

Review Concert**RHAPSODIES OF SPRING 2013**

Singapore Chinese Orchestra
Singapore Conference Hall/Last Friday

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The Singapore Chinese Orchestra's first concerts of the calendar year often coincide with Chinese New Year and the celebration of spring.

Like the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's Christmas Concerts which closed the preceding year, they are jolly and light-hearted affairs. Conducted by music director Yeh Tsung, semi-serious music was mixed with the popular and downright frivolous.

The opener, Li Huanzhi's Spring

Casual air at SCO concert with DJs in the mix

Festival Overture, is so familiar that it even appears in the SSO's latest CD of popular classics alongside Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture.

Raucous and rowdy, the percussion section had to work overtime but there were moments for a lovely sheng solo to stand above the hustle and bustle.

As a tribute to the coming year of the snake, Nie Er's brief Jin She Kuang Wu (Wild Dance Of The Golden Snake) did not slither or strike but displayed some energetic dragon-like feints.

The involvement of 11 deejays from the Chinese-speaking radio station UFM

100.3 gave the concert the casual air of televised variety shows so loved by heartlanders. There was a finger-snapping Mandarin rap An Exceptional New Year Song that played on the ubiquitous New Year greeting Gong Xi Gong Xi.

The comedy team then acted and sang New Legend Of Madame White Snake, updated to 21st-century Singapore to include Hokkien, Singlish, product placement, cross-dressing and a sly dig on the country's stressful modern lifestyles. The totally irreverent reboot of an old tale centred on the romance of Xu Xian and

the eponymous heroine, which almost foundered on that typically Singaporean malady - subfertility.

After the interval, jazz drummer Tama Goh ad-libbed in the spiced-up Cantonese classic Han Tian Lei (Thunder Storm And Drought) while suona masters Jin Shi Yi and Liu Jiang had a virtuosic pas de deux in Huan Tian Xi Di (Exuberance).

Jin's stunning reed technique which approximated Donald Duck in falsetto brought out the most cheers from a startled audience.

Less impressive was Begin's Accompa-

ny Me To See The Sunrise, sung in unison by two women deejays accompanied by their colleagues on four ukuleles.

Popular Malaysian singer-songwriter Wu Jiahui then crooned three sentimental songs - Although I'm Willing, Do You Love Me? and One Half.

The last was the Hokkien theme song of the Royston Tan getai movie 881, also sung by the personable Wu.

Like the Christmas Concerts, there was an audience sing-along, which resulted in a rather tepid clap-along instead.

Whether audiences at SCO concerts are more reticent or because the lyrics to Chinese New Year standards such as Da Di Hui Chun (Spring Returns), Bai Nian (New Year Greetings) and Gong Xi Gong Xi Ni are so banal as to render them speechless, it was difficult to say.