

Two-year-old drummer Yeo Jay Yun is among the 5,000 people playing at a mega concert at the new National Stadium in June

Lisabel Ting

The new National Stadium will be rocked by the sounds of nearly 5,000 traditional Chinese musicians and vocalists when it opens in June.

The June 28 mega concert, Our People, Our Music 2014, is organised by the Singapore Chinese Orchestra and will be the first arts event held at the \$5,000-seat stadium in Kallang.

It also aims to set the Guinness World Record for the largest Chinese drum ensemble with close to 5,000 people playing in a five-minute segment.

The orchestra's resident conductor, Quek Ling Kiong, says: "We hope to inspire people with our music and the concert is on such a big scale that it includes people from many music and community groups in Singapore.

"Basically, the idea is to reach out to as many people as we can and through the concert, we can develop our audience and try to bring the orchestra and Chinese music to another level."

Under the baton of music director Yeh Tsung, who was last year's Cultural Medallion recipient, 80 members from the orchestra and 98 members from its youth wing, the Singapore Chinese Youth Orchestra, will form the core of the performance.

The two groups will be accompanied by musicians and choir members from schools, clan associations and community centres.

Expect to hear pieces such as Chinese composer Huang Hai Hui's Horse Racing, a Teresa Teng medley of popular songs and Power Singapura!, a commissioned piece written by Quek and young composer Phang Kok Jun, at this mega concert.

The show will also feature singer-songwriter Dick Lee, who will lead the performers and the audience in a rendition of the National Day song, Home, which he wrote.

Organising such a large group of performers is no easy task.

Quek says with a chuckle: "We have to arrange the orchestra in a large space and it's a challenge to place all the micro-phones. Conducting-wise, I'm sure maestro Yeh Tsung is having a headache."

In addition, he says the performers come from a wide spectrum of musical ability. "We have so many people, from primary school kids to senior citizens in their 60s and 70s, so we have two versions of the score, one which is simpler," he adds.

"We cater for everyone because the main thing is to get as many people as possible to participate."

One musician who will be taking part is erhu player Stephanie Ow, 18, who has been blind since birth.

Ow, who is from the Singapore Youth Chinese Orchestra, began learning the two-stringed instrument when she was 14, at the suggestion of her parents. She says: "At first, I was very unhappy because I didn't have any interest in it. But along the way, I fell in love with the instrument and traditional Chinese music."

Although she has been performing in public since 2011, each new piece is still a challenge for her. She says: "I have to memorise scores. Sighted people can just read and play. For me, I have to listen. The instructor will teach me and I record the lesson, and then I go home and learn the piece from the recording."

Ow, who graduated from Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School last year, adds that playing with an orchestra has its own challenges.

"I can't see the conductor, so I have to follow by listening." She has to keep her ears pricked for when the conductor slows down or increases the tempo.

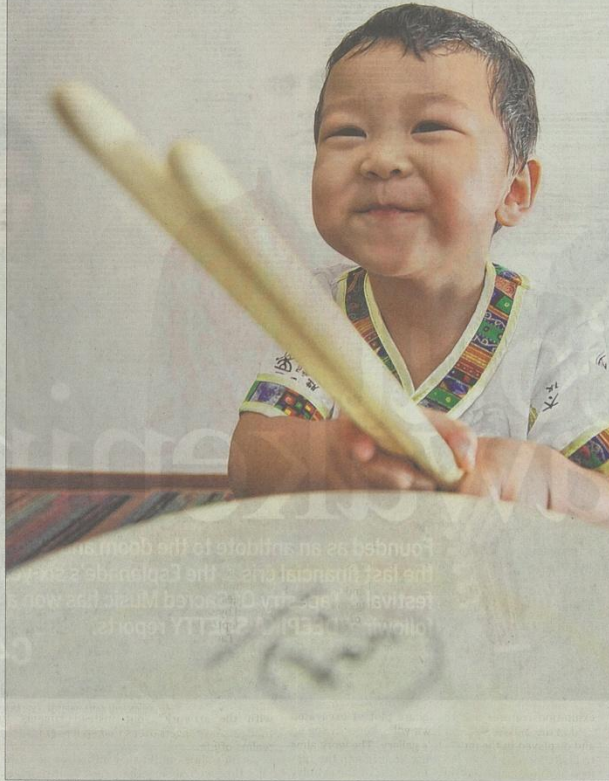
The youngest performer in the concert is two-year-old Yeo Jay Yun, who will be playing the handheld pellet drum in the drum segment. His father, music instructor Ricky Yeo, 45, will also be taking part.

Mr Yeo says: "It's a very rare opportunity to have so many Chinese drums playing together and it will be a very good experience, even for myself."

"Jay Yun is too young to know what's going on, but when he's older, I can show him photos and tell him, 'You were a part of that'."

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Toddler to rock new stadium



Among the players at the mega concert are two-year-old Yeo Jay Yun (above), who will be playing the drums, and erhu player Stephanie Ow (below), who is blind. ST PHOTOS: MATTHIAS HO



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Mr Ricky Yeo, 45, Jay Yun's father

Book it

OUR PEOPLE, OUR MUSIC 2014

Where: National Stadium
When: Jan 23 to 25, 3pm
Admission: \$10, \$20 and \$100 from the Singapore Sports Hub (call 6333-5000, go to sportshubtx.sg or buy from all SingPost outlets)

Sailor i kissing

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This iconic picture Edward McDuffie after the surrende New York on Aug

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