law Wai Lun, Eric Watson, Dick Lee and jazz pianist Jeremy Monteiro.

During the same period, there were a total of 130 winners including painters, choreographers, singers, choir conductors, dancers, photographers, film-makers and writers.

Receiving the medallion alongside Tsung Yeh that evening were Malay poet and

novelist Mohamed Latiff Mohamed and theatre practitioner Ivan Heng. Mohamed Latiff died unexpectedly in his sleep in Melbourne in October 2022, aged 72.

The maestro told the media after receiving the award that it would encourage him to help SCO “scale new heights and create more

innovative works while staying grounded as a people’s orchestra”.

“It is with utmost gratitude to Singapore that I am given this opportunity to serve and the trust to create, thank you,” he said.

After nine years in 2022, he still has not decided what to do with the \$80,000 grant which



Yeh and wife greeting President Tony Tan after receiving the Cultural Medallion at the Istana on October 22, 2013.

goes with the Cultural Medallion to support the recipient's continuing artistic pursuits. "I will probably use it to fund a research project on new methods and effective ways to teach conducting for the benefit of the young," he said.

Yeh was first thrown into the limelight on August 9, 2007, when he was appointed music director of the year's National Day Parade (NDP), held for the first time at the new The Float@ Marina Bay – a 120 m by 83 m steel platform in Marina Reservoir with a 27,000-seat grandstand on the shore – completed only three months earlier in May.

He led a combined 240-member orchestra comprising the SCO and SSO, the Singapore Armed Forces Central Band, Malay and Indian music ensembles and the then 56-year-old traditional nanyin group, Siong Leng Musical Association.

"It was the first time the two national orchestras played together in a National Day parade with Malay, Indian and Chinese music groups representing Singapore's multi ethnic cultures," Yeh recalled with a sense of pride in interviews for this book.

Three composers – Phoon Yew Tien, Eric Watson and Law Wai Lun – wrote the music, all symphonic orchestral works, for the day's ceremonial as well as the performances of songs and dances.

*“Receiving the Singapore Cultural Medallion would encourage me to help SCO scale new heights and create more innovative works while staying grounded as a people’s orchestra.”*

— MAESTRO TSUNG YEH

Phoon provided music for the contingents' march-in and the fighter jets' fly-past. Eric and Law wrote for performances by various arts groups presented in four segments. They had themes on water, green cities, the heavens and people which incorporated traditional, classical and modern music elements in each of them.

Watson remembered the event as "grand and never-before-performed" and Law said it "raised the standard of music for the year's NDP to a new level".

Yeh said he enjoyed conducting the event, but lamented that such a large scale national event involving both the SCO and SSO was never repeated. "It was the first and the last," he noted.

The last time Singapore's NDP was held at the Marina Bay floating platform was in 2022. After that, it was closed for redevelopment into the permanent NS Square, a future outdoor multi-purpose venue in Singapore's Downtown area, especially for water sports such as dragon boating, canoeing and kayaking.



## Setting two world records

The music director was back in the public eye and national attention when he led SCO's second *Our People, Our Music* (OPOM) mass concert on



Yeh was music director and conductor of a combined SCO-SSO orchestra at The Float@Marina Bay for NDP 2007.

June 28, 2014, at the spanking new National Stadium, the anchor tenant of the billion-dollar Singapore Sports Hub in Kallang which opened its doors only a month earlier in May.

The event, which attracted nearly 5,000 participants, made headlines when it broke one and set a new Guinness World Record before an audience of 30,000 people of different races and from all walks of life in the stadium designed for 55,000 spectators at full capacity.

By putting on a Chinese drum ensemble of 4,557 players, SCO smashed the previous record of 3,000 held by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra at a drum festival in Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, in 2003.

It set a new record for staging the largest Chinese orchestra performance by 3,345 people led by SCO with Yeh as music director and conductor.

The combined mega orchestra led by SCO comprised professional musicians as well as amateurs from some 127 Chinese orchestras, representing Chinese clan associations, community clubs, schools and even those from neighbouring Malaysia.

The musicians, with the support of a 1,200-member choir led by chorus director Nelson Kwei, played popular movies' theme songs and golden hits of the late Taiwanese singer Teresa Teng.

SCO's second *Our People, Our Music* mass concert which broke one and set a new Guinness World Records on June 28, 2014.





Other highlights included a martial arts display by former MediaCorp actor Vincent Ng and SCO's then Assistant Conductor Moses Gay leading a 1,000-strong erhu group playing the ever popular piece written specially for the two-string bow instrument, *Horse Racing*.

The concert ended on a high note with Singapore composer-singer Dick Lee singing the National Day theme song he wrote in 1998, *Home*.

PM Lee Hsien Loong, the guest-of-honour

accompanied by his wife, Madam Ho Ching, was impressed by the spectacle of the record-breaking mass event, and praised it as “one for all Singaporeans and a feast for the senses”.

Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, who was there with his wife, Madam Tan Choo Leng, a former SCO board member and the orchestra's active fundraiser, commented that the sheer size of the event was “equivalent to a National Day Parade but of a musical nature”.

To Yeh, the event was not meant to achieve



SCO broke the Guinness World Records for the biggest drum ensemble and set a new one for the largest orchestra performance at *Our People, Our Music 2014*.



SCO's China tour in 2014 included a performance in Shanghai.

any artistic breakthrough or objective, but to promote Chinese orchestral music and help SCO gain world attention with the two Guinness World records.

He was particularly impressed by the discipline shown by the 5,000 participants, especially the students. "I was able to start after a few minutes during the rehearsals and on the actual performance. I couldn't have done that in the US and even in China where young people couldn't sit still for long. The teachers and organisers of the event did a great job."

Just a month before the mass concert at the National Stadium, Yeh led SCO on a concert tour to Nanjing, Suzhou and Shanghai, the second

time he took the orchestra to China. The first was in 2007 when the orchestra played in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Zhongshan, Shenzhen and Macau.

He noted that the eight-day tour to the three Chinese cities in 2014 was special because the orchestra played mostly music from its Nanyang repertoire to reflect multi-racial Singapore. "We couldn't play those traditional tunes which the Chinese were too familiar with anymore," he said.

For the first time, the Chinese audience heard the blend of jazz with the Chinese orchestra featuring home-grown jazz pianist and composer Jeremy Monteiro who played



SCO in concert with Kun opera artistes, during its performance in Suzhou in 2014.

Singapore composer Kelly Tang's *Montage: Three Movements for Jazz Piano and Chinese Orchestra*.

"The Chinese told me they liked it and I spotted some of them swinging with the music from their seats during the performance," Yeh recalled.

The next year he took the orchestra to Hong Kong for two concerts in October, one at the Tsuen Wan Town Hall Auditorium where they played music to a 1934 Chinese silent movie, *The Goddess*, and the other at the Hong Kong



SCO playing to the screening of the silent movie, *The Goddess* in Hong Kong in 2015.



Click to watch  
Ruan Lingyu's  
*The Goddess*  
– A Silent Film Concert  
Singapore, 2014



Left photo: Yeh conducting at the opening of the China Cultural Centre in Singapore in 2015. Right photo: Chinese President Xi Jinping (second from left) and ESM Goh Chok Tong (second from right) were the special guests.

Cultural Centre with a programme featuring mainly Singapore composers' works.

A month later in November, he led an SCO ensemble to perform at the opening of the China Cultural Centre in Singapore at the invitation of the Chinese Embassy. It was witnessed by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong.

Then in December, under his baton, SCO performed at the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas in Kuala Lumpur for the first time as part of the Titian Budaya Singapore Cultural Festival to mark 50 years of Singapore-Malaysia bilateral ties which featured works by both Singaporean and Malaysian composers and performers.

### **Celebrating SCO's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

Came 2016 and Yeh led SCO in its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations staging several major

concerts, a pictorial history exhibition, which also featured Chinese musical instruments, and the publication of a commemorative book. It also marked Yeh's 15 years with the orchestra.

It began with the anniversary gala concert, *Joshua Bell with SCO* on April 9, 2016 when the Grammy-award winner and one of the world's top violinists played Vivadi's *The Four Seasons* to a full house at the Esplanade Concert Hall.

It was followed by *Maestro Extravaganza*, a special concert featuring three conductors, Yeh himself, SCO's founding music director Hu Bingxu and SSO's founding music director Choo Hoey, in July at the SCO Concert Hall.

The maestros took turns to conduct a programme of mainly Chinese and local compositions including Fung Dic-lun's *Pipa Concerto: Arise You Lion of Glory!* and selections from Liu Wenjin's *Erhu Concerto: Great Wall Capriccio* and Law Wai Lun's *Zheng He: Admiral of the Seven Seas*.



Yeh with violinist Joshua Bell at SCO's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert at the Esplanade Concert Hall in 2016.

On the unprecedented event, Yeh said he invited Choo, who now resides in Greece, and Hu from Beijing, as a tribute to them as SCO pioneers who had contributed to the orchestra in the early years.

The Chinese would say that as “*yin shui si yuan*”, meaning when drinking water, one should not forget its source, he pointed out. Choo was a member of SCO's first board of directors and an adviser, and Hu led the orchestra from the beginning in 1996.

SCO created history with the world's first digital Chinese orchestra concert via live streaming with *Strings Fantasy* from the SCO Concert Hall in collaboration with Lianhe Zaobao in November 2016 as part of its anniversary celebrations, taking SCO's unique music across borders.

Broadcast on a high definition digital platform, it allowed viewers in China to watch the concert in real time after they purchased an e-ticket for a special log-in code to key into their



Click to watch  
*Strings Fantasy*  
2016



devices. They could play back any time they liked within the next two weeks.

Yeh noted that the innovative event proved to be useful for SCO later when all live concerts were cancelled due to the pandemic in 2020 and the orchestra and its musicians had to go digital and online to reach out to its audience.

In conjunction with the anniversary celebrations, SCO also staged the exhibition,

*Igniting 20 years of Rhythmic Passion*, at the Singapore Conference Hall's foyer between November and December.

The show recorded SCO's development from a community to a national orchestra since its founding in 1996 – through story boards and taped interviews with the orchestra pioneers and leaders in Singapore's arts scene. They included Professor Tommy Koh and Benson Puah.

It also incorporated a display of Chinese



Click to watch  
*Maestros Extravaganza*  
2016



Yeh hugging maestro Choo Hoey at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert, *Maestros Extravaganza*, in 2016 while Hu Bingxu (right) looks on.



Scene at the exhibition, *Igniting 20 years of Rhythmic Passion*, at the Singapore Conference Hall between November and December in 2016.

music instruments including a 4 m tall erhu. Equally elevated was a giant ruan and a butterfly-shaped guzheng measuring 4 m wide. The exhibits were from the Shanghai No. 1 National Musical Instruments Factory which made the giant instruments for exhibitions overseas.

The anniversary celebrations ended with the publication of the 160-page coffee table book in English and Chinese titled, *The*

*People's Orchestra: Singapore Chinese Orchestra 1996–2016*. The book traced the history of the orchestra to the beginnings of Chinese music in Singapore in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought over by early Chinese immigrants.

In the next chapter we see the maestro finally setting up home in Singapore with his wife after shuttling between Singapore and the US for 15 years.

*chapter 5*



*New home,  
new aspirations*



**F**OR the first 15 years as music director of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO), Tsung Yeh felt “like a ping pong ball flying from one place to another”.

That’s because from 2002 to 2016, he was also leading the South Bend Symphony Orchestra (SBSO) in Indiana in the United States.

Helming two orchestras in two different continents meant frequent jet-setting requiring more than 24 hours of flying time for each journey. Indiana and Singapore are 15,257 km apart.

As Yeh recounted to the media in 2017, he

would finish conducting an SCO concert on a Saturday night, fly to the US the next morning and be ready for rehearsals with the South Bend’s musicians for their concert, usually on a Saturday evening.

Conversely, from the US, he would often leave on Sunday morning, arrive at Changi Airport by Monday evening. The following morning, he would start work with his SCO musicians for their next concerts.

Such gruelling long-distance travels took a heavy toll on him and his family life and he decided to part company with SBSO which he led for 28 years as its music director.

“I have had enough of the frequent flying between Singapore and the US as it took a lot out of me over the years,” said Yeh who turned 72 in 2022 in an interview for this book, adding: “I also want to spend more time with my wife.”

When he left SBSO in June 2016, he brought his wife of nearly 40 years, Madam Wong Sau Lan, from the US to set up their new Singapore home.

Leaving South Bend was, however, heart-wrenching for the maestro. To bid him goodbye, SBSO staged a grand farewell concert at the Morris Performing Arts Center in the city on May 7, 2016, attended by over 1,700 people including his wife, supporters, friends, community leaders and government officials.



Yeh (centre) and his family all dressed up for his farewell dinner at South Bend, Indiana on June 17, 2016.

The evening's highlight was Carl Orff's cantata, *Carmina Burana* for orchestra and chorus.

At the end of the concert, the then mayor of South Bend City Pete Buttigieg proclaimed that day – May 7 – “Tsung Yeh Day” in his honour. Buttigieg, a Democrat, is the US Secretary of Transportation in the Biden Administration since 2021. In addition, SBSO also gave Yeh the life title of Conductor Laureate.

At a farewell dinner later attended by

his wife, their three children and about 350 guests on June 17, he received the “Sagamore of the Wabash Award” in recognition of his contributions to Indiana. It was signed by the state's then Republican governor Mike Pence who, as Donald Trump's running mate in the 2016 presidential elections, became US Vice-President between 2017 and 2020.

A report published in the South Bend Tribune, the local newspaper, paid tribute to

the maestro saying: “In his almost three decades in South Bend, Yeh recruited better and better musicians for the orchestra, expanded the audience, helped to grow its endowment, made 20<sup>th</sup> century American music an integral part of its programming, and introduced SBSO and classical music to new generations of people...”

On the farewell concert and the honours he received, Yeh said: “I was very touched by the support from the audience, many of them dressed in yellow and green, because my wife’s surname Wong means yellow in Cantonese, and my surname Yeh means green leaves in Mandarin.”

Yellow and green ribbons were seen everywhere as decorations at the arts centre that evening, he recalled, “I was truly humbled by all their expression of love for the both of us.”

## From big house to high-rise apartment

The couple moved into a two-bedroom apartment on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor of a 40-storey condominium tower block in Tanjong Pagar in January 2017. It is near where Yeh had stayed for most of his first 15 years with SCO: a standard room at the Amara Hotel just next door.

Leaving South Bend meant selling their three-storey house in a suburban district in



South Bend’s mayor Pete Buttigieg (right) declared May 7 as “Tsong Yeh Day” at the farewell concert in 2016.

South Bend, Indiana, where they had lived for 20 years and raised their three children.

Their elder daughter, Mona, married to an American in the banking sector with a baby boy, and son Joseph, are still living in the US. Younger daughter Melina, who married a German mathematician in August 2022, is working in Europe.



Yeh at the Tanjong Pagar Food Centre opposite his apartment.

*“I have had enough of the frequent flying between Singapore and the US as it took a lot out of me over the years. I also want to spend more time with my wife.”*

— MAESTRO TSUNG YEH

Moving from a big house to a small high-rise apartment has been a challenge for the couple but they have since learnt to adapt. They enjoy a picturesque view overlooking Singapore’s skyscrapers in the central business district and have been spending their most cherished moments in the sky garden on the floor above.

Yeh chose the rented apartment in Tanjong Pagar as it is centrally located with shops and restaurants nearby. Best of all, it is within a 10-minute walk to his office at the Singapore Conference Hall. “I don’t drive and often have to spend long hours at work, so it is very convenient for me just to walk home after work, even late at night,” he said.

The years together in Singapore for Yeh and Sau Lan, who turned 66 in 2022, have been filled with joy and contentment. In the past, especially when their children were growing up in the US, they hardly had time for each other.



Yeh and wife dining at a restaurant near their apartment in Tanjong Pagar.

“He was always working, and even when he was home in the US, he was busy preparing for concerts with the orchestra,” Sau Lan said.

Yeh lamented that he could only spend about 10 days each year with her and their three children. So many years have passed and it is still painful for him to think of the times he could not be at the family’s milestone events such as anniversaries, birthdays and school graduations.

It was a tremendous sacrifice, Sau Lan admitted, but fortunately the children understood and supported their father’s career and his passion for music. “I know he likes Chinese music and is determined to do something to raise Chinese orchestral music to a new level. I am proud of what he had done for SCO and Singapore,” she said.



Mrs Yeh with her husband during SCO's Europe tour in 2019.

Eldest daughter Mona said her dad might be “absent” from the family, but his successful career and contributions to music had made their sacrifices worthwhile. “When he was not around, our mother did a wonderful job of caring for us, making sure we all grow up well and happy,” she added.

On her life with him in Singapore for the past few years, Sau Lan said: “At my age it is difficult to make new friends, but I am happy to be with my husband even though I find the weather a bit too warm.”

Before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, she could travel with Yeh when he was guest

conducting overseas or when the SCO went on tour. She would also accompany him on his visits to orchestras in China, either to perform or lecture.

Yeh is honorary professor at his alma mater, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and principal guest conductor of China's Central Chinese Orchestra in Beijing, among other appointments in the country and elsewhere.

### **In tune with the local music scene**

Apart from spending more time with his wife, one other reason why Yeh decided to set up home in Singapore was to be more involved in the music scene in Singapore as well as overseas where he has been conducting workshops and performing as guest conductor.

When word went round, invitations from music groups and institutions in Singapore and abroad began pouring in, requesting him to conduct, teach and mentor.

Among the firsts was his appointment to the six-member advisory panel of the School of Young Talents (SYT) at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) in April 2017.

Established in 1999, SYT is the premier arts school for the young and gifted in music, art, drama and dance in Singapore. The students, aged between four and 18, have been sweeping





Yeh conducting SCO at their performance in Gwangju, South Korea, in May 2019.

top prizes at both Singapore and international competitions, especially those for music.

For example, 11-year-old violinist Chloe Chua made headlines when she became the first from the school to top the junior category at the Menuhin Competition, dubbed the “Olympics of the Violin”, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2018.

“We are honoured to have Tsung Yeh on board who participated actively in our meetings. He is very concerned with the school’s music curriculum and raising the standards of our students,” said NAFA board member and chairman of SYT’s advisory panel Chew Sin Hwa.

A month earlier in March 2017, Yeh was

invited to guest-conduct the Braddell Heights Symphony Orchestra’s concert, *Homage*, at the School of the Arts.

He conducted the orchestra a year later in 2018 when it played the Chinese composer Xian Xinghai’s *Yellow River Cantata* at the Esplanade Concert Hall.

Yeh traced his involvement with the community orchestra founded in 1986 to its late conductor Adrian Tan who was among the participants of a conducting workshop he held for Singapore, Taiwanese and Hong Kong conductors in 2015. They included Chang Yu-an, currently chief conductor of the Taipei Chinese Orchestra.

The full SCO Orchestra in front of the concert hall in Berlin in 2019.





Singaporean violinist Kam Ning playing *Butterfly Lovers*, a highlight of SCO's Europe tour in 2019.

Adrian, together with another participant, Dedric Wong, assistant conductor of Chinese chamber music group Ding Yi Music Company, were later selected by Yeh as conducting assistants at SCO for a year in 2016.

“Adrian and I got along well and we were planning for more collaborations before his sudden demise,” Yeh said. Adrian died in his sleep from cardiac arrest in July 2021, aged 44.

Other orchestras and music groups Yeh guest conducted included The Singapore Lyric Opera Chorus's concert *Turandot* in September 2008, the Philharmonic Winds' concert, *From Bernstein To Copland*, at the Esplanade Concert Hall in March 2018, Singapore Armed Forces Central Band's *In Harmony 32 – Orchestral*

*Classics*, two months later in May, also at the Esplanade Concert Hall, and Singapore Ballet's performance of *Don Quixote* at the Esplanade Theatre in March 2019.

Two months later in May 2019, Yeh led SCO to perform in Gwangju, South Korea, before going on a 10-day tour in August to Berlin in Germany, Prague in the Czech Republic, Forlì in Italy and Ioannina in Greece, all music capitals in Central and Eastern Europe, to rave reviews.

He said the tour, SCO's fourth in Europe since 2005, was significant because it brought the orchestra's unique Nanyang music and sound and its East-meets-West cross-over acts there for the first time.

Singaporean violinist Kam Ning played the *Butterfly Lovers' Concerto*, re-arranged for the Chinese orchestra by Yan Huichang and Ku Lap Mun, as a highlight of the European tour which Singapore Ambassador to Germany Laurence Bay hailed as “a key milestone for the SCO”.

“The energy of SCO's playing, egged on by the physically exuberant conducting of Tsung Yeh left a powerful impression,” said John Tregellas, director of the Prague Concert Company, who pointed out that “SCO is the first Chinese orchestra to perform here and it has been a delightful experience for the audience”.

Just two months after the orchestra's

*Infinite Island: A Theatre in Concert*, at  
SCO Concert Hall in November 2019.





return from Europe, Yeh in collaboration with Toy Factory’s artistic director Goh Boon Teck, scored another first when they staged the theatrical production, *Infinite Island: A Theatre in Concert*, at SCO Concert Hall in November 2019, to commemorate Singapore’s bicentennial.

Music for the new theatre concert was composed and arranged by SCO’s Composer-in-Residence Wang Chenwei. The story of Singapore’s transformation from a swampy fishing village to a modern metropolis over 700 years was told by a cast of six actors, led by MediaCorp artistes Felicia Chin and Ben Yeo.

On the collaboration, Toy Factory’s Goh, who was the play’s director, was reported as saying: “I sincerely hope that the history of Singapore can be presented from a different and interesting perspective in this novel way”.

Yeh said it was a good experience to provide music for the theatre production, and hoped to do more as the response from the audience was positive.

What finally slowed down the creative and energetic maestro was the outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020, when all SCO performances were cancelled and overseas travel restricted.

The next two years saw Yeh spending more time planning and contemplating SCO’s performances post-Covid-19. “It was a timely break but I still found time to lead conductor



Yeh (centre) with conductor workshop participants in 2021: (seated from left) Lien Boon Hua and Dedric Wong, (standing from left) Adrian Chiang and Adrian Tan.

workshops online, including one in 2021 with Adrian Tan, Lien Boon Hua, Adrian Chiang and Dedric Wong.”

He returned to the concert hall with the full orchestra in March 2022, after measures to curb the Covid-19 pandemic were eased, to kick start a series of three live performances titled, *An Evening of Concertos*, featuring mainly the orchestra’s principal players. The series which ended in June also marked Yeh’s 20<sup>th</sup> year as music director of SCO.

In the final chapter, let’s reflect on the maestro’s legacy and look ahead to his hopes and aspirations for the orchestra.

*chapter 6*





*“It was Li who encouraged me to join SCO. He believed it was time the Chinese orchestra keep up with the symphony orchestra on the international stage.”*

— MAESTRO TSUNG YEH



**O**NE name kept popping up during interviews with maestro Tsung Yeh for this commemorative book – Chinese composer and educator Li Xi’an.

The prominent musicologist and former president of the China Conservatory of Music who passed away in June 2020, aged 83, was the founder and artistic director of the world-famous Huaxia Chamber Ensemble. One of Li’s many illustrious students is the celebrated Chinese composer Tan Dun.

If Singaporean music entrepreneur Aik Yew Goh was the good friend in Hong Kong

who introduced Yeh to the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO), it was Li who helped him decide whether to take up SCO’s offer as its music director in 2002.

Both Yeh and Li met in Beijing in late 1995 when they were rehearsing for Huaxia’s debut performance in Paris at the invitation of Radio France for a concert of mainly contemporary Chinese music the following year.

Yeh conducted the seven-member Huaxia ensemble comprising top Chinese instrumentalists such as dizi virtuoso Zhang Weiliang and percussionist Wang Yidong. Among



“Don’t just follow the Western symphony orchestras, be bold to create and experiment with new ideas to be even better and different. Never be in a hurry to decide on how Chinese orchestras should make music.”



— LI XI'AN

Chinese musician friends said no, and those who supported me were my friends in the United States and Europe.

“It was Li who encouraged me. He believed it was time the Chinese orchestra keep up with the symphony orchestra on the international stage and was confident I could do it with SCO.”

As Li often pointed out, the modern Chinese orchestra started only in the 1950s when Chinese musicians wanted to play together like their counterparts in the symphony orchestras. So they adapted traditional Chinese instruments and music to Western musical scales, notation and form similar to that of the symphony orchestra which has a 400-year-old history.

Like the symphony orchestra, the Chinese orchestra is also divided into sections – bowed strings, plucked strings, wind and percussion. Western music instruments like the cello and double bass were added to provide a fuller sound range.

Yeh recalled Li’s advice: “Don’t just follow the Western symphony orchestras, be bold to

the pieces was Chen Qigang’s *Three Images of Laughter* which represents a new style of Chinese chamber music blending traditional Chinese music with Western composition techniques.

After the successful Paris concert, Yeh and Li continued to work together in more Huaxia’s performances in China and overseas. But what really brought them closer were the beliefs and ideals they shared on the future of Chinese orchestral music.

In his interviews for this book, the maestro spoke about how difficult it was for him to decide whether to join SCO. He said: “Many of my fellow

create and experiment with new ideas to be even better and different. Never be in a hurry to decide on how Chinese orchestras should make music, the repertoire and even seating arrangements of musicians on stage. They all take time to evolve.”

The Chinese music educator had noted that after about 50 years, the Chinese orchestra was still in its infancy and the possibilities for it to grow, develop, adapt and change and modify its musical instruments were limitless.

Encouraged by Li, Yeh took up SCO’s offer without hesitation saying, “it was in my personality to welcome challenges, and it also gave me the opportunity to create something new”.

Initially he thought he would do it for three years, not 20. But his new job with SCO worked out so well that he could continue to lead the South Bend Symphony Orchestra until 2016 when he retired from the US orchestra.

As he summed it up, he simply did what he thought could make SCO an uniquely Singapore and world-class Chinese orchestra – from his early breakthroughs such as his symphony fantasy epic *Marco Polo and Princess Blue* in 2002 to *Daybreak*, a three-movement multi-media, multi-sensory display of sound, music, lights and costumes on three ancient Chinese mythology figures, in 2022.

Li remained Yeh’s adviser and mentor, and he invited Li to be SCO’s adviser and an



Yeh (extreme right) with Huaxia’s founder Li Xi’an (extreme left) and members Wang Xiling and Zhang Weiliang in a meeting before their trip to Paris in 1996.

adjudicator in two editions of the orchestra’s Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition in 2006 and 2011 respectively.

## **New works, new directions**

What are the maestro’s aspirations for SCO for the next 20 years? His mantra: be bold and creative, innovative and different.

He had started several projects to explore Singapore’s history. One, in collaboration with SPH Media, seeks to tell the Singapore story through news photographs and music.

A significant SCO performance on Singapore’s past, he noted, was the symphonic poem, *Independent Note*, which composer Eric Watson wrote to mark Singapore’s Golden



Yeh performing *Independent Note* with Lim Kay Tong (centre) at the Esplanade in 2015.

Jubilee as an independent nation in 2015.

It was a musical tribute to Singapore's founding prime minister, the late Lee Kuan Yew, comprising readings of 21 quotes from his speeches over a period of 50 years accompanied by the orchestra at the Esplanade Concert Hall.

As related in the earlier chapters of this book, Yeh's string of accomplishments with SCO had showcased how he transformed the orchestra from a national music performing group into a world-class one.

He singled out the orchestra's unique repertoire which he built up over the past two decades as one of his most important achievements.

Today, there are some 200 works comprising traditional Chinese, Nanyang flavour and East-meets-West fusion works from commissions and winning compositions of music writing competitions it organised. Another about 900 are re-arrangements or re-orchestration works from different music genres or re-written specially for the various music instruments.

Although the number is impressive, Yeh felt that it is still far from adequate. "We need more and the orchestra must continue to commission new works, especially those from the younger composers to stay relevant," he said.

Another noteworthy achievement, he cited, was the uniquely beautiful SCO orchestra's sound he helped to create over the years by training his musicians to play cohesively together.

This has been extremely challenging as many Chinese musical instruments were made for playing by individuals indoors, not together as an orchestra, he explained.



Yeh with SCO members performing in Ioannina, Greece, in 2019.

The past 20 years thus saw him taking great pains to train the musicians, often section by section, and to teach them to listen to one another as they play. “Today, we produce a very unique, bouncy and round sound which is our signature, well-liked by many,” Yeh proudly declared.

As SCODizi Principal Yin Zhiyang recounted, the maestro was so meticulous over how the orchestra should sound that he sometimes invite manufacturers of instruments to the concert hall during rehearsals to make adjustments such as changing the seating positions of musicians.

“After all these years, the orchestra still needs to learn to play together as there are still areas where the musicians must improve,” Yeh stressed.

SCO’s overseas tours were also a source of pride for the music director. He led the orchestra to perform in Europe four times since 2005, including a visit to Scotland in 2009 when it made history by becoming the first Chinese orchestra ever to play at the Edinburgh Arts Festival. SCO’s last trip to Europe was in 2019.

He took the orchestra twice to perform in China in 2007 and 2014 and to Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur in 2015.

“The orchestra should go out more to perform. We have yet to play in the US, Australia, many other Asian countries including our neighbours in ASEAN,” he said.

He noted that the SCO could have toured the US with violinist Joshua Bell who proposed

“The orchestra must continue to scout for the best talents to continue to strive.”

— MAESTRO TSUNG YEH



From left: Lee Jun Cheng, Zhang Yin, Ma Huan, Tan Manman and Benjamin Boo performing at the Singapore Embassy in Berlin on August 9, 2022.

the partnership after his second performance with SCO in Singapore in 2018. “Regrettably, that did not happen because of the pandemic which made travel impossible in 2021,” he said.

He was delighted to see five of his musicians invited to perform with the Nuremburg Symphony Orchestra (NSO) in Germany for the annual *Klassik Open Air* series of concerts in August 2022.

The SCO musicians – percussionist Benjamin Boo, Lee Jun Cheng on dizi, Ma Huan on yangqin, Tan Manman on huqin and Zhang Yin on pipa – played Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* with NSO under the baton of its Singaporean chief conductor Kahchun Wong at the Luitpoldhain Park in Nuremburg before an

audience of more than 75,000, streamed live on Bayerischer Rundfunk or Bavarian Radio.

Following the concert, the five SCO musicians were invited to play at the Singapore Embassy in Berlin on Singapore’s National Day on August 9, 2022.

Wong, a former SCO conducting assistant under Yeh’s mentorship when he was a student at the Yong Siew Toh Music Conservatory in Singapore in 2011, returned to conduct SCO in the concert, *Kahchun Wong & SCO* at SCO Concert Hall later on August 20, 2022.

“It was great to see Kahchun back and the collaboration with him gave our musicians the rare opportunity to perform at the *Klassik Open Air* concert too,” said Yeh, who believed that SCO should grab every opportunity to perform overseas for greater exposure and experience.



Yeh (right) and Kahchun Wong at the SCO concert in August 2022.



SCO Patron Prime Minister Lee (centre) with Yeh and his wife at the Fundraising Gala Dinner and Concert in October, 2022. In a Facebook post later, Lee attributed the orchestra's success to the maestro.

## Cherished and sad moments

Over the years, Yeh had witnessed SCO musicians come and go, some leaving for greener pastures and others calling it a day, and a younger generation of musicians filling the ranks.

From the day he joined the orchestra, succession remained an issue, Yeh emphasised saying: "The orchestra must continue to scout for the best talents to continue to strive."

But he also took the view that SCO could retain the older ones by extending their retirement. Citing the example of Singapore-born dizi player Lim Sin Yeo who turned 65 in

2022, he said: "He is a good bangdi player and can contribute for another few more years."

As he looked back on the past 20 years as SCO's music director, Yeh counted more happy moments than sad ones.

"Heart-warming and encouraging" – that was how he described the support from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who is also SCO's Patron, over the years.

Yeh initiated the Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition in 2006. At its second edition in 2011, PM Lee personally donated \$750,000, giving a big boost to his efforts to increase the orchestra's Nanyang

repertoire. He believed this generous donation to a music writing composition was the first by a prime minister of any country.

Support from SCO's board and the Singapore public was also an inspiration for his hard work, Yeh acknowledged, adding: "I would not have succeeded without the board's encouragement and the audience cheering me on all these years."

At the concert, *Strings Fantasy* at the SCO Concert Hall in September 2022, Chinese Australian cellist Qin Li-Wei, who performed Chinese composer Zhao Jiping's *Zhuang Zhou's Dream* to thunderous applause, paid tribute to Yeh on the night of his performance saying: "SCO could not have been so successful today without Yeh's artistic direction the past 20 years."



Yeh (right) and cellist Qin Li-Wei at the concert, *Strings Fantasy* in September, 2022.



Florence (left) and her younger sister, Heng Bee with Yeh at a dinner party in 2018.

On a lighter note, Yeh recalled an ardent fan giving him a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday surprise when he returned from the US one evening in 2012.

"Florence and her younger sister, Heng Bee, together with their friend received me at the airport and took me to a Teochew restaurant in town to celebrate my special day with a cake, candles and all. I was so overwhelmed by the touching gesture that I teared."

His long-time supporter Florence Chek, a secretary, recollected: "It was already past 10 pm but we managed to persuade the restaurant in River Valley to stay open for the birthday celebration that evening. We love and support him because he had done great for SCO and Singapore."

Yeh's saddest moments with the orchestra: the demise of two musicians. Zhongruan player, Yeo Puay Hian, died in 2007 aged 53, succumbing to cancer. Dizi player Tan Chye Tiong passed away in April 2022 aged 57, also of the same illness.



Tan Chye Tiong (1965-2022)



Yeo Puay Hian (1954-2007)

“Puay Hian was one of the most talented Singapore-born musicians who could compose and re-arrange for the orchestra,” he said. Yeh also revealed that Chye Tiong’s mother-in-law, Wei Xiaoshen, was his primary school classmate at the Shanghai Music Conservatory years ago, adding: “That’s why Chye Tiong, who was also an accomplished watercolourist, and his piano teacher wife Yening are very special to me.”

In all, Shanghai-born Yeh had lived and worked in three countries and one territory. He spent the first 30 years of his life in China. He



Yeh and his mother Zhang Renqing in a photo taken in 2019.

went to the US for further training and started his career there and in Hong Kong for the next 20 years before joining SCO in 2002.

So which place exerted the most influence on him? His reply: China, because his experience especially in the poor countryside during the Cultural Revolution taught him the lessons of hardship, which helped him to appreciate music making even more.

“Then there are my parents, especially mom who shaped both my character as well as my understanding of music,” he said, adding: “Dad helped me to be logical, analytical and become a good organiser.” His mother Zhang Renqing, a Russian-trained vocal teacher who nurtured his talent in music since young, turned 97 in 2022. His father passed away in 1996, aged 75.

As for his future, Yeh said: “I have done all I could for SCO since 2002 as its music director, making it one of the best, if not the best Chinese orchestra in the world. SCO must continue to move forward to excel.

“My life is a never-ending quest towards new and greater artistic heights.”



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*“I have done all I could for SCO since 2002 as its music director, making it one of the best if not the best Chinese orchestra in the world.”*



# TSUNG YEY Milestones

# 葉聰 年表

## 1950

Born in Shanghai on May 17 to businessman Ye Zhujiu and vocal teacher Zhang Renqing.

5月17日出生于上海，是商人葉祖菲和声乐教师张仁清的儿子。



## 1960

Joined Shanghai Conservatory of Music's junior school, then its secondary and later at tertiary level studying the piano. His early teachers included Li Minqiang and Ma Sisun.

就读于上海音乐学院附小，先后升上该院附中，过后主修钢琴本科。他的钢琴启蒙老师是李民强和马思荪。



## 1977

Joined Oriental Song and Dance Troupe as pianist and later toured Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong and Macau.

成为中国东方歌舞团团员，担任钢琴演奏，曾随团赴新加坡、泰国、香港、澳门等地演出。

## 1981

Left China on a scholarship from Mannes College of Music in New York, graduating with a bachelor's degree in music two years later. 获纽约曼尼斯音乐奖学金，离开上海到美国求学，两年后取得音乐学士学位。



## 1983

Enrolled in a post-graduate programme at Yale University. Married church chorister and secretary Wong Sau Lan.



在耶鲁大学攻读音乐硕士研究生学位，同年与教会诗班成员黄秀兰结婚。

## Tsung Yeh named to direct symphony

The South Bend Symphony Orchestra Association has named Tsung Yeh as its new music director.

Charlotte Ford, president of the association, made the announcement at a mid-morning news conference in the Morris Civic Auditorium. Yeh was one of five music director candidates who conducted either the South Bend Symphony Orchestra or Chamber Orchestra over the course for the 1987-88 season.

He will be succeeding current Music Director Kenneth Kiesler, who joined the South Bend Symphony in 1984. A native of Shanghai, China, Yeh is currently serving as resident conductor with the Florida Orchestra, with whom he conducts up to 98 concerts yearly.

Prior to that he spent three seasons as Exxon/Aris Endowment Conductor with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. During his residency there with Leonard Slatkin, he participated in a full range of orchestral activities and served as principal conductor of the Saint Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Two years ago the People's Republic of China invited him to participate in engagements with the Central Philharmonic Society in Beijing and the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, all of which were very successful. In recent seasons, Yeh has participated in the Aspen Music Festival as assistant conductor.



TSUNG YEH  
New music director

mother, a voice professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He studied piano and concertized extensively in Beijing and Shanghai. Soon he won a full scholarship to Mannes College of Music in New York. There he earned a bachelor of music degree under Sidney Harth and served as assistant conductor of the Mannes College Orchestra.

As Music Director, Yeh will be involved in all artistic aspects of the Symphony Association. In the 1988-89 season, Tsung Yeh will conduct seven Symphony Orchestra concerts, four Chamber Orchestra concerts and all Children's and

## 1988

Became music director and conductor of South Bend Symphony Orchestra in Indiana, USA.

就任美国印第安纳州南湾交响乐团音乐总监。

## 1999

Appointed music director of Hong Kong Sinfonietta. 受委为香港小交响乐团音乐总监兼指挥。



## 2002

Joined the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) as music director and conductor.

加入新加坡华乐团，担任音乐总监兼指挥。

## 2006

Launched Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition. Two more editions of the competition were held in 2011 and 2015 to expand its Nanyang repertoire.

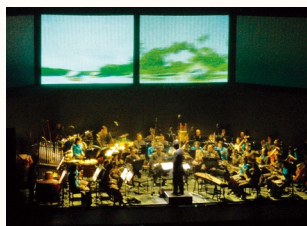
发起新加坡国际华乐作曲大赛，并于2011年和2015年分别举办第二届、第三届比赛，以发掘更多具南洋风格的音乐作品。



## 2007

Led a combined 240-member orchestra including members of SCO and Singapore Symphony Orchestra for National Day Parade at The Float@Marina Bay. In October he toured five major Chinese cities with SCO.

以总指挥的身份，带领一支包括新加坡华乐团和新加坡交响乐团在内的240人大型乐队，参与在浮动舞台举行的国庆庆典。同年10月与华乐团到中国的五个城市巡演。



## 2009

Took SCO on its second European tour, and made history as the first Chinese orchestra to appear in the

Edinburgh International Festival.

第二次带领新加坡华乐团前往欧洲巡演并参加爱丁堡国际艺术节，成为有史以来首支受邀在该艺术节演出的华乐团。

## 2013

Awarded Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest honour for artistic excellence.

获颁新加坡文化艺术最高荣誉——新加坡文化奖。



## 2014

Set Guinness World Records for the biggest drum ensemble and largest Chinese orchestra performance at SCO's second OPOM concert at the National Stadium in October. Earlier in May toured Nanjing, Suzhou and Shanghai with SCO.

《全民共乐2014》音乐会创下两项新的吉尼斯世界纪录——“最大中国鼓乐齐奏”和“最大型华乐演出”。5月带领华乐团去南京、苏州与上海巡演。



## 2016

Left South Bend Symphony Orchestra and moved his home with wife from the US to Singapore. May 7 declared “Tsong Yeh Day” by mayor of South Bend.

南湾市市长宣布5月7日为“Tsong Yeh Day”（叶聪日）。卸任南湾交响乐团音乐总监一职，随后与太太定居新加坡。

## 2019

Led SCO to tour Gwangju, South Korea and later to Berlin in Germany, Prague in the Czech Republic, Forlì in Italy and Ioannina in Greece.

带领新加坡华乐团赴韩国光州演出，随后前往德国柏林、捷克布拉格、意大利弗利与希腊约阿尼纳巡演。



## 2022

To mark his two decades as SCO music director, *Tsong Yeh 20* was staged at SCO Concert Hall and the commemorative book, in English and Chinese, *Tsong Yeh & His 20 Years with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra* launched in November.

为庆祝叶聪与新加坡华乐团携手并肩已走过20年，2022年11月在音乐厅举行《叶聪20》音乐会，并发布《叶聪——新加坡华乐团音乐总监20年》双语传记。





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梁榮錦，自由撰稿人及編輯顧問。早在他當《海峽時報》記者時（1977—2017）已開始報道新加坡華樂的動態與新聞。他的著作包括《人民的樂團——新加坡華樂團1996—2016》、《藝心·藝意——南洋藝術學院80年》與2022年獲榮新加坡書籍獎最佳客制內容的《SCO 隱藏的瑰寶》。

他是《白衣人——新加坡執政黨秘辛》的作者之一，《梁田——跌宕一生的礦家傳奇》英文版譯者。他是南洋藝術學院、ISS新加坡國際學校董事，也是新加坡華族舞蹈劇場獨立董事。

譯者簡介



李汶霞，中國師範學院中文系畢業。在新加坡擔任華文教師25年。曾多次參與雜誌書籍編輯工作，其中包括2018年南洋藝術學院《藝心·藝意》的中文版編審。作為新加坡華文教師朗誦藝術學會的會員，她曾擔任新加坡中小學的朗誦比賽評審。

汶霞興趣廣泛，偏好音樂、戲劇，多次獲得歌唱比賽大獎，並獨立編導兒童戲劇，公演時頗受好評。她個人的詩歌、雜文極受業界人士高度讚賞，也是一位自由寫作者。

# 序

## 吴绍均

新加坡华乐团董事主席



## 2022年

恰逢葉聰先生在新加坡华乐团担任音乐总监兼指挥 20 周年，在此，让我与音乐界同仁，一起恭贺他二十年载耕耘所取得的斐然成就。

过去的 20 年，在葉聰的领导下，我们看到华乐团从一支国家级的乐团，逐步演变成长为一支具有丰富、多元曲目的世界级华乐团。

葉聰自 2002 年加入新加坡华乐团，便创造了历史，成为世界上首位跨越两大洲，同时领导西方交响乐团和东方华乐团，两支不同乐团的音乐总监兼指挥。一直到 2016 年，才卸任美国南湾交响乐团音乐总监的职位，他领导这支乐团也有 28 年之久。

过去 20 年里，葉聰在音乐里程碑上的突破和成就有很多，包括 2002 年他为滨海艺术中心开幕策划的大型交响幻想史诗《马可波罗与卜鲁罕公主》，以及 2022 年

为纪念该艺术中心成立 20 周年，策划的三乐章现代作品《破晓》。

为感谢葉聰 20 年来对新加坡华乐的贡献和分享他成功的故事，华乐团出版了《葉聰——新加坡华乐团音乐总监 20 年》一书，由前英文《海峡时报》记者梁荣锦撰写。

这本传记以中英双语呈现，书中内容也追溯了葉聰在中国的成长岁月，在纽约深造音乐并开启音乐职业生涯，随后结婚与妻子抚养三个孩子成长的经历。

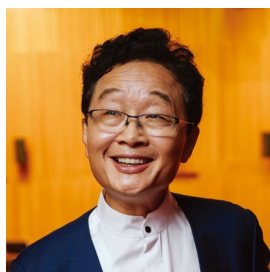
我要感谢葉聰这 20 年来领导新加坡华乐团所做出的努力与贡献，正因为他的创新力和孜孜不倦的付出，新加坡华乐团才会成为独具匠心并享誉世界的华乐团。

翻开书卷，共同领略这位名家的音乐之路。别忘了扫描书中二维码，观赏葉聰音乐会的精彩视频。

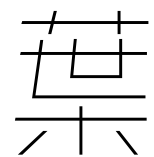
第一章

音乐路上的挚友





“是啊，如果不是易有伍，  
我也不会在新加坡华乐团  
指挥乐团20年，  
我必须要郑重感谢他。”  
——葉聰



葉聰与易有伍的初次相遇大约是90年代初，在香港两人一见如故。但葉聰无论如何都没想到，才刚相识的朋友会在未来改变他的生活轨迹和音乐道路。

时光荏苒，不知不觉中就到了2022年，新加坡华乐团音乐总监葉聰与华乐团携手并肩，在音乐道路上砥砺前行不觉已有二十载。忆往昔峥嵘岁月，他带领乐团从一支新加坡国家华乐团，逐渐成长为一支具有新加坡特色的世界级华乐团！

葉聰在接受本书采访谈到过去20年对新加坡华乐团的成就时，并没有忘记在香港认识的易有伍。不难看出，他对好友给他所带来的一切十分感激。

两位先生在友谊的篇章中谱写出一段华美乐章，在风雨兼程的音乐路上，或许会有迷茫、困惑，但葉聰却是一步一个脚印摸索着前进。

葉聰出生于上海，年近40岁时，他已是美国南湾交响乐团的音乐总监。90年代初期，葉聰经常前往当时的英殖民地香港访问演出，他的音乐才华初露锋芒，使他在香港名声大噪，后来也成为了香港小交响乐团指挥之一。

易有伍，新加坡人，比葉聰小几岁，是香港雨果音乐制作有限公司的创始人。



雨果是一家在录音制作上具权威性和代表性的唱片公司，高品质的音频制作有口皆碑。

为录制西方古典专辑和中国现代及古典音乐，易有伍找到久负盛名的葉聰希望与之合作。由葉聰指挥的香港小交响乐团录制了专辑《红旗颂》，一首赞颂中国共产党的交响乐序曲。专辑也收录了中国国歌《义勇军进行曲》和一些耳熟能详的中国经典交响乐曲。

“因为葉先生在

中西方音乐上的极深造诣，  
以及对提升华乐团水准的满腔热忱，  
我才向新加坡华乐团推荐了他。”

——易有伍



再录制了几张唱片后，他们逐渐熟络，成为好朋友，两人也一同录制了1994年在莫斯科与俄罗斯爱乐乐团合作的两张专辑：里姆斯基-柯萨科夫根据《天方夜谭》故事创作的四个乐章组曲，以及由香港作曲家罗永晖创作、中国演奏家王静演奏的琵琶协奏曲《飞絮》。

葉聰在回顾这段友情时提到，易有伍对音乐的敏锐嗅觉、高水准的录音技巧，加之他对推广中国传统音乐走向世界的初衷，都给他留下了深刻的印象。对易有伍来说，他同样被葉聰在西方和中国音乐方面的卓越才华所折服。

这或许就是他们彼此相知相惜，故形莫逆之交的原因吧。

具体是哪一年认识的，两位好友似乎都淡忘了，葉聰依稀记得那是1991年，他受邀担任香港管弦乐团客卿指挥的时候。易有伍在接受采访时却说：“大概是1992年，通过经理周凡夫的介绍，我们初次结识。”

易有伍是一位自学成才的音乐家，演奏小提琴、大提琴和二胡。1977年他移居香港加入新成立的香港中乐团前，曾在新加坡人民协会华乐团，即新加坡华乐团前身，担任过二胡演奏家。



2001年9月7日与8日，葉聰以客卿指挥的身份指挥了新加坡华乐团两场音乐会。

1986年成立雨果唱片公司之前，易有伍也在香港政府的文化部任职一段时间，主要的工作是推广华乐。

冥冥之中似乎早有安排，2000年9月易有伍被委任为新加坡华乐团的董事。来自中国的指挥家胡炳旭是当时乐团的创团音乐总监，恰巧三年合同期满后离开了。乐团便开始物色新一任的音乐总监兼指挥。

新加坡华乐团开始时对葉聰比较陌生，最理想的接棒人选是在中国出生的新加坡籍香港中乐团音乐总监兼指挥阎惠昌。当时他与香港中乐团的合约尚未结束，因此无法接受新加坡华乐团的邀

请。直到2022年，阎惠昌仍在带领香港中乐团。

幸运的是，易有伍在为华乐团物色下一位音乐总监之际，看到好友葉聰的潜能。于是他便将这位具有西方交响乐背景和对华乐又颇有建树的葉聰举荐给新加坡华乐团。

首先，他安排葉聰以客卿指挥的身份，于2001年9月7日与8日在新加坡华乐团音乐厅以中国传统管乐和打击乐为主的曲目呈献了两晚音乐会，演出非常成功。

数天后，9月11日，在返回美国的途中，葉聰经历了一次惊心动魄的旅程。由于卡伊达恐怖主义组织在美国发动恐怖袭

击摧毁了纽约的双子塔，他所乘搭的新加坡航空航班，不得已临时迫降落在加拿大的多伦多机场。

平安回到美国印第安纳州的家后，新加坡华乐团开始与叶聪洽谈工作事宜。不久后，叶聪应华乐团之邀飞回新加坡作进一步探讨。斟酌了近一周的时间，也在乐团高层的游说下，他终于同意接受音乐总监一职。

卸任了香港小交响乐团的音乐总监工作后，叶聪于2002年1月正式出任新加坡华乐团的音乐总监，同时继续他在美国南湾交响乐团的职务。

每一段华美的乐章，都将在历史的轨迹上奏响。

回到2022年，叶聪在采访中无不再感慨地说道：“是啊，如果不是易有

伍，我也不会在新加坡华乐团指挥乐团20年，我必须郑重感谢他。”

易有伍在广东佛山市顺德的工作室，也接受电话采访。他说举荐叶聪是非常正确的一件事，也为他好友在新加坡20年所取得的成就感到自豪。他解释道：“因为叶先生在中西方音乐上的造诣，以及对提升华乐团水准的满腔热忱，我才向新加坡华乐团推荐了他。”

事实证明，叶聪所取得的成就没有辜负易有伍的眼光和期盼。易有伍于2004年9月才卸下新加坡华乐团董事的职务。

## 前奏曲——香港

如果说叶聪在香港的经历让他能有机会与新加坡华乐团结缘，同样那也让他走向世界级乐团的路上熠熠生辉。

回到最初……

作为一名钢琴演奏家，叶聪于1979年随中国东方歌舞团来到香港，自那之后，他逐渐熟悉这个城市。

1991年10月他应香港管弦乐团之邀，客卿指挥了两场周末音乐会。这两场



叶聪是香港小交响乐团的创团指挥。

演出给葉聰带来了莫大的鼓舞。香港管弦乐团的前身是成立于1947年的中英管弦乐团。

葉聰对那两场音乐会的记忆已经模糊，但仍记得演奏过两首重要的作品：贝多芬的第三交响曲《英雄》，以及谭盾的一部当代曲目。

自那以后，葉聰就频繁来往香港。与此同时，他遇到了早年在上海相识的音乐界朋友，也结识了来自内地和香港的中国音乐先驱，如林樂培、陈永华及罗永晖等。

与他们的交往中，葉聰看到了香港华乐坛欣欣向荣的一面。彼时的香港及



香港小交响乐团起初只有20名成员。葉聰于1999年成为乐团音乐总监时，成员已增加到60人。



1996年11月，香港小交响乐团在香港大会堂演出后，金庸（左）携太太和葉聰一小聚。

世界对华族音乐极其推崇，华乐影响力之深，再次点燃了他对华乐的热爱、憧憬与发展。这也为他后来加入新加坡华乐团奠定了基础。

90年代初期，繁华的香港是一个充满活力和激情的地方，像葉聰这样深受西方影响的音乐家更能受到音乐界的器重。每年他都要往返香港和中国大陆五到八次，邀约的工作已应接不暇。

作为香港小交响乐团的创团指挥，他见证了乐团从20人，大都是香港演艺学院的毕业生，发展至1999年他任音乐总监时的60多人。

1996年11月，葉聰在香港大会堂与

小交响乐团合作演出了一场以《神雕侠侣交响曲》为主的音乐会，乐曲由黄辅棠根据著名作家金庸的武侠小说而作，至今谈起他仍然很兴奋。

“那场音乐会座无虚席，著名武侠小说家金庸携同他的妻子出席，作曲家黄辅棠先生也来了。”葉聰回忆说。

1997年6月30日，香港回归前的午夜，葉聰也参与了香港文化中心举行的庆祝香港回归演出。那场具有历史意义的演出，让他久久难以平复激昂的情绪。

“虽然我忘了那天晚上演奏的内容，但我记得当时下着瓢泼大雨。大家都嬉说那可能是因为在场的中国国家主席江泽民的名字中，‘水’太多啦！”他笑着打趣道。

## 艰辛岁月

葉聰成长于一个不平凡的年代，1950年5月他出生于上海，是商人葉祖蕙和声乐教师张仁清的儿子。另有一个妹妹，葉明，出生于1961年。

二战结束后，中国开始爆发全面内战，中国共产党于1949年10月取得胜



五岁时的葉聰与爸爸妈妈合影。

利，国民党退守台湾。他的出生，时值中华人民共和国成立的几个月后。

葉聰的父母均出身于上海的名门望族。他的祖父葉露曾在日本留过学，是一名妇科医生。外祖父张近枢则在同济德文医学堂学医，毕业后成为著名的内科医生。

葉聰小时候就显露出过人的音乐天

赋，在母亲的鼓励下，五岁开始学习钢琴。他的母亲曾在上海音乐学院任教，尤其对西洋声乐颇有研究。一辈子都在教书育人的母亲直到90多岁才退休。2022年她已经97岁了，头脑仍旧灵活，还会经常为学生上课。葉聰的父亲后也成为上海对外贸易学院的一名教授，于1996年去世，享年75岁。

1960年，10岁的葉聰就读于上海音乐学院附小，主修钢琴。不幸的是，突如其来的中国文化大革命10年动乱时期，打乱了他的学习和职业规划。那是一场“一个阶级推翻一个阶级”的政治革命运动。

1972年葉聰被派往合肥安徽省艺术学校教钢琴与视唱练耳，除了教学生弹奏西方乐曲外，也指导他们演奏革命歌



葉聰（左）与中国男高音蒋大为于1979年一起随中国东方歌舞团到新加坡及泰国演出。



80年代初，葉聰、妹妹葉明與雙親攝于上海。

曲。后来他又下派到安徽定远县的一个村庄。

那段岁月是葉聰一生中最为艰难的时期。村里没水，没电，只能同村里的老百姓一样，每日过着种田、喂鸡、打井水的生活。在持续了一年困苦和艰辛的日子后，他不幸染上了疟疾，当时村里缺乏足够的医疗药物和护理设施，只得送他回上海医治。

文化大革命于1976年结束，次年，葉聰加入中国东方歌舞团。

1979年，他跟随剧团前往新加坡、香港和泰国进行为期一个月的巡演。第一次到国外，亲身感受到异国的艺术氛围，那一刻，也让他萌生了要出国寻求发展的想法。

随着与交响乐团的频繁接触，葉聰

更想成为一名交响乐团的指挥，而不只单单演奏钢琴。“我已年近30岁了，成为钢琴演奏家的黄金时代早已过去，指挥对我来说是一个更佳的职业选择。”

同年，即1979年，葉聰毅然决定，辞去东方歌舞团的工作，回到上海音乐学院去上指挥专业课程，想未来成为一名交响乐团的指挥。

## 拉开绚丽人生的帷幕

而立之年是人生宝贵的第一个阶段，葉聰过去几乎都是处于政治动荡的岁月中。1981年，他获得纽约曼尼斯音乐学院的奖学金。他就此离开中国，远赴美国学习，去追寻自己的梦想。

葉聰的妹妹葉明，早他一年离开中国，同样获得奖学金在纽约伊士曼音乐学院学习小提琴。后在美国安家，至今仍为美国百老汇的音乐剧演奏小提琴。

刚来到纽约留学，葉聰很幸运遇到了纽约路德会灵光堂的音乐总监雷鉅源先生。谈到雷先生，葉聰回忆道：“他让我免费住在他家的阁楼上，作为交换，只要他在家想练歌，我就得为他伴奏钢琴，



1983年，葉聰與黃秀蘭在紐約路德會靈光堂結婚時與親戚朋友合影。

到了星期天就去教堂為詩班伴奏。

雷先生還為葉聰作媒，給他介紹了教堂詩班里一位年輕漂亮的成員——黃秀蘭，也是一名行政秘書。兩人一見鍾情，感情發展迅速。黃秀蘭的父母是香港移民，她從小在美國長大，比葉聰小六歲。葉聰從曼尼斯音樂學院獲得學士學位後，在繼續攻讀耶魯大學音樂碩士學位前，他與黃秀蘭於1983年喜結良緣。

次年，在經過三輪激烈的比賽後，葉聰獲得了埃克森／藝術基金會獎，並與密蘇里州聖路易斯交響樂團簽訂了為期三年的助理指揮合同，這標誌著他開啟指揮的職業生涯。

婚後的那幾年，葉聰除了忙於工作、學習，他更要兼顧家庭生活。他的大女兒萌娜出生於1984年，二女兒靈娜出生於1992年，兒子久文出生於1997年。

後成為媒體人的萌娜於2015年與在美國銀行界就職的賈馬爾·拉赫吉·拜爾斯結婚；成為營銷主管的靈娜於2022年8月在柏林與德國數學家盧卡斯·韋塞爾斯結婚；久文在2018年從喬治華盛頓大學獲得國際關係學位後在政府部門工作，現在也有了心儀的對象。

葉聰在美國的職業生涯成就斐然。1987年，他被任命為坦帕灣佛羅里達管弦樂團的常任指揮，後又被紐約奧爾



巴尼交响乐团聘为首席客卿指挥。1988年，成为了印第安纳州南湾交响乐团的音乐总监，直到2016年都在担任该职位，长达28年。

1991年4月，他获得著名钢琴家和指挥家丹尼尔·巴伦霍伊姆的指点。同年11月，在上台前的最后一刻，他代替身体不适的巴伦霍伊姆指挥芝加哥交响乐团，演了一场重量级的音乐会，世界著

名钢琴家阿尔弗雷德·布伦德尔担任钢琴独奏，当时站在舞台上的葉聰突然间成为了众人瞩目的焦点。

那是葉聰担任香港管弦乐团客卿指挥一个月后，在香港遇到了易有伍，那位在2002年改变他一生的挚友。

2022年是香港回归中国25周年，为庆祝这一盛事，香港驻新加坡经济贸易办事处特邀新加坡华乐团，于6月24



2022年8月，葉聰全家合影于幼女灵娜与德国数学家卢卡斯·韦塞尔斯在柏林的结婚日，最右边的是葉聰儿子久文的女友劳拉。



2022年6月24日在新加坡华乐团音乐厅举行的《乐融双城》音乐会。

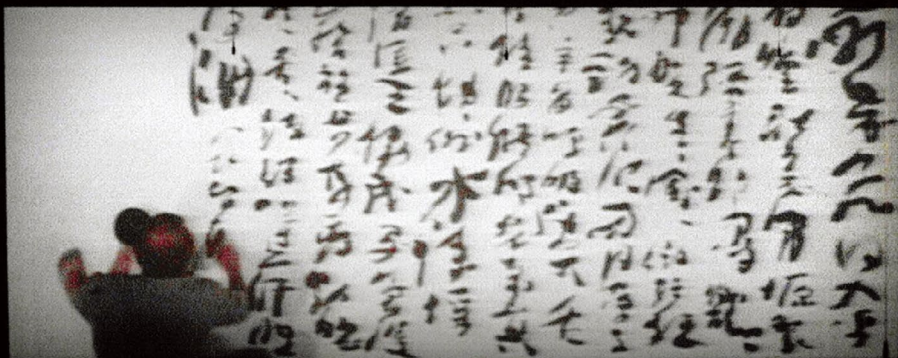
日在新加坡华乐团音乐厅举办以香港电影、电视主题曲为主的特别音乐会《乐融双城》，当晚的指挥是乐团驻团指挥郭勇德。

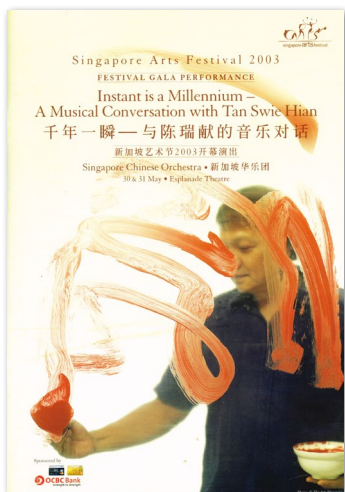
这一年恰逢叶聪担任新加坡华乐团音乐总监已足二十载。

回顾过往，叶聪感慨道：“从香港到新加坡，好似只是一瞬间的事，很庆幸这么多年来我依然坚守，砥砺前行。”

叶聪接棒后的新加坡华乐团，又有哪些翻天覆地的变化，他究竟在音乐道路上创下多少里程碑……

# 华乐 迈向 新里程





在乘坐从芝加哥飞往新加坡的航班上，叶聪随手拿起一本《国家地理》杂志翻阅着。杂志中关于马可波罗游记的文章深深吸引了他。那时正值2002年初。

文章描述了13世纪，威尼斯冒险家马可波罗护送蒙古公主从中国回到欧洲的海上之旅。这位美丽的公主是元朝皇帝忽必烈派去同波斯王和亲的，故事凄美动人，叶聪看得興味盎然。

当叶聪仔细看到篇章的配图时，他

惊讶地发现：马可波罗的船只途经了马六甲海峡和淡马锡地区，而淡马锡正是新加坡的旧称。

“找到了！”此时的叶聪兴奋至极，因为不久前他还正在为新加坡华乐团要在滨海艺术中心开幕的演出内容寻找素材而努力。一部巨作就这样在这位指挥家的脑海中开始酝酿。

滨海艺术中心，耗资6亿建成，拥有1,600个座位的音乐厅和2,000个座位的剧院。因为两座连接椭圆型屋顶，均以三角形金属遮阳罩覆盖，所以被称为“榴槤壳”。艺术中心计划于当年的10月正式开放。



纽约的克雷格·舒尔曼饰演马可波罗，中国女高音吴碧霞演美丽的公主。



《马可波罗与卜鲁罕公主》结尾时，台上绽放绚丽多彩的烟花。

葉聰自一月接任华乐团音乐总监一职后，滨海艺术中心总裁潘传顺就向他发出了演出邀请。这将是他首次带领乐团参演具有历史意义的重大演出，这对他来说意义非凡。

在飞机上看到的《国家地理》杂志让葉聰对那场演出已有初步的构思，他也从德国作曲家理查德·瓦格纳的《特里斯坦与伊索尔德》，一部关于恋人和禁忌之爱的三幕歌剧中，得到灵感。

马可波罗究竟有没有爱上了蒙古公主，我们无从得知。但葉聰相信，在海上漫长的航行中与公主朝夕相处，日久生

情，就很可能在大约1,000年前，他们的船只停靠在阳光明媚的东方“伊甸园”时，萌生了一段“水天相连，地久天长”的恋情……

葉聰回到新加坡后，他马不停蹄地请来了上海音乐学院的老朋友，中国作曲家刘湜，以及他的妻子王乙宴，共同为一部七乐章的大型幻想史诗创作词曲。随后，他找到纽约百老汇音乐剧的男高音克雷格·舒尔曼，由他饰演马可波罗，首次以华语演唱，美丽的公主则由中国著名女高音吴碧霞饰演。

葉聰还组建了一个多达200人的合



当时新加坡副总理李显龙（右四）是以主宾身份出席观看了2002年10月26日在滨海艺术中心的首场演出。

唱团，由新加坡青年合唱团指挥兼艺术总监谭秀英指导，这支阵容强大的合唱团囊括了中国国家交响乐团的合唱团、新加坡青年合唱团，以及由本地学生组成的大合唱团。

《马可波罗与卜鲁罕公主》就是葉聰几个月努力的成果，2002年10月26日至27日正式在新加坡滨海艺术中心公演，是新加坡华乐团演出的第一部富有梦幻色彩的大型交响幻想史诗。

开幕当晚，时任新加坡副总理兼新

加坡华乐团赞助人李显龙以主宾身份出席观看演出，音乐会结束后并上台向葉聰、刘涓及演唱家们亲切地祝贺。

这场演出有近300名表演者参与，其中包括华乐团的80名演奏家，创造了辉煌的历史记录，演出空前成功，被誉为无与伦比的音乐盛会，为葉聰的音乐人生划上了一道闪耀的光芒。

当年滨海艺术中心为期23天的开幕节上，有多少精彩之处令人难以忘怀。来自22个国家的1,300名艺术家，上演了

——葉聰

“那五年让我有了源源不断的灵感，将新加坡华乐团推向更高的境界，团员们的配合度也更加默契。目前，他们已经从人民协会华乐团，成长为一个世界级水平的国家乐团了。”

约 600 场音乐会。其他叹为观止的表演还包括纽约爱乐管弦乐团与郎朗的钢琴合奏，以及中国国家芭蕾舞团表演张艺谋的《大红灯笼高高挂》舞蹈等等。

新加坡华乐团在滨海艺术中心开幕节上的演出好评如潮，新加坡英文《海峡时报》评论乐团首次尝试中西融合，无疑“在传统曲目上开辟了新的天地”。

滨海艺术中心总裁潘传顺也称这类型的演出空前绝后，他在节目册里说道：

“新加坡华乐团以崭新的演出形式创作出了别具一格的作品。”

新加坡华乐团时任董事兼国家艺术理事会总裁朱添寿形容此次演出时说：

“它将华乐推向了另一个艺术高度！演出非常壮观，尤其是结尾时在台上绽放着绚丽多彩的烟花。”

葉聰回忆当年的情景时说这样的演出在全球华乐界是史无前例的。“即便我没有充分准备的时间，但我还是做到了，滨海艺术中心的开幕节是一个绝佳的契机，不仅让华乐团精彩亮相，同时也是新加坡华乐团向世界舞台展示的一次难得的机会。”他解释道。

为举办开幕节，滨海艺术中心总裁潘传顺给予了葉聰百分之百的信任，同意让他制作耗资 40 万元的大型音乐会。这使葉聰受宠若惊，毕竟那个时候他也才刚来新加坡不久，观众对他还很陌生。

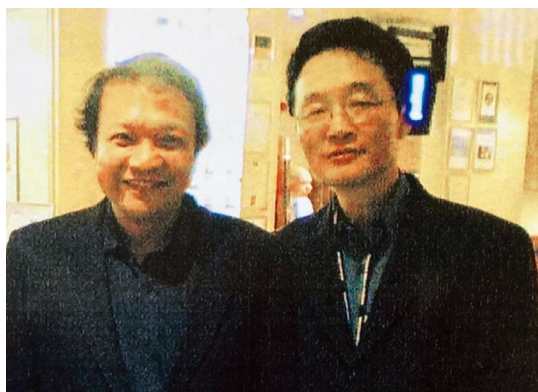
“我真的很感谢他，但我也冒了很大的风险，如果我失败了，就得收拾行李离开。”他继续感慨道：“值得庆幸的是，演出相当成功，在观众热烈的掌声中，我看到华乐团团员们都自豪地退下舞台。当时他们的脸上都充满着自信与喜悦，仿佛获得了重生一般！”

## 华乐团再创精彩！

新加坡华乐团应艺术理事会邀请参加2003年的新加坡艺术节时，叶聪大胆地提议了“书法协奏曲”的演绎形式，这是任何一支交响乐团或华乐团都从未尝试过的。为了实现这个提议，时任新加坡华乐团董事兼国家艺术理事会总裁的朱添寿，将新加坡著名的多媒体和多元艺术家陈瑞献介绍了给叶聪。陈瑞献是1987年新加坡文化奖得主。

两位艺术家的相遇，注定火花四溅，激烈的思想交流与碰撞后，最初的“书法协奏曲”提案，很快扩展为与陈瑞献的诗歌、寓言、艺术、雕塑和哲学的音乐对话。

这场别开生面的演出，给新加坡华



叶聪（右）与陈瑞献摄于2003年。



2005年，瞿小松的《神曲》在伦敦巴比肯艺术中心首演。

乐团带来许多第一次。华乐团第一次启用多媒体技术、200人组成的合唱团、两位朗诵者，还有与数码影像艺术家林国材和著名灯光设计师王志强为这场多媒体、多元化的音乐会合作演出。

四位作曲家——来自新加坡的罗伟伦和潘耀田、香港的罗永晖和中国的瞿小松，将他们的音乐创作配上艺术家的文字、诗词、寓言。音乐会上，一幅幅精美的绘画与艺术品跃然屏幕绘影绘声。透过视觉艺术，陈瑞献的艺术文学作品栩栩如生，伴随着动听的乐曲，惟妙惟





2007年，葉聰（右二）在上海指揮華樂團演出《壺口黃河》，新加坡榮譽國資政吳作棟與夫人（左四、五）也出席觀賞。

肖，精彩絕倫。整場演出以五部不同樂曲演出。

最終巨作《千年一瞬——與陳瑞獻的音樂對話》，在2003年5月，於濱海藝術中心，新加坡藝術節的開幕晚會上公演。

演出十分轟動，那是一場別出心裁、突破單一藝術呈獻形式的音樂會。音樂會讓視覺藝術和音樂的意識流完美融合，為觀眾呈獻了一場雙重觀感的音樂響宴。

陳瑞獻在接受新加坡《聯合早報》採訪時表示：“所有藝術都是相通的，藝術媒體間的跨越就像鄰居互訪一樣。”

對葉聰來說，這場大型音樂會是新加坡華樂團創下的另一個里程碑，讓他更加堅信華樂團必須與時俱進，多演奏傳統樂曲以外的創新作品。

20年已去，那場《千年一瞬》中的五首經典創作，始終是新加坡華樂團的經典曲目。

第一首樂曲是羅偉倫譜寫的《天網》。這首樂曲也伴隨新加坡華樂團走入國際舞台，2007年葉聰也將它收入在樂團中國巡演中的曲目之一。

最後一首《壺口黃河》由香港作曲

2004年7月30日，葉聰指揮的《全民共樂》  
國慶音樂會在新加坡室內體育館首次登場。





点击观赏  
《全民共乐》  
(2004)

家罗永晖谱曲，其中有一段精彩的书法表演，是陈瑞献在舞台上以草书书写他那首 110 字的词作《沁园春——壶口黄河》。葉聰也于 2005 年带领华乐团在伦敦巴比肯艺术中心的首次欧洲巡演演出这首曲目。

为欢庆新加坡建国 39 年，新加坡华乐团于 2004 年在新加坡室内体育馆举行了第一场《全民共乐》音乐盛会，这无

疑又是一场载入史册的里程碑！

《全民共乐》由潘耀田、何志光、杨培贤和沈文友等本地作曲家谱写，以爱国歌曲为主，在可容纳 8,000 名观众的国家室内体育馆举行。当天参与演出的表演者有新加坡华乐团团员，社区、大专院校，及全岛多个华乐团和合唱团等 2,400 多名，其规模史无前例！

当日，时任新加坡副总理兼新加



七乐章史诗剧《海上第一人——郑和》于 2005 年在滨海艺术中心公演。中国男低音刘月明饰演苏丹满速沙（左），女高音阮妙芬饰演汉丽宝公主。



2005年2月，作曲家莫凡根据中国戏剧大师曹禺1933年的话剧《雷雨》创作的同名歌剧在滨海艺术中心上演。

坡华乐团赞助人李显龙作为主宾出席盛会。

“这样的群众音乐会有助于走入群众，普及华乐，我们绝对有必要定期举办《全民共乐》。”葉聰受访时说道。

## 传统与流行乐的融合

为纪念郑和下西洋600周年，在2005年6月的新加坡艺术节上，华乐团集合了多方面的力量，邀请到国际知名歌唱家同台呈献的大型音乐史诗清唱剧《海上第一人——郑和》，再次成为新闻焦点。

这是一部七个乐章的史诗剧，乐曲叙述了十五世纪明代将领郑和率280艘船队七次出洋到访三十多个国家和地区的伟大壮举。这场清唱剧由罗伟伦作曲，他也是作词人之一，另一位是前新加坡电视剧编剧乐美勤。

中国男高音范竞马饰演男主角郑和，男低音刘月明饰演苏丹满速沙，香港出生的女高音阮妙芬饰演汉丽宝公主。参与演出的除了新加坡华乐团，还有维多利亚初级学院合唱团和中国交响乐团合唱团组成的百人合唱团、人民协会马来舞蹈团，及淡滨尼的一个华族舞蹈团。

在同年的2月初，葉聰与Toy肥



2006年2月，新加坡华乐团唢呐/管首席靳世义（左）在滨海艺术中心华艺术节上呈献《华乐，新感觉》音乐会。

料厂剧团的艺术总监吴文德合作推出了中国作曲家莫凡根据中国戏剧大师曹禺1933年话剧《雷雨》而创作的同名歌剧。《雷雨》是华艺术节的一部分，在滨海艺术中心音乐厅公演。

《雷雨》这部话剧在中国可说是家喻户晓。这部由话剧创作的歌剧，讲述的是封建社会时期，以女性细腻的情感，展现了为寻找自由和爱情，并挣扎于现状的故事。当年这部歌剧让新加坡观众充分感受到了艺术的魅力。

由杭州出生的作曲家莫凡作曲，这部歌剧是由来自中国、美国、马来西亚与

新加坡歌唱家共同演绎。演出还有来自上海歌剧院合唱团、新加坡国立大学合唱团和维多利亚合唱团等三个团体。

新加坡华乐团在艺术道路上屡创艺术高峰，证明音乐总监、指挥家葉聰在艺术上的卓越，华乐团的成就他功不可没！

在2006年2月举办的华艺术节上，华乐团又带来了另一场主题新颖的演出。《华乐，新感觉》，由新加坡华乐团唢呐/管首席靳世义以唢呐、口琴子、卡腔表演创作的《天黑黑》，一首改编自流行于台湾的闽南歌曲。

“这真的很出色，将传统与流行融合在一起了。” 葉聰说道。

正如葉聰所回忆的那样，前五年的工作是忙碌而富有创造力的。“那让我有了源源不断的灵感，将新加坡华乐团推向更高的境界，团员们的配合度也更加默契。目前，他们已经从人民协会华乐

团，成长为一个世界级水平的国家乐团了。” 他说道。

新加坡华乐团行政总监何偉山指出，在葉聰的努力下，华乐团在新加坡的一些艺术盛会都时常有演出的机会，其中包括始于1977年的新加坡国际艺术节。



2022年5月，葉聰率領華樂團和馬來西亞婆羅洲土著文化的砂勞越創意機構，在巴西班讓發電廠一起為新加坡國際藝術節呈獻開幕演出。

新加坡华乐团每年都会参加这项国际艺术节的演出。最近的一次表演，是2022年5月在巴西班让发电厂。华乐团与马来西亚一间专注于婆罗洲土著文化遗产的砂劳越创意机构合作 MEPAAN 音乐会。这场演出通过乐团独特的艺术演绎方式，重现早期原住民的生活画卷，高度还原其历史文化，令人叹为观止。

这场时长 90 分钟的音乐会由埃里克·沃森、华乐团驻团作曲家王辰威和青年作曲家高程锦联合作曲。

新加坡华乐团自 2003 年首次亮相华艺节以来，一直是滨海艺术中心的常客。当年华乐团以《华族民间音乐精品集锦》演出中国最优秀的音乐作品，受到广大音乐爱好者的赞誉。

2022 年恰逢滨海艺术中心 20 周年庆，再次邀请葉聰合作为周年庆献上特别音乐会《破晓》。

葉聰为音乐会提出了全新的艺术构思。由罗伟伦和马来西亚作曲家钟啟榮分三个乐章创作乐曲，以多媒体、多感官的声、乐、光，演绎三个中国神话人物：开天辟地的盘古、炼石补天的女娲，及华夏民族的始祖黄帝。

这场音乐会《破晓》于 2022 年 10



由葉聰策划、融合灯光舞美效果的《破晓》，于 2022 年 10 月 21 日在滨海艺术中心公演。

月 21 日，在华乐团副指挥倪恩辉的指挥下，在滨海艺术中心音乐厅演出。

葉聰说：“这场音乐会对我来说很特别，因为 20 年前，我被邀请为滨海艺术中心的开幕呈献演出，20 年后我又有这个机会回来一起欢庆这个里程碑。”

让我们一起在下一章回顾葉聰如何带领新加坡华乐团，迈向“人民的乐团”！



# 人民乐团的诞生





试问：一位受过西洋古典音乐熏陶、长期游走于西方交响乐团的音乐家，能否胜任为新加坡华乐团音乐总监兼指挥？

这也是许多出席新加坡华乐团于2002年1月25日音乐会的观众所想知道的。当晚乐团新上任的音乐总监叶聪登上指挥台，开始属于他的首场音乐会《叶聪》。

叶聪在上任三个星期内，就紧锣密鼓地准备在华乐团音乐厅举行的音乐

会，以非传统曲目的当代作品来彰显新加坡华乐团未来发展的新方向。

叶聪以中国作曲家杨青改编的一首欢快热闹的吹打乐曲《淘金令》拉开了音乐会的序幕。接下来还呈献了中国当代作曲家谭盾、陈其钢、郭文景、何训田等人的作品。

为了让观众对曲目更好了解，叶聪在每首乐曲演奏前，都会与观众深入浅出地用英语和华语进行了言简意赅的阐释，让观众了解作曲家的音乐创作的解释，拉近曲子和观众的距离。

当天的演出效果非同凡响，与观众的互动产生共鸣。演出的曲目包括新派作品《蚂蚁人》，一首描写现代城市生活的诗，配上香港作曲家陈明志的音乐，是新加坡诗人潘正镛的作品。当乐团和朗诵融和的演绎时，叶聪以他的独特魅力深深俘获了观众们的心。

这一刻足以让那些对这位新音乐总监抱有怀疑态度的观众彻底放下疑虑。他的表现，给新加坡华乐界及出席音乐会的贵宾们都留下了深刻的印象。其实，叶聪早年在中国的时候，从小就受到了华乐的启蒙和熏陶，并在90年代香港工作时也与华乐有所接触。



2002年1月25日，葉聰首次以音樂總監身份指揮新加坡華樂團。

当晚，首次出席新加坡华乐团音乐会的主宾，纳丹总统更是惊叹不已，演出结束后，他特别上台祝贺葉聰。

葉聰在接受本书采访时透露，纳丹总统推荐他担任新加坡交响乐团的客卿指挥。这一提议很快被当时在场的交响乐团主席詹道存所接受。他说：“后来，我受邀到交响乐团客卿指挥了一场莫扎

特音乐会，使我游走东西方音乐，让我感到很满意。”

已经退休的《新明日报》总编辑，诗人潘正镭，在接受采访时大力称赞葉聰，说道：“显而易见，那场音乐会非常成功，邀请香港作曲家将我的诗结合起来进行创作谱写，这样的音乐创意是一个相当大胆的尝试，由此可见华乐是具





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《华乐·黄梅齐争辉》  
(2007)

观众，连连叫好，当晚座无虚席。

后来，为乐团融入新势力的表演艺术形式如雨后春笋般接踵而至。于是，更多类似的音乐会，包括越剧、潮剧、粤剧、黄梅和昆曲等或悠远婉转，或激昂澎湃的戏曲表演形式纷纷涌现，每场都很卖座。

接着，2013年一场盛况空前的音乐会更加稳固以戏曲演出为音乐会的形

式，在《京剧精萃 I & II》的音乐会中，让观众们欣赏到了由华乐团与中国顶级京剧表演艺术家花脸演员孟广禄联合演出的京剧音乐会，也目睹了来自天津的新加坡京剧演员田平的精湛演绎。

田平受访时提到：“京剧音乐会不仅吸引到了更多的戏迷来到音乐厅欣赏戏曲，与此同时也有助于推广京剧艺术，这样的创意策划绝对是双赢的。”



2012年6月，叶聪指挥《粤韵风华》音乐会，由黎骏声（左）和倪惠英演唱。

## 东西方音乐的巧妙融合

葉聰对于乐团曲目风格的演出不仅限于华乐，他还将东西方音乐巧妙融合，带来不一般的视听盛宴。2003年1月举办的《扬琴世界游》，正是这样一场东西方音乐碰撞交融、火花四溅的音乐会。当时他邀请了两位东欧独奏家：维多利亚·赫伦萨和凯瑟琳·安诺欣娜，一同与华乐团演奏匈牙利和西班牙风情的音乐代表作品，如俄罗斯作曲家亚历

山大·鲍罗丁的《波罗维茨舞曲》。

同年9月，华乐团也呈献了一场特别结合中西方的音乐会，包括《波罗维茨舞曲》，和美国作曲家伦纳德·伯恩斯坦的作品《梦断西城》。

此后，华乐团也开始融入爵士乐。2007年8月，葉聰与传奇爵士钢琴家戴夫·布鲁贝克的儿子克里斯·布鲁贝克领导的美国爵士三重奏合作了《绝对爵士乐》音乐会。至此，新加坡华乐团又多了一道华彩的表现形式。



爵士乐钢琴家杰雷米·蒙泰罗与葉聰指挥的华乐团于2010年8月的一场音乐会。



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《声东击西》  
(2019)



葉聰与苏格兰打击乐手依芙琳·葛兰妮于2015年在新加坡华乐团音乐厅的音乐会。

葉聰发现爵士乐与华乐团的融合非常巧妙。大约从2010年起，他邀请新加坡顶级爵士钢琴家兼作曲家杰雷米·蒙泰罗和他的固定鼓手吴永森与华乐团合作演出。

从爵士乐开始，葉聰邀请凯尔特小提琴家克里斯托弗·斯多特在2008年合作了《苏格兰风情——凯尔特之魂》音乐会。斯多特于2012年再次来到新加坡，与俄罗斯小提琴家亚历山大·苏布特和中国二胡演奏家王晓南一起在滨海艺术中心举办的《弦炫中西》音乐会上演出。

随后，美国蓝调歌手金伯利·琼斯和

劳伦斯·米切尔·马修斯，以及钢琴家莱昂·贝茨在2013年7月的《格什文之夜》音乐会上与华乐团合作演出。

其他东西方跨界表演也包括著名苏格兰打击乐手依芙琳·葛兰妮分别在2012年、2015年，以及2019年与华乐团合作。另外还有古巴籍吉他手曼努埃尔·巴鲁埃科与中国阮演奏家刘星于2009年7月一起为音乐会《弹拨汇中西》演出。当吉他遇到中阮时，这又是一场别开生面的艺术享受！

另一位名气极盛的独奏家是格莱美



2011年，实力派歌手陈洁仪在葉聰指挥的华乐团伴奏下，于滨海艺术中心的华艺术节上高歌。

奖得主小提琴家约夏·贝尔，他于2016年在滨海艺术中心与新加坡华乐团一同呈献20周年庆典音乐会。两年后，他再度携手华乐团在同个地方共同呈献经典小提琴协奏曲《梁祝》。

华乐团的许多跨界演出由三位居住新加坡的作曲家罗伟伦、埃里克·沃森及潘耀田改编或移植，他们都曾经是新加坡华乐团的驻团作曲家。

葉聰认为选择合适的作品演奏极为重要，因为它们需要与华乐乐器有很好的配合与协调。他指出说：“并非所有

西方作品都适合，比如，让华乐团演奏贝多芬的交响曲还不是时候。”

葉聰于2009年时邀请了尺八大师山本邦山和山本真山一起合作呈献了《东瀛雅乐》音乐会，并于2016年举办了《乐袭韩风》的韩流音乐会。

作为2011年华艺术节的一部分，新加坡华乐团在滨海艺术中心为新加坡流行歌手陈洁仪举办了《陈洁仪——我的音乐之旅》音乐会，以及2017年底，在滨海艺术中心举办的另一场《新谣之夜》，唤起了一代人的记忆。



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《乐袭韩风》  
(2016)



在葉聰的领导下，为了吸引更多观众，现任驻团指挥郭勇德于2004年开始举办《母亲节音乐会》，并于每年5月举办一次。由郭勇德执棒，音乐会主要由来自海内外的华语和粤语流行歌手演唱。

新加坡华乐团的春节音乐会《春花齐放》，是2008年开始由新传媒电台广播员主持的一年一度音乐盛会，他们包括著名新加坡歌手及艺人陈建彬和李国煌。随着观众越来越多，音乐会有时还需在波那维斯达的星宇表演艺术中心举行。

另外，华乐团自90年代中期创团以

来，已开始在公园、社区以及学校等场所，均有举行音乐会，较大型的都会在新加坡植物园和滨海湾花园演出。这样的免费音乐会，通常是与社区民众组织一起合作，由华乐团30至40名演奏家演出。2002年自葉聰上任后，这项活动已扩展到医院和大专院校。

“社区民众很重要，作为人民的乐团，我们必须走入社区，而不是等待民众步入音乐厅。”葉聰说。

葉聰非常重视这些社区音乐会，在新冠疫情来袭之前，新加坡华乐团每年



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《新谣之夜》  
(2017)



新谣歌手洪劭轩（左）与潘盈在葉聰的指挥下参加了华乐团2017年的《新谣之夜》演出。

1月14日葉聰(右)于乐团音乐厅指挥新加坡华乐团  
呈献《春花齐放 2022 虎气冲天迎新春》音乐会，  
表演者包括笛子演奏家李浚诚(左)。





都能举办 100 到 120 个包括音乐会的演出项目，其中有七成是走进社区的。

## 南洋风韵的源起

新加坡华乐团作为人民的乐团，凭借其广泛和多样化的演出，所面对的观众群已经覆盖了大部分领域。但对于叶聪来说，这显然不足。

他坚信，一个人民的乐团不仅要演奏人民喜欢听的音乐，还要制作反映新加坡与邻国的风土民情和富有南洋风格的音乐。

叶聪 2002 年初到新加坡时，他便开始寻找有关新加坡人民生活和历史的作品，但新加坡华乐团资料室里的相关作品有限。其中有新加坡作曲家梁荣平的早期作品和流行的马来和印度曲调，也包括由前华乐团音乐家沈文友改编的作品，如《丹絨加东》、马来民谣《陈玛丽陈》和《苏里兰》。

最有代表性的委约曲目之一是《鱼尾狮传奇》。这首曲目是 1999 年时任指挥胡炳旭委托中国作曲家刘锡津创作的高胡协奏曲。这部极富本土色彩的乐曲

——叶聪

“对我来说，新加坡是东西方完美的交汇点，我们要做的就是与众不同，新加坡华乐团一定要成为一支全新的华乐团。”

于当年的 11 月在维多利亚音乐厅举行首演，以迎接千禧年的到来。

叶聪最先委托创作有关本土作品的作曲家是出生于上海的罗伟伦。罗伟伦在 2017 年获颁新加坡文化奖。2004 年 3 月在滨海艺术中心举行《南洋音乐之旅》音乐会上，他为华乐团创作的交响诗《王子与狮子》首次公演。音乐会内容呈献了马来、印度的音乐及舞蹈等。另一位新加坡作曲家潘耀田，在 2005 年也为华乐团创作了具有南洋风的乐曲《西岸甘榜》。潘耀田是 1996 年的文化奖得主。



2011年8月，在华乐团音乐厅举行的《丰收十五》邀请了中国四人八大锤打击乐团来新演出，左一为王建华。

这标志着葉聰开始涉足本土音乐，后来被称为南洋曲风。他希望所有新加坡人都能认同和享受属于新加坡与东南亚地区的音乐风格。

为扩充本土曲目，他于2006年发起了首届新加坡国际华乐作曲大赛，以激发具有南洋风格及反映东南亚地区的音乐作品涌现。

首届比赛的获胜者是居住在新加坡的英国作曲家埃里克·沃森，他的作品《挂毯：时光飞舞》描绘了新加坡与邻国的多民族、多语言和多文化社会面貌。

另外两届比赛分别在2011年和2015年举行，同样吸引了来自马来西亚、香港、中国大陆、台湾和美国的众多作品参赛。

新加坡华乐团赞助人李显龙总理，恰逢2011年第二届比赛之际，为华乐团捐赠75万元，以鼓励创作南洋风格的音乐。从2006年开始，历经16年共主办了三届的新加坡国际华乐作曲大赛，新加坡华乐团现拥有丰富的获奖作品多达70部，这些作品也经常在新加坡和海外演出。

李显龙总理献给华乐团的这份特别礼物，也正值新加坡华乐团成立15周年。为庆祝周年纪念，华乐团与来自中国的八大捶打击乐团在新加坡华乐团音乐厅于同年8月举办了一场盛大的音乐会《丰收十五》，八大捶打击乐团中的成员包括了前新加坡华乐团打击乐手王建华的表演。



李显龙总理在 2014 年的国庆群众大会演讲中，首次赞扬华乐团的南洋曲风。

李总理在 2014 年国庆群众大会上以华语的演说中，首次称赞华乐团经常呈现富有南洋风韵曲风的音乐作品，并提到在体育城举行了一场意义非凡的音乐会，打破了两项最多表演者的吉尼斯世界纪录。

在 2022 年 8 月的国庆群众大会上，李总理再次以华语表扬华乐团，指出南洋主题曲风的作品，包括来自不同种族和文化的元素，有助于加强新加坡人的身份认同感，及国人的自信心。在大会上他也播放了由王辰威创作，华乐团的第

一首线上乐曲《融》的短片，该曲以华族乐器演奏印度、马来和西方音乐，描述一个多民族、多文化社会向往和谐共处的生活憧憬。

葉聰当晚在家里观看总理的国庆群众大会现场直播时，深深体会到总理的心意。他说：“也许我们现在要做的就是尽快恢复乐团的新加坡国际华乐作曲大赛，收获更多多元化的作品。”

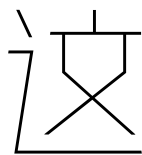
一个国家级乐团的指挥如何成为新加坡乐坛坚挺屹立的标杆？让我们在下一章进一步了解这位指挥家的音乐里程。

# 致敬 向音乐家



## CULTURAL MEDALLION & YOUNG ARTIST AWARD 2013





是2013年10月22日在新加坡总统府颁发新加坡文化奖时，给予叶聪300字赞词中的开篇。随后，他从时任总统陈庆炎博士手中接过奖章，获颁这份荣耀。

新加坡文化奖是新加坡文化界最高荣誉的艺术奖项。这标志着此时的叶聪，正值他新加坡音乐生涯中的顶峰时刻。荣获这份奖项，充分肯定了他为新加坡华乐团和新加坡音乐发展所做的杰出贡献。

此奖项可说是新加坡每一位从事视觉、表演、文学和电影等艺术领域工作者所梦寐以求的。当天与叶聪一起获颁奖项的是马来文作家拉迪夫·莫哈末和英语戏剧家王爱仁。拉迪夫·莫哈末于2022年10月在澳洲墨尔本家中不幸逝世，享年72岁。

自1979年设立以来，仅有29名音乐家获此殊荣。其中包括新加坡交响乐团创团音乐总监朱晖和第二任音乐总监水蓝；新加坡华乐先驱郑朝吉博士和阎惠昌；四位知名作曲家潘耀田、罗伟伦、埃里克·沃森和李迪文，以及爵士钢琴家杰雷米·蒙泰罗等。

直至2021年，共130名艺术工作者获颁新加坡文化奖，其中包括画家、编舞

“叶聪以领导新加坡华乐团的卓越表现而闻名，在乐团发展成为世界级的华乐团的过程中，他功不可没。”

自2002年担任新加坡华乐团音乐总监以来，叶聪在音乐方面不断尝试与突破，展现了他对艺术的远见。为发展南洋风格的音乐作品，他鼓励创作，精益求精，发扬传承。”



者、歌唱家、乐团指挥、舞蹈家、摄影师、电影制作人和作家。

葉聰在获奖后对媒体表示，这项殊荣将鼓励他继续前进，带领新加坡华乐团走向更广阔的国际舞台，以及在坚守新加坡华乐团为人民的乐团的同时，不断继续创新。

葉聰在受访时说道：“非常感激大家给予的信任和支持，让我有机会为本地的音乐领域做出贡献，鼓励我继续乘风破浪，不断创新。”

从获颁文化奖至2022年已有九年了，但他还没有用到随奖项所带来的8万元奖金。这笔钱是要帮助得奖者日后在



2013年10月22日，葉聰夫妇（左）在总统府荣获文化奖章后向陈庆炎总统致谢。

“获得新加坡文化大奖将鼓励我继续努力，带领新加坡华乐团走向更广阔的国际舞台，以及在坚守新加坡华乐团为人民的乐团的同时，不断继续创新。”

——葉聰



2007年8月9日国庆检阅典礼，浮动舞台上的240人大乐队由葉聰担任总指挥。

追求艺术上的所需。提到这笔奖金时他说：“我应该会将它投入一项指挥教学的研究项目，对象是年轻的音乐家们。”

让葉聰首次受到新加坡民众瞩目的，是于2007年8月9日的国庆庆典，他被委任为当年国庆庆典的音乐总监兼总指挥。当年的庆典首次在滨海湾浮动舞台举行，其舞台由一个120×83米的钢制浮台和沿岸有27,000个座位的看台

组成，于同年5月份竣工才三个月。

在葉聰的职棒下，当天的庆典由新加坡华乐团、新加坡交响乐团、新加坡武装部队军乐队、马来和印度乐队，以及在当时已有56年历史演奏传统南音的湘灵音乐社组成，共有240人，盛况空前。

潘耀田、埃里克·沃森及罗伟伦等三位作曲家在庆典上以歌曲、舞蹈等音乐为主的表演作曲和乐曲改编。

潘耀田为部队的检阅礼仪式和战斗机飞行表演创作音乐。埃里克·沃森和罗伟伦则为各个艺术团体的表演创作音乐。音乐以“绿洲”、“花园城市”、“寰宇”、“国民”四个部分，将传统、古典及现代的音乐元素融入其中，为这场特别的庆典音乐会注入了磅礴的生命力。

“这是新加坡两个国家级乐团第一次在国庆盛典中，与代表新加坡多民族文化的多个乐团一起演奏。”叶聪在采访中自豪地回忆道。

埃里克·沃森回忆说，这场庆典的规模宏大且前所未有；罗伟伦也对当年国庆庆典将音乐水平提升到了一个新高度给予肯定。

叶聪说他为能担任盛典的指挥感到荣幸至极，遗憾的是，如此恢宏盛大，又集合了华乐团与交响乐团与全民举国欢庆的大规模庆典，至此都没有再举办过。

最后一次在滨海湾浮动舞台举行国庆庆典是2022年，在那之后舞台被关闭重建。经过大改造的浮动舞台，将重新发展为“卫国广场”，待竣工后将设有以国民服役为主题的展览馆、社区体育设施等多功能户外公共场所，也能举办赛龙舟等水上活动。

## 创造两项世界纪录

叶聪于2014年6月28日登上了崭新的国家体育场大舞台，带领华乐团呈献新加坡历来最大型华乐演出《全民共乐2014》大型群众音乐会，再次受到全国的关注。新国家体育场向公众开放才一个月左右，是刚落成的新加坡体育城的一部分，可容纳55,000人，耗资十多亿打造。

当晚的《全民共乐2014》是新加坡华乐团第二次举办如此大规模的演出，有近5,000名表演者参演，在约30,000名观众的见证下，创下两项新的吉尼斯世界纪录，成为当时热议的头条新闻。

新加坡华乐团集合了4,557名打击乐鼓手，挑战“最大中国鼓乐齐奏”吉尼斯世界纪录，并成功打破2003年香港中乐团以3,000名鼓手在尖沙咀举办的香港鼓乐节所创下的记录。

此外，新加坡华乐团联合其他华乐团又组成了3,345名表演者的庞大乐团，也缔造了新加坡纪录的“最大型华乐演出”新纪录。这个大型乐团包括来自新加坡各宗乡社团、社区俱乐部、学校，以及来自马来西亚等总共127个表演团体，其中也有专业音乐家和业余爱好者们。

《全民共乐》音乐会不乏亮点。音乐会上，演奏家们连同合唱指挥家桂乃舜指挥的1,200人合唱团，演奏电影主题曲和已故台湾歌手邓丽君的金曲。时任新加坡华乐团指挥助理倪恩辉带领一支1,000名演奏家组成的二胡乐队，演奏经典曲目《赛马》，曲声气贯长虹之势犹如万马奔腾，尘烟滚滚而来。

另外，著名武术指导翁清海在《男儿当自强》音乐的伴奏下还为观众呈献了一场精彩的中华武术。

本地知名作曲家、歌手李迪文压轴登场，带领现场观众齐声高唱他1998年创作的国庆主题曲《家》，把音乐会现场欢腾的气氛推向高潮。

新加坡总理李显龙与夫人何晶当晚也一同出席了演出。这场破纪录的群众活动，李总理称赞这是“一场为所有新加坡人呈献的感官盛宴”。

新加坡荣誉国务资政吴作栋伉俪出席当晚的盛典，他评价“这场音乐会的规模相当于国庆庆典的氛围。吴作栋夫



新加坡华乐团于2014年在国家体育馆《全民共乐》大型群众音乐会中打破了两项吉尼斯世界纪录。



作曲家李迪文在当晚的群众音乐会结束前，带领全场合唱他创作的国庆主题曲《家》。

人陈子玲女士也是前华乐团董事成员，至今还积极为乐团筹款。

对于葉聰而言，这场演出并非为了实现任何艺术表演上的突破，而是为了推广华乐和帮助新加坡华乐团创下两项吉尼斯世界纪录，获得世界的瞩目。

葉聰回忆在 5,000 名的参演者中，学生团体的表现尤为深刻。他说：“学生们的纪律良好，在排练中，我可以在几分钟的准备时间后就开始。这是在美国，甚

至中国的孩子们都很难做到的。这要归功于参与活动的老师和组织者们。”

在举办《全民共乐 2014》的一个月前，葉聰带领新加坡华乐团到南京、苏州和上海三地巡回演出。这是他第二次携手乐团前往中国巡演。第一次是于 2007 年在北京、上海、广州、中山、深圳和澳门的演出。

葉聰表示，2014 年那次跨越三个城市和为期八天的中国巡演是颇为特别的，华乐团并未演奏那些耳熟能详的中国传统乐曲，而是将具有新加坡特色的南洋风格音乐呈献给中国观众。

新加坡爵士钢琴家和作曲家杰雷米·蒙泰罗盛情演绎了由新加坡作曲家董叶明作曲的《集锦：爵士钢琴与华乐团的三个乐章》，让中国观众第一次听到了爵士乐与华乐的交融，耳目一新的音乐旋律也让观众感受到中西音乐合璧的魅力。

“我看到观众随着旋律摇摆，沉浸在悠扬动听的音乐声中。演出结束后他们也告诉我说很高兴有机会欣赏到这些别具一格的乐曲。”葉聰回忆道。

次年 10 月，葉聰带领华乐团赴香港举行了两场音乐会。一场是在香港荃湾大会堂呈献阮玲玉经典默片《神女》音



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阮玲玉《神女》  
默片音乐会  
(新加坡, 2014)

2015年10月，华乐团在香港荃湾大会堂配合阮玲玉主演的黑白默片《神女》剧情，现场演奏。

音乐会，由罗伟伦全新作曲的音乐配合默片。另一场是在香港文化中心音乐厅，主要演奏新加坡作曲家的音乐作品。

2015年11月，葉聰应中国大使馆之邀带领新加坡华乐团与多名小学生，为新加坡中国文化中心揭牌仪式演出。当天，中国国家主席习近平和新加坡荣誉

国务资政吴作栋共同出席揭牌仪式。

同年12月，为庆祝新加坡和马来西亚建交50周年，葉聰带领新加坡华乐团参加了新加坡文化、社区及青年部于吉隆坡举行的“文化之桥”新加坡文化交流季，与多名新加坡艺人在双峰塔国油演奏厅呈献一场丰富多彩的音乐飨宴。



(左图) 2015年11月, 葉聰带领华乐团团员与八名小学生在中国文化中心揭牌仪式上演出。  
(右图) 当天的贵宾是中国国家主席习近平和新加坡荣誉国务资政吴作栋。

## 欢庆华乐团 20 周年

2016年恰逢新加坡华乐团成立20周年, 在葉聰的职棒下, 华乐团呈献了一系列多姿多彩的大型音乐会。华乐团还



在葉聰的带领下, 新加坡华乐团于2015年12月首次在吉隆坡的双峰塔下的国油管弦乐厅演出, 庆祝新加坡与马来西亚建交50周年。

举办了《华乐情深二十载》多媒体大展和出版了一本讲述乐团史的纪念书刊。这也标志着葉聰与华乐团同心协力, 一同走过了15年。

新加坡华乐团20周年庆典音乐会于2016年4月9日开始首场演出, 葉聰与国际巨星格莱美奖得主、世界顶级小提琴家约夏·贝尔在滨海艺术中心合作演绎维瓦尔第的小提琴协奏曲《四季》。当晚音乐会现场座无虚席, 音乐厅内飘荡着悠扬的琴声, 传递出四季更迭之景, 旖旎而行, 让人流连忘返。

华乐团接着在同年7月举办音乐会《大师荟》, 聚首三位声名显赫的指挥大师——新加坡华乐团音乐总监葉聰、华乐团创团音乐总监胡炳旭和新加坡交响



2016年7月《大师荟》演出结束后，指挥朱晖（中）拥抱胡炳旭，叶聪则在一旁欢呼喝采。

乐团创团音乐总监朱晖。三位大师轮番登场指挥以中国和本土作品为主的音乐会，包括冯迪伦的琵琶协奏曲《狮舞弄清韵》，刘文金的二胡协奏曲《长城随想》，以及罗伟伦的《海上第一人——郑和》之《海路》及《海誓》。

接受采访时，叶聪对于这场史无前例的音乐会诚挚表示：“常言道‘饮水思源’，我之所以邀请了现居雅典的朱晖和来自北京的胡炳旭，是因为想要感谢他们早年对新加坡华乐团所做出的贡献，也是向先驱者致敬。”

朱晖是新加坡华乐团第一届董事会成员和顾问，而胡炳旭是华乐团的第一任音乐总监兼首席指挥。

同年11月，华乐团与《联合早报》合作在音乐厅举行首场跨国线上直播音乐会《秦琴乐吕》。通过高清画面呈献的线上音乐会，让国外的观众也能一睹演奏家高超的琴艺。中国的观众在购买电子票后可实时观看这场线上音乐会，保存门票代码登入，还能在接下来的两周内随时观看重播画面。

叶聪指出，事实证明，这一场推陈



出新的音乐会对华乐团来说是一场具有借鉴意义的音乐会。2020年因席卷而来的冠病疫情导致华乐团不得不取消现场音乐会，乐团和演奏家都需通过线上方式与观众交流。”

为配合周年庆典，新加坡华乐团于2016年11月至12月在新加坡大会堂举办《华乐情深二十载》大型展览会，通过

重要里程碑展示华乐团在这20年来的转变。

该展览以图文并茂的方式讲述乐团历史，也在荧幕上播放乐团先驱及各界知名人士的访谈录像，他们追溯新加坡华乐团自1996年成立以来的，从一支人民协会乐团发展成至今的国家乐团的历程。录像中受访的贤英包括新加坡外交部巡回大使



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《秦琴乐吕》  
(2016)



2016年11月在新加坡华乐团音乐厅演出的《奏琴乐吕》，是世界第一场以高清画面呈献的华乐团网上直播音乐会。



2016年11月至12月，华乐团在新加坡大会堂举办了《华乐情深二十载》大型展览会。

许通美教授和滨海艺术中心总裁潘传顺。

展览期间，巨型乐器和珍品乐器开放给公众参观，其中引人注目的乐器包括4米高的巨型二胡，4米高的阮和4米宽的蝶式箏。巨型乐器与珍品乐器展由来自上海民族乐器一厂承办。

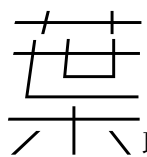
除此之外，华乐团分别以中英文出版了《人民的乐团——新加坡华乐团

1996-2016》。这本书记录了华乐团的历史，从华乐的崛起到未来的展望，为华乐团的音乐历程谱写下一个个美妙的符号，一篇篇动人的乐章。

下一章，将继续追随葉聰的脚步，在他结束了15年不停来回穿梭于美国和新加坡两地的工作和生活后，安居在新加坡的故事。

# 新居所 新开始





叶聪在担任新加坡华乐团音乐总监的前15年里，总感觉自己像一个乒乓球，来来回回不间断地往两处飞来飞去。

这是因为从2002年直至2016年，他同时兼任美国印第安纳州南湾交响乐团的音乐总监兼指挥。

同时跨越两个大洲指挥两支乐团，意味着他需要频繁地飞行于两地。因印第安纳州和新加坡相距15,257公里，叶聪每次飞行行程需超过24个小时。

叶聪在2017年曾向媒体讲述，他通

常在星期六晚上结束新加坡华乐团的音乐会后，第二天一早就得飞往美国，抵达后匆忙赶往南湾交响乐团排练星期六将要演出的音乐会。星期天早上又从美国返回新加坡，抵达樟宜机场时都已经是星期一的晚上了。隔天一早，又开始马不停歇地排练华乐团周末的音乐会。

15年来，叶聪都为此疲于奔命往返两地，给他的家庭生活带来诸多不便。2016年，叶聪最终决定卸任南湾交响乐团音乐总监兼指挥的工作，专注于新加坡华乐团的职务。他领导南湾交响乐团长达28年之久。

2022年，在接受本书采访时，72岁的叶聪说：“这些年来不停歇地乘机往返两地，已经让我感到有些身心疲惫，未来我只希望多花一点时间陪我的太太。”

叶聪2016年6月离开南湾交响乐团后，于2017年1月移居新加坡。妻子黄秀兰不久后也从美国迁居新加坡与叶聪在一起。

然而，离开南湾交响乐团对叶聪来说是充满不舍和伤感的。告别之际，南湾交响乐团于2016年5月7日在南湾市的莫里斯表演艺术中心举办了一场盛大的告别音乐会。当晚的出席者包括叶太太、朋友、乐迷、社区领袖和政府官员，共约有1,700人。那也是叶聪最后一次作为南湾交响乐



葉聰、太太和三个孩子在美国芝加哥的家中。他们都出席了2016年6月17日在南湾举行的欢送晚宴。

团音乐总监登台指挥演出。当晚的音乐会，交响乐团演绎了著名作曲家卡尔·奥尔夫的合唱管弦乐经典曲目《布兰诗歌》，乐团与演唱交相辉映，荡漾在艺术大厅中，余音绕梁久久不散。

演出结束后，时任南湾市市长的皮特·布蒂吉格宣布5月7日为“Tsung Yeh Day”（葉聰日），以纪念他的卓越贡献。此外，乐团更授予他“桂冠指挥

家”的称号。皮特·布蒂吉是一位音乐爱好者和业余钢琴家，他于2021年出任拜登政府的美国交通部长。

随着霞光落下，便迎来了6月17日的欢送晚宴，当晚包括葉太太及三名儿女在内，共有350人出席了这场隆重且难忘的晚宴。

晚宴上，葉聰荣获印第安纳州最高平民奖“The Sagamore of the Wabash Award”，以表彰他对当地音乐界的贡献，该奖项上有印第安纳州州长迈克·彭斯的签名，由州政府官员颁发给葉聰。彭斯后来作为特朗普的竞选搭档，与特朗普在2016年的美国总统选举中获胜，于2017年至2021年担任美国第48任副总统。

当地报纸《南本德论坛报》发表一篇报道，向这位音乐家致敬，报道评论说：“葉聰在南湾交响乐团担任音乐总监近30年，在这期间不仅为乐团招募了许多优秀的演奏家，日益扩大观赏音乐会的观众群，也协助乐团筹得更多资金。他同时积极推广20世纪美国音乐作品成为乐团主要演奏曲目的一部分，也使年轻一代接触并了解古典音乐，领略到乐团的风采。”

那场告别音乐会至今都让葉聰难以忘怀，他回忆说：“当晚观众的支持和举动令我非常动容。有许多乐迷身穿黄色或绿色的衣服，表达对我们离别的不舍之情。我的妻子姓黄，而我姓葉，绿色则是树叶的颜色。当晚艺术中心随处可见的装饰丝带都以黄色和绿色为主，他们的用心准备和送别之情将一直留存在我心底。”

## 从独立洋房到高层公寓

葉聰与太太于2017年1月正式搬进了位于丹戎巴葛一座40层高的两房式公寓，住在30楼能俯瞰城市美景。在此之前，葉聰每次来新加坡都旅居在附近安国酒店的客房。

移居新加坡后，葉聰与太太决定出售在印第安纳州南湾郊区的一栋三层楼独立洋房。他们在那里居住了20年，抚养三个孩子成长。

如今，他们的大女儿萌娜与丈夫已育有一子，一家三口与弟弟久文仍住在美国。小女儿灵娜于2022年8月嫁给一位德国数学家后，目前在欧洲工作。

从独立洋房搬到小型高层公寓的这



2016年5月7日，南湾市市长皮特·布蒂吉格（右）宣布定5月7日为“葉聰日”。

个过程，对葉聰和太太来说无疑是一项挑战，但他们已渐渐适应，开始享受风景如画的城市景色。两人一起俯瞰车水马龙的新加坡市中心和繁华热闹的摩天大楼，闲暇之余在高楼的空中花园享受二人宁静浪漫的生活。

葉聰之所以将租房地地址选择在丹戎巴葛的公寓，不仅因为这里正处市中心，就餐和购物都十分便利。最令他满意的是，步行10分钟就能到达新加坡华乐团音乐厅的办公室。“我不开车，况且有的时候常常会工作至深夜，下班后只用步行回家，对我来说非常方便还能节省时间。”

对葉聰来说，搬来新加坡之后，能腾出更多的时间陪伴太太，同她共度美



葉聰在公寓附近的餐馆和商店。

好的时光，愿琴瑟在御，岁月静好。之前居住在美国时，因为忙碌于工作和拉拔孩子长大，他们甚少有这样独处的日子。

秀兰常常感慨：“他一直都忙于工作，即使回到美国，也会先处理乐团的事宜或准备音乐会的演出。”

葉聰也有些遗憾地说道：“以前每年只有约10天时间能够陪伴太太和三个孩子。这么多年过去了，每当想起一些有特别意义的节日，例如结婚周年纪念日、

“这些年来不停歇地乘机往返两地，已经让我感到有些身心疲惫，未来我只希望多花一点时间陪我的太太。”



葉聰夫妇在丹戎巴葛高层公寓天空花园享受市中心景观。

孩子的生日，又或者是他们的毕业典礼，我都无法参加，为此真心感到很遗憾。”

秀兰由衷了解葉聰为了工作理想所作出的牺牲，一直包容理解并默默支持他。在母亲的影响下，孩子们一直都对父亲在事业上的努力和贡献引以为傲。秀兰说：“我知道他热爱华乐，事必躬亲，会一直坚持把华乐艺术提升到更高的水平。我为他对新加坡与新加坡华乐团所做出的一切感到自豪！”

大女儿萌娜在接受本书采访时说：“虽然爸爸在我们的成长过程中经常缺席，可是，他在音乐界的贡献和所取得的成就让我们深深为他感到骄傲。这些年来他甚少陪伴在我们身边，但母亲方方面面都把我们照顾的很好，让我们同样能感受到家庭的温馨与幸福，并快乐地成长。”

谈及在新加坡的生活时，2022年时年66岁的秀兰说：“我这把年纪，很难再结交新的朋友，但我很高兴终于有时间能够陪在我先生身边，一起生活。就是觉得这里的天气有些炎热。”

在冠病疫情肆虐全球之前，每当葉聰带领新加坡华乐团出国巡演、客卿指挥，或执教授课时，秀兰都会陪伴左右。与乐团最后一次出国，已经是2019年华乐团到



2020年1月，葉聰在昆明的一场演出后，陪太太到弥勒市游览。

欧洲四个国家进行为期10天的巡回演出。

葉聰近些年来，改换不同的身份重返校园，在母校担任上海音乐学院客座教授，另也受委中国中央民族乐团首席客卿指挥。除此之外，他也在国内外其他团体出任不同职位与担任指导的工作。

## 与本地音乐团体建立合作

除了能有更多的时间陪伴妻子，葉聰决定在新加坡安家的另一重要原因，是希望能够多与新加坡本地及国外的音乐团体一起合作，在此之前他也经常在海内外指导工作坊和客卿指挥。



消息传开后，来自海内外的音乐团体和机构纷纷邀请他担任客卿指挥、教学或指导工作。

最早向他发出邀请的包括南洋艺术学院，学院也于2017年4月委任葉聰担任其少年儿童艺术学校的六人顾问团成员之一。

南艺少年儿童艺术学校成立于1999年，是新加坡首屈一指的艺术学院。学院专注于培养艺术英才，发掘在音乐、艺术、戏剧和舞蹈方面有天赋，年龄介于4岁到18岁的学生。时至今日，学生们在新加坡和国际比赛中斩获诸多殊荣，尤其是音乐比赛中，他们的表现更是一骑绝尘，出类拔萃。

南艺少年儿童艺术学校可谓是人才

辈出。11岁的小提琴手蔡珂宜于2018年在梅纽因国际小提琴比赛中过关斩将，成功获得初级组冠军。这项比赛在瑞士日内瓦举行，被誉为小提琴届“奥林匹克”赛事。

南洋艺术学院董事兼顾问团主席周新华表示：“我们很荣幸能够邀请到葉聰加入南艺。他非常关心学校的音乐课程，参加音乐教研活动，也经常留意要如何提高学生的音乐技巧与水准。”

葉聰于2017年的3月受邀到新加坡艺术学院指挥布莱德岭交响乐团出演一场音乐会。次年，他再次受邀担任该乐团的客卿指挥，在滨海艺术中心演奏冼星海作曲的《黄河大合唱》，气势磅礴的音律响彻音乐厅。

1986年成立的布莱德岭交响乐团与葉聰的渊源可追溯到2015年。该交响乐团已故音乐总监陈志刚当年曾参与葉聰为新加坡、台湾和香港指挥家举办的工作坊。新加坡鼎艺华乐团的助理指挥黄德励和现任台北国乐团首席指挥張宇安也一同参加。

另外，葉聰于2016年也曾邀请陈志刚及黄德励，担任新加坡华乐团的指挥助理，为期一年。



2019年葉聰在台湾桃园主持指挥工作坊，指导青年指挥萧逸中。

葉聰受访时说：“志刚还在世时和我很聊得来，原本我们还计划了几个合作项目。他的突然离世令我很惋惜痛心。”陈志刚于2021年7月因心脏骤停在睡梦中去世，享年44岁。

葉聰曾担任客卿指挥的乐团和团体包括：2008年9月与新加坡抒情歌剧团呈献歌剧《图兰朵公主》；2018年3月

在滨海艺术中心音乐厅的新加坡爱乐管乐团音乐会《从伯恩斯坦到科普兰》；同年5月在滨海艺术中心音乐厅的新加坡武装部队乐队音乐会《和谐32——经典交响乐》，以及2019年3月新加坡舞蹈剧场的芭蕾舞剧《堂吉诃德》。

2019年5月，葉聰带领新加坡华乐团赴韩国光州演出。随后于同年8月前



2019年新加坡华乐团在柏林音乐厅的合照，前排左起为指挥葉聰、董事副主席吴学光、董事主席吴绍均与行政总监何偉山。



2019年8月，葉聰与华乐团在布拉格呈献了一场难忘的音乐会。

往德国的柏林、捷克的布拉格、意大利的弗利和希腊的约阿尼纳进行为期10天的欧洲巡演。华乐团在每一站的演出都发挥了最高水准，以其丰富的音乐情感、优美的旋律而好评如潮，扬名海外。

葉聰表示，此次巡演是新加坡华乐团自2005年以来第四次远赴欧洲演出，意义重大，因为这是首次将乐团独特的南洋曲风以及中西合璧的音乐风格一起带上国际舞台。

由新加坡小提琴家甘宁演奏享誉海外的小提琴协奏曲《梁祝》是欧洲巡演的一大亮点，缠绵哀婉的曲调，深深打动着观众们的心。《梁祝》是由阎惠昌和顾立民为华乐团而改编的，新加坡驻德国大使马绍峰称那次的巡演为新加坡华乐团树起“一个重要里程碑”。

华乐团赴欧洲四国的演出，以其饱满的热情，活力十足的演出，给海外的观众们留下了深刻的印象。Prague Concert Co. 的音乐总监约翰·特雷格拉斯表示：“这场音乐会的美妙之处在于，新加坡华乐团充满活力的演奏让观众产生共鸣，沉浸其中，对观众来说是一次愉快的经历。新加坡华乐团也是首个在这里演出的华乐团。”

华乐团从欧洲归来两个月后，葉聰再次与Toy肥料厂艺术总监吴文德合作，于2019年11月在华乐团音乐厅呈献《华乐戏剧：通天大埠》，以纪念新加坡开埠200周年，这无疑又是一部属于华乐的恢宏巨制。

《通天大埠》中的曲目是由新加坡华乐团委约驻团作曲家王辰威创作的作品。这部生动的戏剧由新传媒艺人陈凤玲和杨志龙带领其他四位演员饰演，讲述了新加坡从700多年前的小渔村，如何崛起成为一个充满魅力、活力和创新力的现代化、国际化大都市的故事。

对此次的合作，戏剧导演吴文德说道：“我诚恳希望能以新颖和有趣的角度来呈献新加坡的历史。”

葉聰则表示，与戏剧合作是一次与众不同的体验，这样的戏剧演出能够极大地

2019年11月，华乐团与Toy肥料厂艺术团合作  
呈献华乐戏剧《通天大埠》。







2022年3月，葉聰（中）率領華樂團呈獻了第一場《協奏之夜》音樂會。演奏家從左起為尹志陽、李寶順、瞿建青和許徽。

调动观众的情绪，他们的反应也非常热烈。葉聰也期待未来有更多机会能够在戏剧方面有所合作。

在接下来的两年里，随着新冠病毒的影响，新加坡华乐团的音乐会陆续被取消，出国演出机会受限，葉聰不得不放慢脚步。但是，这也让他有时间规划和思考新加坡华乐团后疫情时期的演出。他说：“这本来是个适合休息和放松的时期，但我却还抽出时间举办线上指挥家工作坊，包括2021年与郑逸杰、陈志刚、黄德励和连汶华举办的线上指挥大

师班。”

随着新加坡政府逐步放宽防疫措施，葉聰和新加坡华乐团于2022年3月全团回归新加坡华乐团音乐厅，为观众们隆重呈献三场《协奏之夜》系列音乐会，均由乐团的首席与副首席等演奏家演出。

《协奏之夜》系列于2022年6月结束演出，也意味着葉聰担任新加坡华乐团音乐总监的第20个年头。

在最后一章，让我们回顾葉聰在音乐界所作出的贡献，以及他对乐团所寄予的抱负与对未来光景的展望。

回首往事  
展望未来





——葉聰

“李西安当时也鼓励我，他认为，是时候让华乐在国际舞台上赶上西方交响乐团的步伐了，并且他坚信我可以带领新加坡华乐团一起让华乐走向更广阔的世界。”

# 在

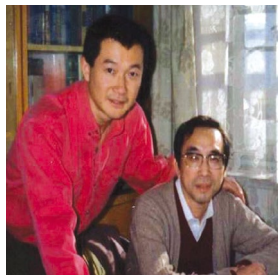
接受本书采访时，葉聰不时提起在音乐界享誉盛名的中国作曲家、教育家——李西安先生。

这位著名的音乐家，曾担任中国音乐学院院长，于2020年6月逝世，享年83岁。他也是闻名遐迩的华夏室内乐团创始人和艺术总监。李西安可谓桃李满天下，其中一位就是赫赫有名的作曲家谭盾。

如果说是挚友易有伍将葉聰引荐给新加坡华乐团，那李西安便是鼓励他接受乐团音乐总监要职的良师了。

葉聰与李西安于1995年底在北京相识，当时华夏室内乐团应法国广播电台的邀请，参加一个大型的音乐节，于是两人便忙于排练几个月后要在巴黎以当代音乐为主的演出。

参演的七名演奏家都是华夏乐团的成员，其中包括在中国也是极负盛名的笛子演奏家张维良和打击乐演奏家王以东。音乐会也呈献了陈其钢带有幽默色彩的《三笑》，一首



李西安（右）与谭盾在90年代初摄于北京。



——李西安



“不要只是盲目地效仿西方交响乐团，要勇于创新 and 尝试新的做法，无时无刻地让自己变得更好、更不一样。不要急于定型华乐团，这都需要时间去演变的。”

融合了中国传统音乐和现代西方作曲技巧的民乐四重奏。

在巴黎成功演出后，葉聰与李西安继续搭档，多次合作参与华夏在海内外的演出。他们之间的配合越来越有默契，很快成为了志同道合的好友。但真正让这两位音乐家推心置腹的，是他们对华乐未来发展的共同理念、想法和期望。

葉聰在接受本书采访时也谈到了他加入新加坡华乐团前让他裹足不前的内心纠结。他回忆道：“那时的我左右为难，很

多在中国的朋友都劝我不要去华乐团任职，反倒在美国和欧洲的朋友都很支持我。李西安当时也鼓励我，他认为，是时候让华乐在国际舞台上赶上西方交响乐团的步伐了，并且他坚信我可以带领新加坡华乐团走向更广阔的世界。”

正如李西安所言，现代华乐团始于50年代。当时华乐演奏家为效仿西方交响乐团，将中国传统乐器融入已有400多年历史的西方交响乐团的编制，并将音阶、音符和乐谱各式改编成西乐一般。

刚形成的华乐团由吹、拉、弹、打四个部分组成。后来又添加了大提琴和低音提琴等西方乐器，以提供更浑厚和饱满的音色及音域。

葉聰回忆李西安当时的建议说：“不要只是盲目地效仿西方交响乐团，要勇于创新 and 尝试新的做法，无时无刻地让自己变得更好、更不一样。不要急于定型华乐团，这都需要时间去演变的。”

李西安深信，即便已经经历50年，华乐团仍处于起步与发展阶段。所以说华乐团的演变和中国乐器改良求新的可塑性是无限的。

在李西安的鼓励下，葉聰最终下定决心接受新加坡华乐团的邀请，2002年

1月成为乐团的音乐总监，他表示：“我的性格是勇于迎接新的挑战，这也给了我一个创新的机会。”

葉聰起初觉得自己或许只会在华乐团三年，没想到一晃就是20年。之所以能走到今日，首先是因为他在新加坡华乐团的工作得到了各方面的支持与信任；其次，他这些年来所积累的经验与成就是足以让他游刃有余，让他同时兼顾美国南湾交响乐团的工作一直到2016年。

葉聰在这20年里，一直都有向李西安请教，可以说他是葉聰在音乐方面的知心顾问。在2006年和2011年由新加坡华乐团主办的新加坡国际华乐作曲大赛中，葉聰也邀请了这位亦师亦友的前辈两度担任比赛的顾问和评委。

在谈及对新加坡华乐团的贡献时，葉聰云淡风轻地说：“我一心只想把新加坡华乐团打造成独一无二的世界级华乐团。”而在这20年里，观众们也见证了他音乐路上所取得的成就。从他早期的突破，如2002年的交响奇幻史诗《马可波罗与卜鲁罕公主》，一直到2022年精彩绝伦的《破晓》，都能让观众看到他以独特的视角将音乐震撼人心的魅力诠释得淋漓尽致。《破晓》分三篇章创



1997年葉聰（前排左一）与李西安（左二）带领华夏到纽约演出时合影。

作，结合多媒体投影科技演绎出三位中国古代神话人物的故事，这场演出，再次打破观众们对音乐会的刻板印象，超出了大家的期待。

正如李西安所期盼的那样，葉聰不负众望，为华乐界开疆拓土，将新加坡华乐团推上了国际舞台，使其成为世界级的华乐团。

## 新作品 新方向

葉聰对新加坡华乐团未来的20年有什么期望？葉聰的座右铭——大胆创新、与众不同，也恰如其分地体现了他在新加坡华乐团这20年的建树。



2015 年华乐团在葉聰指揮下演奏交響詩《莊嚴的獨立宣言》。演員林繼堂（中）朗誦建國總理李光耀的睿智語錄。

另外，葉聰已在籌劃多部探索和追溯新加坡歷史的新作品。其中是與新報業媒體拓信合作，力求通過新聞的歷史檔案照片和音樂講述新加坡的故事。

葉聰指出有關回顧國家歷史的音樂會，近年來樂團舉辦的最具歷史意義的是 2015 年在濱海藝術中心舉辦的《繼往開來》音樂會。作曲家埃里克·沃森為慶祝新加坡獨立 50 周年，創作了交響詩《莊嚴的獨立宣言》，紀念新加坡建國總理李光耀，並向他表達致敬。在華樂團的伴奏下，由資深演員林繼堂聲情并茂地

朗誦了建國總理李光耀 50 年來演講中 21 段最精彩的語錄，感人肺腑。

在此書前幾章的內容中，敘述了葉聰與新加坡華樂團所取得的輝煌成就和在音樂領域的突破，也記錄了他如何帶領一支國家級華樂團成為世界級樂團的過程。

葉聰表示，過去 20 年他最驕傲的成就之一，便是樂團多年來日積月累、獨具匠心的樂曲。

如今，累計華樂團創办的“新加坡國際華樂作曲大賽”作品，以及委約的

新作品，共有 200 部之多，包括中国传统、南洋风格乐曲和中西合璧的作品。除此之外，还有约 900 首是通过不同音乐流派的原创作品所改编，或者重新编写过的，也有一部分是为了配合乐器的演奏而特意重新编写的。

虽然乐团的乐曲数量可观，但葉聰却总觉得还远远不够。“我们需要推陈出新，不断创新委约新的音乐作品，尤其是来自年轻作曲家的创作，才能与时俱进。”

他认为华乐团另一成就，是多年来通过团员们齐心协力，在一次次的排练中所达到的默契，体现了乐团独特的演奏风格。

在过去的 20 年里，他竭尽所能地通过与团员们的排练，帮助他们熟悉每一种乐器的音准节奏，每一小节的和弦，以及其他团员演奏乐器时的音色。华乐团中的部分乐器，特别是管乐器，原主要为户外演出而制的，反则有些弹拨拉弦乐器则是以在书斋或厅堂里演奏为主。要把这一大群“个性极强”的乐器凝成一组声，的确极具挑战性。

新加坡华乐团笛子首席尹志阳说，葉聰指挥对乐团的声要求非常细致，以至于在排练时邀请乐器制造商到音乐厅进

行调整，比如调换团员的座位位置等等，以达到最佳的效果。

今天乐团能演奏出它独有、饱满且具弹性的音色，让乐团本身和其音乐会都深受业界及广大乐迷的喜爱，足以让葉聰感到无比自豪。“无论过去做了多少，乐团依旧需要学习如何相互协调以演奏出更加和谐的声音，在这方面乐团仍要力求与日俱进。”葉聰谦逊道。

新加坡华乐团的海外巡演也是葉聰最为之引以为傲的，这标志着华乐团在国际舞台上已占有一席之地。自 2005 年以来，他曾带领乐团四次赴欧洲演出，其中包括 2009 年的苏格兰之行，使新加坡华乐团成为有史以来第一支在爱丁堡艺术节演出的华乐团。乐团最后一次去欧洲巡演已是 2019 年。

此外，葉聰于 2007 年和 2014 年两次带领华乐团赴中国演出，2015 年还分别到香港和吉隆坡去演出。

“华乐团需要走出新加坡，若有机会就多到海外演出。目前我们还未到美国、澳洲，亚洲的一些国家，包括邻近的亚细安国家巡演。”葉聰继续说道：“之前华乐团原本有望可以和小提琴家约夏·贝尔一起到美国开展巡回演出。2018 年他第二



2022年8月9日的演出后，新加坡驻德国大使马绍峰（左三）与华乐团演奏家在大使馆合影。

次来新加坡演出后便向华乐团提出合作，遗憾的是随后新冠病毒就开始席卷全球，这个合作最终不了了之。”

不过，值得欣慰的是，新加坡华乐团的五位演奏家于2022年8月初受邀与德国纽伦堡交响乐团举行的年度露天古典音乐会上一起演出。

华乐团的五位团员分别是打击乐手巫崇玮、吹笛子的李浚诚、演奏扬琴的马欢、拉二胡的谭曼曼和弹琵琶的张银。在纽伦堡交响乐团首席指挥黄佳俊的带领下，与纽伦堡交响乐团同台献艺，演奏俄国作曲家莫杰斯特·穆索尔斯基的名曲《图画展览会》，现场有75,000名观众出席，并在巴伐利亚电台在线直播。

“乐团必须不断地寻找  
最优秀的人才，  
才能做到精益求精。”  
——叶聪

音乐会结束后，于2022年8月9日新加坡国庆日当天，这五位华乐团团员受邀到新加坡驻德国柏林大使馆参加了一场特别演出。

黄佳俊于2011年在新加坡杨秀桃音乐学院就读时，曾在新加坡华乐团担任过指挥助理。2022年8月20日他重返华乐团音乐厅呈献《黄佳俊与新加坡华乐团》音乐会，演出非常成功。

叶聪对于此次机会说：“很高兴再次与佳俊合作，让华乐团团员有难得的机会在德国著名的露天古典音乐盛会上演出。”他认为华乐团应该抓住每一次到海外演出的机会，来增加乐团的经验，以走向更广阔的世界舞台。



葉聰（左一）在2019年的华乐团筹款晚宴上欢迎李显龙总理，一旁是乐团行政总监何偉山（左二）和董事主席吴绍均（右一）。

## 珍贵、感伤的时刻

多年来，葉聰目睹了新加坡华乐团团员们的新旧交替，资深演奏家们后浪推前浪，乐团也随着时间的推移加入了朝气蓬勃的年轻一代。

葉聰说从他加入乐团的那一起，最关注的就是华乐团接班人的问题。他解释道：“乐团必须不断地寻找最优秀的人才，才能做到精益求精。”

葉聰也表示，新加坡华乐团可以通过延长退休年龄来留住优秀的团员。他以2022年65岁笛子演奏家林信有为例

说：“他是我们一名优秀团员，还可以继续为乐团贡献多几年。”

在这20年里，最让葉聰感动和感恩的，便是新加坡总理兼新加坡华乐团赞助人李显龙对华乐团无私的支持，让他深感温暖与鼓舞。

葉聰于2006年发起首届新加坡国际华乐作曲大赛，在2011年的第二届比赛颁奖礼上，李总理亲自捐款75万元，肯定了他为推动南洋曲风发展所做的努力。他相信能如此为音乐创作而慷慨捐赠的，李总理是所有国家领导人中唯一的一位。

葉聰表示，现在所取得的成就都与新加坡华乐团历届董事成员和主席们的贡献和观众们的支持息息相关，他说：“如果没有他们的鼓励，我也不会有今天的业绩。”

2022年9月，在新加坡华乐团音乐厅举办的《弦彩》音乐会上，澳洲籍大提琴家秦立巍演奏了中国作曲家赵季平的《庄周梦》，并于当晚的演出后向葉聰致敬说：“如果不是葉聰过去20年的艺术指导和付出，新加坡华乐团不会有今天的业绩。”

说到观众，葉聰不得不提到热心的粉丝，栗杏苑和她妹妹杏美。他回忆起2012年的一个晚上，他刚从美国回来时，这对姐妹为他60岁生日准备的惊喜。

想起那又惊又喜的一刻时，葉聰回忆说：“她们两姐妹和一位朋友到机场接我，并带我去了一家市中心的潮州餐馆。她们准备了蛋糕、蜡烛、礼物来为我庆生。我被她们的情感动得流下了眼泪。”

杏苑是一名秘书，她回忆说：“那天晚上10点多了，但我们说服了那间在里峇峇利餐厅的老板延长营业时间，为



华乐团2015年在香港演出时，杏美（左）和姐姐杏苑与葉聰合影。

远道而归的葉聰庆祝生日。我们敬爱他、支持他，因为他为华乐团和新加坡做出了巨大贡献。”

葉聰谈起在乐团最感伤的时刻，难免不提到两位团员的逝世。2007年中阮演奏家杨培贤因癌症去世，享年53岁。2022年4月，笛子演奏家陈财忠也同因癌症离世，享年57岁。葉聰在得知他们去世时，无不感到悲伤惋惜。

葉聰表示：“培贤是本地最有才华的音乐家之一，他不仅是位优秀的阮演奏者，也可以为乐团作曲和重新编曲。”他还透露：“财忠的妻子李晔宁是一名钢琴老师，她的母亲魏晓申也是我在上海音乐学院附属小学的同学，所以财忠和他妻子对我来说都很特别。”葉聰惆怅地说道。



陈财忠 ( 1965–2022 )



杨培贤 ( 1954–2007 )

葉聰的生活和工作轨迹基本上围绕着三个国家。在中国，他度过了他人生的前 30 年。离开中国后，他去了美国深造，在接下来的 20 年里，相继在美国、香港开始了他的职业生涯，并在 2002 年加入新加坡华乐团。

若要问哪一段岁月最让他刻骨铭心，他的答案是：中国。因为在中国生活成长的种种经历，磨练了他的意志，这无疑在音乐上发掘了他的潜力，激发他更多的灵感，让他能够专注工作，使自身在

音乐上的成就光芒四射。

葉聰也说起双亲对他的影响。父亲葉祖菲培养了他多向思维和组织领导的能力，他的父亲于 1996 年去世，享年 75 岁。他的母亲张仁清塑造了他的性格，并在他童年的时候就为他奠定了音乐基础，因着母亲的鼓励，使得他能坚定地走下去，并成为声名远播的指挥家。2022 年高龄 97 岁的母亲仍十分健朗，她是一位受俄罗斯声乐训练，后又吸收西方各名家特长，并形成自己教学体系的声乐教育家。

谈到未来，葉聰说：“从 2002 年开始担任新加坡华乐团的音乐总监以来，我尽心竭力将新加坡华乐团打造为享誉海外的世界级乐团。我非常欣慰的是，我已做到了！乐团必须精益求精，继续往前力求新突破，再从头越，攀上新高峰！”

葉聰对艺术的探索是永无止境的。他说：“即便倾尽所有，也会是我一生的追求。”




2022 年 10 月，葉聰的 97 岁母亲摄于上海家中。



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# 葉聰

新加坡華樂團

音樂總監20年

梁榮錦 著

李汶霞 译