

Kolom : Potpourri	Title : S'pore arts fest preps for 30th anniversary dazzle
Penulis : Nauval Yazid	Media : Jakarta Post, Monday may 21, 2007

S'pore arts fest preps for 30th anniversary dazzle

Nauval Yazid
Contributor/Singapore/Jakarta

It's no secret that desperate shopaholics flock to Singapore between May and July every year on a pilgrimage to the Singapore Great Sale. But for the past few years, the event has met its match in bringing in another sizable crowd.

This particular crowd may not be the kind willing to queue at cash registers, but they will queue at the city's concert halls and other cultural centers, speaking of arts and culture, generally shunning the mainstream.

This is the kind of crowd to be found during the Singapore Arts Festival, which marks its milestone 30th anniversary this year.

Slated from May 25 to June 24, the longest surviving arts festival in the region has expanded greatly from its small-scale inception

in 1977, when it only showcased local productions for under a week's duration.

Two decades later, with substantial funding from the local government and a heavy marketing boost by the city's tourism board, the festival began sharpening its teeth by luring international artists to perform during the mid-year break — a perfect time to gather spectators from every possible demographic.

Of course, it did not hurt to link the event with shopping events targeting the cash-and-carry pilgrims.

While ties to the annual shopping showcase are not apparent this year, the festival lineup is a draw in itself, presenting world-class musicians, artists, dancers and dramatists.

Following the tradition of featuring Oscar-friendly names like composers Yo-Yo Ma and Michael Nyman, who graced the music

program in past fests, this year the spotlight is likely to shine on Tan Dun, who received an Oscar for his scores in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Together with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Tan will reveal his latest musical exploration, *The Map & Paper Concerto*, in which he plans to manipulate paper of different sizes and strengths as percussion instruments.

Equally promising is the premiere performance of *PLAY! A Video Game Symphony*, a multimedia concert featuring theme tracks from popular video games such as *Final Fantasy*, *Super Mario Bros* and *The World of Warcraft*. This concert is the inaugural performance of the newly established Singapore Festival Orchestra, directed by Grammy-winning composer Arnie Roth, who appears as guest conductor for the event.

On the theatrical side, fans of

classic plays may be pleased to hear that Henrik Ibsen's bourgeois tragedy *A Doll's House* will be reborn in the Obie-winning comic show in Mabou Mines' *DollHouse*, directed by Lee Breuer of the U.S. Expect the title to be realized literally onstage.

If it is the ultimate classic one yearns for, nothing beats William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*. Another tiresome rendition? Wait until the cast delivers soliloquies in Lithuanian and the Capulets and the Montagues fight in a pizzeria.

The flour and eggs flying across the stage might have been the deciding factor that earned this stage version the Grand Prix prize at the 2004 Belgrade International Theatre Festival.

After all, what's in a name, and language is no barrier — as was proved by the Arabic-language *Hamlet* at the 2005 arts fest.

For dance lovers, watch for

internationally renowned ballerina Sylvie Guillem in a production by the Akram Khan Company, the U.S.' Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, and an acrobatic, pyrotechnic multimedia closing show by Germany's antagon theaterAKTION.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The 2007 Singapore Arts Festival boasts an anniversary program of more than 1,900 artists representing 27 countries, with 22 feature productions and 400 other free events, including six world premieres and five Asian premieres.

Workshops, master classes and lectures are also on the program, as are free family-oriented events and, for the first time, two complementary district festivals.

The Singapore Arts Festival 2007 runs from May 25 to June 30. For the full program and ticketing information, visit the official website at www.singaporeartsfest.com.



JPNauval Yazid

A promotional poster of events featured in the 2007 Singapore Arts Festival stands among plastic plants in The Festival Nest. Located at the Raffles City Shopping Centre, "the nest" is a public hub where visitors can obtain information from the festival, which marks its 30th anniversary this year.