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7 October 2006

New home for Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music



Music in the air as the Conservatory Orchestra strikes up a performance at the new concert hall

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Contemporary with a touch of classic elegance – the new Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YSTCM) building cuts an impressive façade as it sits on almost 20,000 sqm of land adjacent to the University Cultural Centre. The latest addition to Kent Ridge campus, the 3-storey building boasts of state-of-the-art facilities comparable to the top conservatories in the world.

Taking centrestage is the 600-seat European-style "shoe-box" shaped concert hall, with surface finishes carefully chosen to attain maximum architectural and acoustical quality. It was specially built for classical music performances, making it ideal for chamber music and symphony orchestra concerts. The \$40 million building also houses 44 practice rooms, 31 teaching studios, seven spacious ensemble rooms for rehearsals and performances and a comprehensive music library which has a collection of over 17,000 volumes of books and scores, 6,000 CDs/videos and 150 titles of journals. Conservatory students would also have access to a recital studio with video conferencing facilities, music technology labs and smart classrooms where IT is used extensively in classroom teaching.

"Our staff and students are thrilled to have a new home built for our needs in terms of teaching, practice and performance," said Dr Gene Aitken, Director of YSTCM. "One of our major initiatives is to integrate technology into the classrooms so that our students are prepared to embrace technology in the ever-changing global music industry."



Mr Wong Ngit Liong, Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees officially unveils the foundation stone with Ms Yong Siew Yoon

The new YSTCM building was completed within two years and officially opened on 7 October 2006 by Ms Yong Siew Yoon, sister of the late Yong Siew Toh, a dedicated music teacher and daughter of the late philanthropist Dr Yong Loo Lin.

The Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, a collaboration between NUS and Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, was launched in 2003 as part of a broad strategy to position Singapore as an arts and culture hub. Currently having 180 full-time students from 13 countries, the Conservatory's pioneer cohort of students will graduate next year.

"The new building provides the infrastructure for music to be taught at a standard benchmarked to the top conservatories in the world," said Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, NUS Deputy President and Provost. "Leveraging on our partnership with the renowned Peabody Institute, our vision is for the Conservatory to evolve into a music institution of international standing and quality."

A classical weekend at YSTCM

To celebrate its official opening on 7 October 2006, YSTCM held its first Open House from 7 to 8 October 2006, with guided tours of the new building and a series of mini-concerts by outstanding Conservatory students, as well as celebrated faculty and guest artists. Award-winning musicians, currently teaching at the Conservatory, were on hand to meet those interested in pursuing a career in music.

A gala concert by the Conservatory Orchestra was also held on 7 October 2006 to inaugurate the new concert hall. This event was graced by Dr Tony Tan, Chairman of the National Research Foundation, who played an instrumental role in the formation of a music conservatory in Singapore.

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