

Star
2

What a blast!

It was a time for laughter and tears, as the cast of the Dama Musical Production *In Perfect Harmony* wrapped things up and took their bows for the last time on Sunday night, as the show drew to a close. >16,17



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INSPIRING
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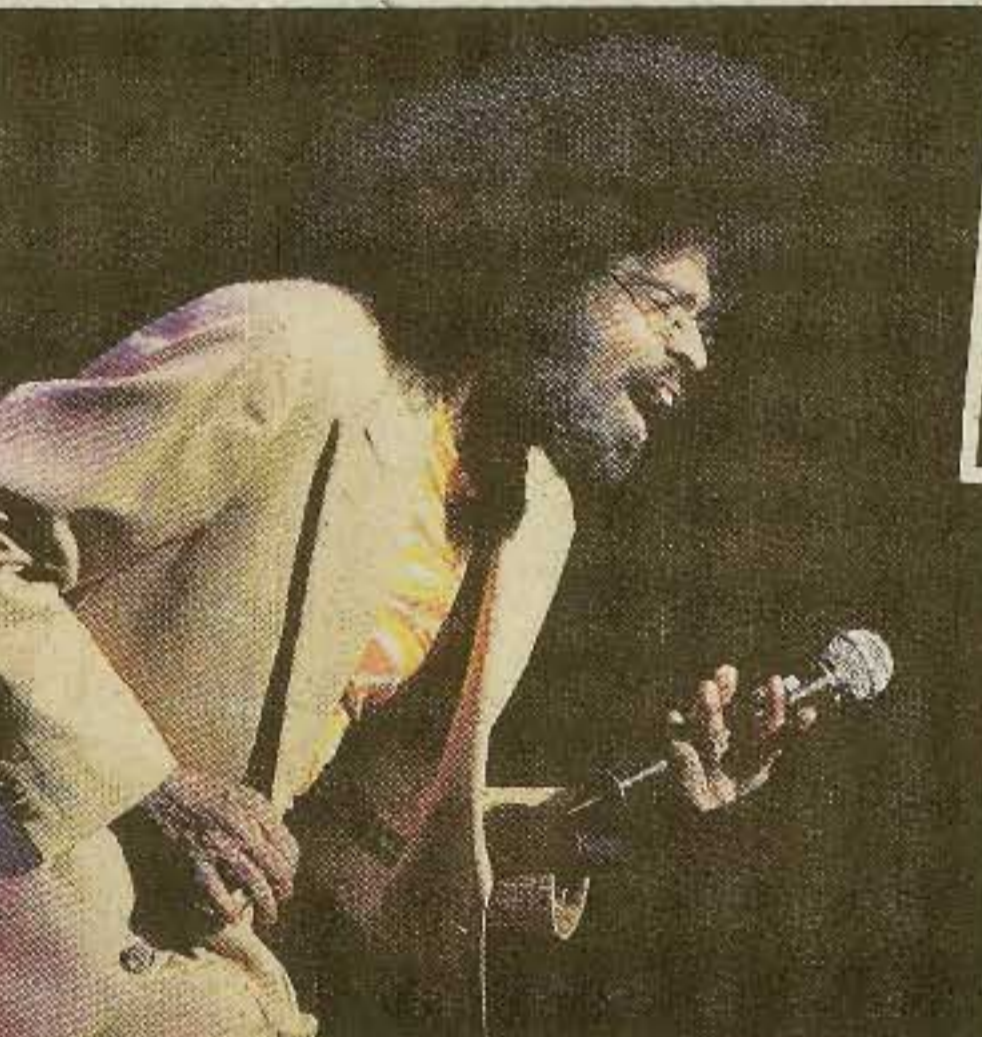
Mere nam Joshua: Joshua Gul, the Chinese boy from Bukit Mertajam, Penang, who was brave enough to tackle the Hindi number *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and had the audience in stitches.



The pun stops here: Janet Lee and Douglas Lim providing comic relief; Lim was truly the super-glue that held the show together.



Green is gold: Zainal Abidin (pic below) with the evergreen favourite, *Hijau* — one of Malaysia's finest tunes.



Stray cat strut: Datuk David Arumugam belted out tunes in three languages, showcasing the 1Malaysia spirit all the way.

Say it again: Narrator Patrick Teoh was full of wit and wisdom.



Full house: Crowds came in droves, eager to participate in the musical journey through the decades.

Grand finale: The cast taking a bow at the end of the spectacular *In Perfect Harmony*. — Photos by Ibrahim Mohtar, Darran Tan, Azhar Mahfuf, Azlina Abdullah, Norafiqi Ehsan, Azman Ghani, Glenn Guan, Mohd Faihan and Ahmad Izzafiq/The Star



Thank you for the music

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In the end it was not entirely a perfect show. The sound system wasn't the best and the lighting had minor glitches. But what was perfect was the energy, the enthusiasm, the heart and the genuine joy that emanated from the young performers on stage to the audience in their seats, who returned the same feelings in full measure. That was why night after night, the 40-strong multi-racial cast of *In Perfect Harmony* — a Malaysian Musical Journey received standing ovations.

Those watching it laughed, cried and cheered as song after song rolled out seamlessly, threaded together by a clever interplay of a commentary of real social, political and economic events narrated by legendary deejay-turned-actor-writer Patrick Teoh, who played himself, and the monologue of a fictitious radio deejay, Douglas Santa Maria, played by comedian-actor Douglas Lim.

By the time the musical ended its run on Sunday, there was a tremendous sense of pride that a collaboration that *The Star* undertook with Dama Orchestra to create a "docutainment" that would take its audience through four decades of history and music, had achieved its objectives.

These objectives were simple: *The Star* wanted to celebrate its 40th anniversary and to continue its legacy of bringing in performances and musicals from abroad, it decided to treat Malaysians to a homegrown production that would be unabashedly sentimental, joyfully nostalgic, and yet carry a strong underlying message.

Was the objective met? Star Publications (M) Berhad group managing director and CEO Ho Kay Tat said yesterday: "*In Perfect Harmony* succeeded beyond our best expectations. The show was a sell-out and the audience, young and old, loved it. The producers, musicians and cast were fantastic; they were a great showcase of our performing arts talents. Who would have expected to see Dama Orchestra playing disco music; a Chinese boy, together with a

Sign your name across my heart: The Dama ensemble wowing audiences with their sign-singing.



Malay and Indian girl, singing and dancing so wonderfully to a Hindi song; and Tan Soo Suan giving such a powerful rendition of *Gemilang*?

"They sang in various languages and danced to different genres of music with such skill and passion, and so many new talents were unearthed. As the title *In Perfect Harmony* suggests, we wanted to send a message that there can be harmony in the diversity of music and songs. And we hope, as Patrick Teoh said at the end, that life in Malaysia can now imitate art."

Ho added: "For us at *The Star*, it has been a joy and inspiration to work with such talented people, to present this top-class musical. Malaysians should be proud of them."

Pun Kai Loon, the show's director, felt that this has truly been a wonderful celebration of the rich cultural diversity of Malaysia. Pun said: "We are very happy with the show's success and sad that it has come to an end. The response from the audience was wonderful. And we appreciate the free rein

The Star gave us in developing and shaping this project."

This was a show that truly had something for everyone. Older folk grooved to all the evergreens from the 1970s and 80s and the younger set moved to the numbers from the latter two decades. Whether the songs were in Malay, Chinese, English, Hindi, Korean or sign language, the audience responded to them.

Seventeen-year-old Kevin Lim, from SMK Bandar Utama Damansara (3), Petaling Jaya, Selangor, said: "It was my first musical and I didn't know what to expect but *In Perfect Harmony* was very good. Most of my friends had watched it. They kept telling me that it's a show not to be missed and that's why I decided to go and watch it. The musical may have been about things that happened before I was born but I could totally relate to it. It was really, really entertaining."

Nicholas Tan, another 17-year-old, thoroughly enjoyed the Hindi song *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and its well-played humorous

touches. "It was awesome, so fun," gushed the Sri KDU student.

Star photographer Azlina Abdullah who covered many of the 14 nights, said her favourite segment was the dramatic Mandarin-Hokkien number, *Any Empty Wine Bottles For Sale* (*Jiu Kan Tang Buey Boh*) sung by Dama's principal singer Tan Soo Suan, because of the story message of filial piety.

Like Azalina, Valiram Group senior marketing manager Joanne De Silva was deeply moved by the song, too.

"I don't understand Mandarin but I could feel the emotions in Tan's voice. The actors in the background, portraying a father and a daughter picking up empty bottles, was just heart-wrenching," she said. *In Perfect Harmony* benefited too from special appearances by Zainal Abidin, Sean Ghazi, Datuk David Arumugam and The Seasons 4, who performed on certain nights, adding special flavour and excitement to the show, which proved that in our unity we have strength.

"The best part is that the show reminds us of what being Malaysian is — popular songs from local artistes, as well as international favourites that we all grew up with. This truly embodies our melting pot of cultures," said SP Setia president and CEO Tan Sri Liew Kee Sin. SP Setia as the gold sponsor and UOB (Malaysia) as the official bank were indeed the perfect partners that came along on the journey.

Both companies subscribe to the notion of creating a nation built on peace, prosperity and harmony.

That, ultimately, was what it was all about and was aptly conveyed in Teoh's parting words at the end of the show: "We live in a special place where the monsoons meet. We are Malaysians, no matter what colour our skin, which god we worship, and whom we choose to love. To stay together, we must learn to live together."

"During our journey, we remembered our differences and celebrated our diversity. We must never forget them. And the music reminds us of our vision of a land of harmony and tolerance and laughter."



'K-Pop sensations': Tan Yon Lynn, Michelle Tan, Tan Soo Tze and Rachel Tan give *The Wonder Girls* a run for their money.



Swaying to the beat: The ensemble paying tribute to the disco beat of *Saturday Night Fever*.



You know how to do it: Tria Aziz, Chang Fang Chyi and Tan Soo Suan feel the Abba beat on their tambourines.



From dusk to Sean: Sean Ghazi bringing his brand of suave jazz to the stage.