

CASE STUDY ON SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA

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(A) Introduction

Overall Arts Scene in Singapore

The convergence of rich and diverse cultural influences has endowed Singapore with both a traditional and contemporary outlook in the arts as well as a rich cultural heritage. Presently, the Singapore arts scene is in a state of rapid growth. Singapore's indigenous performing and artistic talent has sprung up, nurtured by government and private assistance schemes and incentives.

On 1st of September 1991, the National Arts Council (NAC) was set up as a statutory board to spearhead the development of the arts in Singapore. Its mission is to help nurture the arts and develop Singapore into a vibrant global city for the arts. Pursuant to its mission, the NAC adopts a multi-pronged approach to nurturing artistic talent and promoting arts practice and appreciation. It provides financial assistance and arts housing for artists and arts groups, and actively promotes them locally and abroad. In order to discover new talents, it arranges competitions for various art forms, as well as art events e.g. the Singapore Writers' Festival and the Singapore River Buskers Festival to enliven the city.

NAC also develops the audience base through outreach programmes, e.g. Concert in the Park series and Poems on the MRT, which brings arts to the masses. The young are given the opportunity for arts appreciation through arts education curriculum in schools. Numerous awards are presented to artists in recognition of their achievements and to patrons for their sponsorships. NAC actively participates in cultural exchange programmes and engages in international networking and marketing.

Throughout the past decade, there were several significant events that helped shape the arts scene in Singapore. In 1993, the Arts Education Programme (AEP) was launched in schools. In December 1997, Singapore's first arts radio, Passion 99.5 FM was launched. In 1999, the Festival of Arts and the Festival of Asian Performing Arts merged as an annual event- the Singapore Arts Festival, with emphasis on the Asian Performing Arts. In the year 2000, nearly 3000 arts activities were held, 764,000 paid to watch performances, arts sponsorship amounted to \$37.6 million and the Festival of Asian Performing Arts featured 39 sold-out shows. The Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay, presently under construction, will be Singapore's premier international performing arts centre when it opens at the end of 2001.

The overall arts scene can be divided into 2 categories: performing arts and visual arts. Visual arts groups include the Singapore Watercolour Society, Children's Art Society Singapore and Siew Tao Seal-Carving Calligraphy & Painting Society. Performing arts encompasses theatre, dance, music and opera. There are several performing groups in these various areas of art. Performing arts can be further sub-divided into two categories - hardware and software. Hardware refers to the venues for these art performances e.g. Kallang Theatre, Victoria Theatre and Drama Theatre whereas

software refers to the numerous performing groups or troupes e.g. Odyssey Dance Theatre and The Necessary Stage Ltd.

There is also an increasing trend of private companies e.g. TheatreWorks and Act 3 being set up to manage the performing arts groups. In this way, the musicians and performers can concentrate on their preparations for the performances while these companies can manage ticketing, funding and audience development.

Currently, Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) and Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) are the two major orchestras in Singapore.

We have decided to carry out an exploratory research study on the Singapore Orchestra (SCO) because it is a young orchestra set up merely 6 years ago; thus while it possesses high potential to excel in the developing arts scene in Singapore, it is also vulnerable to any environmental changes eminent during this period of unprecedented growth. Withholding a monopolistic status in the Chinese Orchestra market in Singapore, SCO thus presents itself as an interesting organisation worth looking into, to help us better understand the opportunities and threats involved in managing and marketing an arts group in Singapore, holding other factors like competition constant.

(B) Historical Background of SCO

The Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) was established in 1968 as a performing unit of the People Association (PA) Cultural Troupe. It was then known as the People's Association Chinese Orchestra, whose primary role was to perform at community functions, like the Singapore Festival of Arts, Chingay Parade and National Day Parade. Under the initiatives of the People's Association to contribute to the vibrancy of the arts scene in Singapore, the orchestra also participated in overseas exchange programmes with Chinese orchestras from the region.

In addition, the orchestra held regular concerts featuring traditional Chinese instruments performing an assortment of Chinese classical music and folk tunes. Most of their concerts were held at Victoria Theatre and the Singapore Conference Hall, usually four times a year. Tickets were priced between \$5 and \$20.

At that time, the orchestra was contained within the boundaries of the People's Association's Cultural Development Section and was not an orchestra of a professional standing. Without a formal board of committee and an independent management, it did not receive the extent of exposure and amount of funding as compared to what it is able to receive today.

(C) Milestones of SCO

May 1996

The Singapore Chinese Orchestra was formerly a performing unit of the People's Association (PA) Cultural Troupe formed in 1968. On 8 May 1996, the Singapore Chinese Orchestra Limited was set up under the initiative of the Prime Minister to manage the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO). The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Brigadier-General (NS) Lee Hsien Loong is the patron of the SCO Company. The SCO Board of Directors consists of 14 leading entrepreneurs and professionals including the Chairman Mr Chng Heng Tiu.

April 1997

The long awaited SCO Inaugural Concert was successfully staged in April 1997 at the Victoria Concert Hall. The company specially engaged the renowned local composer, Mr Phoon Yew Tien to compose an overture - *Step Up and Up* - for the concert. The company also invited the renowned soloist Min Hui Fen to perform the famous erhu concerto - *The Great Wall Capriccio*. The conductors of the Inaugural Concert were SCO Music Director Hu Bing Xu and SCO Conductor cum composer Qu Chun Quan. Some of the concert pieces featured in the concert included *A Night in Pasir Ris*, *A Matched Fight*, headed by Quek Ling Kong, dizi solo and full orchestra *Cascades* by Lim Sin Yeo, *Gada Meilin Symphonic Poem*. Patron of the SCO Company, Deputy Prime Minister Lee attended the gala concert with a nearly thousand people in the audience. The splendid performance won thunderous applause and created a rousing scene signifying a new milestone for the Chinese orchestra.

Year 1997

In 1997, the SCO invited 16 foreign renowned guest musicians, vocalists and a guest conductor to participate in the 12 performances of the SCO regular concerts. In addition, the SCO staged 11 school concerts, six community series concerts and one outdoor concert. On the 26th August, 10 musicians from the SCO performed at the Ismailia International Folklore Festival in Egypt. This was the first time SCO performed overseas, and the performance was well received there.

September 1998

For the first time, the entire orchestra went on a nine-day concert tour to Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen in China. The efficient management and performance of SCO impressed the Chinese audience. The audience was treated to famous master works and orchestral pieces written by Singapore and China composers. In addition to the three concerts staged by SCO, the orchestra also jointly performed with the China Central Chinese Orchestra and the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra as part of the cultural exchange programme. The SCO performances won positive reviews and high acclaim. The audience, including those from the music and arts scene in China, commended them. At the Beijing Cultural Exchange Forum, experts from the music circle even

commented that the SCO must be added in as the "4th pillar" in the Chinese Orchestral world, in addition to the 'Three Kingdoms' (China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) in the past.

Year 1998

The SCO launched its own website to introduce the SCO to the world through the Internet. In July, the Lianhe Zaobao and the Capital Radio (95.8 FM) signed the Memorandum of Understanding with SCO at the World Trade Centre. They were recognised as SCO's official newspaper and radio station respectively, to help publicise and promote SCO and its music to the public.

The SCO launched its first Subscription Series booklets on 23 November as a way to announce to the public upcoming concerts SCO would be staging for the next six months. This would make it more convenient for them to book concert tickets in advance. The Friends of SCO Club was also formed with the launch of the Subscription Series Booklets. The objective of the Club is to foster ties between SCO and its supporters. Friends of the SCO would be able to enjoy privileges such as priority booking and special discounts.

January 1999

On the 1st January 1999, SCO started its first launch of the quarterly newsletter 'Hua Yue'. The newsletter will serve to promote Chinese orchestral music to the public through reports of Chinese Orchestra news. It will act as a bridge to enable the public to understand the musicians themselves and educate them on Chinese music theories and history. The newsletter would also provide music composition reviews.

January 2000

A millennium concert was staged collaboratively by the SCO and Ministry of Education (MOE). This much-awaited gala concert was held on the 1st day of the Millennium year 2000 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium at 8.00pm. For the first time in Singapore and beyond, this very first concert featured more than 1,200 musicians. They included professional musicians of SCO and members of various amateur Chinese orchestras. The audience was treated to a repertoire of music including traditional, contemporary and familiar tunes in the Millennium Concert.

February 2000

The SCO was invited by the Taipei Municipal Chinese Orchestra to perform at the Taipei Traditional Arts Festival at Taipei National Concert Hall. The SCO's performances were highly commended by the audience, including those from the music circle. Chief Director of the Taipei Cultural Affairs and diplomats or various countries, including Mr Joseph Koh, Trade Representative of Singapore Trade Office in Taipei also attended one of the concerts. Upon a special invitation from the

National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, the SCO then went on to stage another performance in Taichung. The SCO's performance was again well received by the audience and more encores were requested.

(D) Arts Education Program

The Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) is the only professional Chinese orchestra in Singapore. Since its inaugural concert in April 1997, SCO has staged numerous concerts in various concert halls, enjoying full-house performances and rave reviews for most of the time. It has also participated in prestigious music festivals in Japan, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Taipei.

Chinese Orchestra In-Focus

SCO, through the Arts Education Programme - Chinese Orchestra In-Focus, offers an enjoyable opportunity for students to visit and watch the Singapore Chinese Orchestra during their rehearsals. A briefing is usually held before the rehearsals to help the students gain insight into the operations of the orchestra.

Tunes of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra

SCO aims to promote appreciation of Chinese orchestra music among the young Singaporeans through the Arts Education Programme - *Tunes of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra*. Each programme includes an introduction together with a demonstration of selected musical instruments, participation of students through the use of quizzes, followed by a performance by the orchestra.

Further Insights on the SCO

The Musicians

Presently, the orchestra consists of 62 musicians. These musicians are a mix of local and foreign talents from Singapore, China and other countries in the region, who were recruited into the orchestra after rigorous auditions. Such stringent selection is critical to the ensuing success of the orchestra.

Since the departure of the previous Conductor, Mr Hu Bing Xu, SCO has yet to fill this position with a suitable candidate. The current Assistant Conductor of SCO is Mr Lum Yan Sing. Mr Lum is also the conductor of the National University of Singapore and River Valley Secondary School Chinese Orchestras, an instructor at Hwa Chong Junior College Chinese Orchestra. In addition, he is the advisor of the Malaysia School of Arts, a council member of the China National Philharmonic Association, an executive member of the Singapore Chinese Instrumental Music Association and an advisor to the Singapore Erhu Association.

The Management

In tandem with SCO's relocation into the Singapore Conference Hall, the size of its management has increased. The higher level of the original management team consisted of a senior manager, a human resource and finance manager, a programme manager and a marketing manager. At the next level is an accounts executive, an administration executive, a programme executive, a marketing executive, a stage supervisor/orchestra monitor, an orchestra librarian for scores, a secretary for the senior manager and lastly two assistant executives.

Currently, the management has also included a facilities manager to manage the facilities in the Singapore Conference Hall. In addition, part-timers were occasionally recruited during the peak season to handle the huge workload. Stagehands were recruited on a per concert basis to help with the moving of instruments and chairs on stage during a concert.

(E) SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Being the only professional Chinese Orchestra in Singapore, SCO is able to gain an advantage in the Chinese Orchestral Music scene. Its musicians were chosen from amongst the best in Singapore and third of them were recruited through rigorous auditions of musicians from China. SCO is thus a mark above the rest of the approximately 200 amateur and school Chinese orchestras in Singapore. SCO can thus be considered the market leader in the Chinese orchestral music arena. This leading role allows SCO to innovate and set trends in the industry. It possesses the avenue to try out experimental music, which includes contemporary compositions and Western compositions.

As the national Chinese Orchestra of Singapore. SCO receives grants from the government to sustain its operations. In addition, it is also able to garner substantial number of sponsorships from other private organisations like Singapore Airlines and Creative Technology, just to name a few. This provides the much-needed funds to sustain the unprofitable business that SCO is running.

SCO is a young orchestra, formed merely six years ago. Most of the musicians in the orchestra are young; hence they prove to be more receptive to new forms of music. This is in marked contrast to other established Chinese Orchestras in the region which had been set up long ago. SCO possesses flexibility to integrate Western or contemporary music with Chinese musical instruments. This allows the young orchestra to create a niche for itself in the marketplace.

There is a separation of duties between the music aspect of the orchestra and the marketing aspect of it. While the music director and the musicians concentrate on polishing their music, the management of SCO focuses their efforts on marketing the orchestra to the public, managing the accounts of the orchestra and handling the other administrative matters pertaining to the orchestra. This is a privilege that SCO is able

to enjoy as compared to the other grassroots and amateur Chinese orchestras in Singapore.

Weaknesses

The arts scene in Singapore is not as developed and vibrant as other regions in the world, like New York's Broadway and London's West End. Appreciation of the arts in Singapore is low and Singapore pales in terms of talent pool, facilities, activities, audience figures and level of state funding for the arts. The environment is essentially not conducive to the flourishing of Chinese orchestral music. Thus, there exists a need to employ more proactive marketing strategies to educate and develop a pool of audience inclined towards Chinese orchestral music, to allow SCO to better establish itself in the local arts scene.

There is also a lack of formal training institutions and Conservatories to produce a pool of professional musicians who could be recruited into the orchestra. The only avenue to obtain a professional degree in the performance of Chinese orchestral music is still through courses organised by Conservatories in China. At present, there are only two arts institutes in Singapore to cater to students pursuing arts education in Singapore. They are the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) and LaSalle. However, both institutions do not offer music programs beyond diploma courses. Furthermore, the music program in La Salle focuses on areas such as contemporary music, composition and music technology; it does not encompass courses specialising in Chinese orchestral music. Music courses in NAFA, while including the some elements of Chinese music history, world music and performance in orchestration, does not specialise in providing an education in the performance of Chinese orchestral music. The music program in NAFA encompasses numerous electives covering many general aspects of music education instead. For these reasons, the level of awareness and interest in Chinese Orchestral music is limited.

A young orchestra without a long history to boast of, SCO needs to work harder to gain more exposure and consequently garner more recognition for itself locally, regionally and internationally. Efforts have to be put in to generate more awareness of its existence, and more importantly, about its music. Through several concerts performed overseas, SCO has since received numerous favourable responses about its musicality and has created some awareness in the region. However, more must be done in order for SCO to carve out a name for itself overseas. Locally, this is done through a series of community concerts performed at different parts in Singapore all year round.

In managing an arts organisation, there is a lack of performance measures to evaluate the success of its activities. In the sale of any other products, profits, sales volume or revenue is generally used to measure the success of the firm. However, in the case of SCO, the success of a concert is not only dependent on its ticket sales. The turnout of a concert depends on various factors, including the type of music performed, the guest musician invited or any other musician within the orchestra featured, and on the successful marketing of the concert. In addition, audience response and satisfaction is also an important factor to consider when evaluating the success of a concert. SCO is a non-profit organisation; hence profitability should not be an issue when measuring

the success of its concerts. Rather, the organisation should look towards maintaining a high standard of performance as a gauge of success of its activities; since the goal of the organisation is to develop the orchestra to a higher standard to facilitate the appreciation of music in Singapore.

The nature of the industry is such that SCO will be dependent on grants and sponsorships to sustain its activities. This would put SCO in a vulnerable position since the performance of the economy will directly affect the amount of grants and sponsorships available for the organisation. Should the economy experience a downturn, the level of sponsorships might be reduced and this will adversely affect the amount of funds available. In the same way, we could also say that the budget of the organisation is constrained by the amount of funding available.

Opportunities

Stated in the Renaissance City Report released by the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) on 9 February 2000, the current Arts Education Programme will be expanded with additional funding of another \$400,000 per annum. This will make way for the systematic introduction of arts education at the junior college, secondary and primary school levels. We also see an increase in the number of Chinese orchestras set up in schools and a stronger emphasis on the Chinese orchestra as an extra curricular activity. This goes to create a heightened awareness in Chinese orchestral music and will readily develop a pool of audience keen in the activities of SCO.

The National Arts Council (NAC) will be allocated an additional \$5 million per annum over the next five years to support major arts companies, one of which is SCO. With more funds available, SCO will thus be able to embark on more projects and enjoy more flexibility in their planning. The NAC will also be allocated an additional \$700,000 per annum to promote Singaporean artists overseas; these overseas missions will help showcase Singapore's arts and heritage. Measures will also be taken to facilitate international co-productions and collaborations involving Singapore and overseas talents. More opportunities will thus be open for SCO to expand its activities overseas and gain more recognition in the international arts scene.

As part of MITA's plan to develop Singapore's cultural scene, more efforts have also been initiated to discover and groom local talents. Greater recognition will be awarded to Singaporean artistes or arts groups who have attained high standards of excellence in their fields. They could be designated as cultural ambassadors or recognised as arts laureates. The Huqin Quartet, formed by four members of the SCO, is one such arts group which has benefited from this initiative. The Huqin Quartet - being the first of such a quartet in the world - will enable the Singaporean group to carve a niche in the international music scene. The ultimate goal of MITA is to develop Singapore as an international arts events hub. Thus, it is considering measures aimed to encourage international arts events to be staged in Singapore. As a first step, the Esplanade is constructed to hold such events. In addition, measures like the withholding of tax on income earned by foreign performing artists and show presenters from arts production will provide the incentives for foreign arts groups to stage their events there. \$500,000 will be set

aside over three years to organise an international performing arts market with an Asian focus to attract the neighbouring countries to sell their arts groups and productions to festival directors of the Arts in Singapore. Consequently, it will transcend into more awareness in Chinese orchestral music, which facilitates SCO's goal to establish itself locally and in the region.

Upon the completion of the Singapore Conference Hall, SCO will move into the premises. SCO's office will be located there; the Concert Hall will not only serve as the official venue for the orchestra's daily practice but also for the rehearsing and staging of SCO's concerts. This would provide the opportunity to increase the number of concerts SCO is able to put up each year and create flexibility for the orchestra in the planning of its concerts. In addition, SCO is able to amass more funds when they collect fees for the rental of the Concert Hall. Furthermore, the marketing manager of SCO is considering the possibility of developing an audience base through organised tours to allow the public to understand how the orchestra functions and to give them the chance to attend rehearsals of the orchestra.

With the revamp of the current SCO website completed this coming July, the management is hoping to generate more awareness about its activities, especially among the English-speaking or younger audiences. The website will serve as an additional channel to reach local or even international audiences who surf the net. When people visit the website, they will learn how the orchestra functions be updated on SCO's activities and concerts and educated on the latest happenings in the Chinese orchestral scene through SCO's newsletters. This will thus enable SCO to target a wider range of audience in addition to its traditional audience base.

By participating in the Art Reach program, SCO has performed in places like the Botanical Gardens, which has attracted a large crowd of expatriates who were unfamiliar with Chinese orchestral music. This would serve as an opportunity to draw in ever larger segments of SCO's audience - the foreigners and English-speaking segment.

SCO's advertising through the mass media and print media will certainly heighten awareness and interest in its activities. This can be seen through the advertisements and interviews on the radio channel, 'Passion 99.5 FM' and occasionally in the morning program on television 'Good Morning Singapore'. Such advertisements in the mass media will help convey SCO's messages to a broad range of audience. Also, to target the more educated and knowledgeable audiences, SCO also promotes activities through the national newspaper, The Straits Times and the Arts Magazine.

Threats

The high barriers of entry in the industry have successfully eliminated SCO's threat of a direct competitor in Singapore. The nature of the industry does not allow for the formation of another professional Chinese orchestra to attain the same status as the SCO locally. The high costs involved in maintaining the orchestra and putting up a concert is only partially offset by the revenue the orchestra earns. It does not allow the orchestra to make a profit in order to sustain its operations. Hence, there is a need to depend on grants sponsorships to maintain such a professional orchestra.

The possible threat the orchestra faces is probably itself. The orchestra has to constantly improve itself to gain a foothold in the international arts scene and most importantly, to maintain a leading position in the local Chinese orchestra scene. The quality of an arts performance is a subjective matter. Hence, there is a possibility of putting up a high quality concert, but which is not well received by the audience. The response for SCO's concert may depend on whether there are events held on the same day as SCO's concert that may withhold the audience's time, and on the level of publicity generated, the popularity of the repertoire, the guest performers or even the guest conductor invited. Hence, SCO always faces the possibility of putting up a highly acclaimed concert which does not sell.

Since SCO is very dependent on government grants and private sponsorships to sustain its operations, any fluctuations in the economy will thus have a direct impact on the funds available for the company. A downturn in the economy may result in less revenue for the government, and in turn leads to less funds available to develop the arts in Singapore. The government may also need to channel more funds towards rescuing the economy, and less towards cultivating the arts. The same situation goes for the private sector. This will thus create a chain effect causing the reduction in the funds for SCO. Hence, we could say that SCO is vulnerable to the situation in the country.

(F) Marketing Strategies of SCO

Short Term

SCO has both short-term and long-term plans in the works as part of its marketing strategy. Its short-term plans stretch for about one-two years from 1st January to end of 2002. One of their short-term goals is to change their corporate image from one that was previously simple, unattractive and unfashionable to one that is fun, eventful, interesting and attractive. SCO's usual audience include working adults (10%), housewives and the elderly (less than 15%), students (60%) as well as tourists and expatriates who make up the rest of the crowd. The new image SCO hopes to present is one that is more innovative and technically savvy. This is to more effectively target the student group, which makes up an integral part of SCO's audience.

To achieve this, SCO plans to re-launch its website to reach out more effectively to the younger crowd as well as other people. It hopes to unveil the new website later this year in July 2001. This new website would be quite different from the old one in that it would include a greater use of technology like MP3 and video-clips to target and attract the younger crowd. There would also be the use of e-posters and e-flyers to inform people of new and upcoming performances. One main reason why SCO has decided on this move is that the Internet is an easy yet efficient way to reach its audience. It is also vital to get a portal that has high traffic as well as extensive coverage to reach out to a broader group of people.

Long Term

SCO's long-term plans are proposed to run until 2004. There are currently no concrete plans that are intended to go further than 2004, because there is a lot of uncertainty due to the present dynamic environment. SCO's vision is "To Become an Orchestra with an International Standing". Thus, in line with this mission, SCO's present goals and objectives are to create awareness and gain recognition as well as to inexorably pursue audience development. It also plans to go into the international arena and perform there, while differentiating itself from other orchestras and carving a niche for itself.

Currently, SCO's audience consists mainly of the Chinese-educated. Therefore, SCO is trying to shift their focus to the English-educated to try and get them to be interested and subsequently form an integral part of their audience. This is quite a tough task to undertake and entails changing the group's perceptions towards the Chinese orchestra. So far, SCO has already tried to reach out to this new target group by printing and using bilingual brochures and flyers. Its current website is also bilingual and the upgraded one would have similar features. Another group the SCO is trying to focus on is the expatriate and tourist group. Though this group is a small one, SCO feels they should not be neglected.

There are currently some audience development programs that SCO has planned. These awareness programs are very important to SCO and form an indispensable tool to help SCO achieve its objectives. They not only try to cultivate interest and positive attitudes towards Chinese orchestras amongst the general public but more importantly, amongst the student population as well.

As part of its continual and intense efforts, it launched a "*Community Series*" programme consisting of outdoor concerts. These open-air concerts are jointly organised together with the National Parks Board and are held in various parks across Singapore. For example, the Botanic Gardens, the Bukit Batok Nature Park as well as Woodlands Town Centre Garden. The Botanic Gardens concerts sometimes attract crowds of up to 5,000 people! SCO hopes to be able to put up at least four of these outdoor concerts per year. Most of the audience that come to these concerts are made up of tourists and expatriates. There are also other indoor concerts that are held in various community centres like the Bishan Community Club, the Macpherson Community Club as well as the Kolam Ayer Community Club. One main message that SCO is trying to bring across to people is that it is a professional orchestra with full-time musicians.

In such concerts, familiar songs like "*Chan Mali Chan*" are performed to allow the audience to better relate to the music. There are also "interactive sessions" that draw overwhelming response from the public. These sessions include the introduction and demonstration of musical instruments to both adults and children by members of the orchestra who then try to explain or relate as much as they can about the instruments to the public. Also included in these sessions are hands-on sessions with musical instruments where members of the orchestra allow the public to "try-out" the instruments. This can in fact help to generate greater interest among the younger generation. Quizzes are also held after these performances whereby children can participate and learn more about the Chinese orchestra.

The SCO also participates actively in the National Arts Council Arts Education Program as part of its "*School Series Community Concerts*". These programs are aimed at increasing students' knowledge and interest in the arts in an attempt to mould Singapore into a more gracious society. These concerts usually follow a sequence as shown below:

1. Overview of the concert and background / achievements of the orchestra
2. Performance of familiar tunes like pop songs
3. Quizzes are held for students to participate in
4. Orchestra members talk to teachers in charge of their own student orchestra as a form of interaction and information exchange
5. Special offers are made to students to encourage them to go for concerts like concessions and group booking discounts

The SCO has thus far come up with another program called the "*Chinese Orchestra In-Focus*" which offers excursions and other enjoyable opportunities for students to visit and watch the SCO in rehearsals on weekends. Briefings and on-site student tours are also held before the concerts to help the students gain a better understanding into the operations of the orchestra.

The SCO also performs in schools with a wide selection of community songs, television serial theme songs and pop songs to reach out to the younger crowd. The SCO's target group of students encompasses those studying at primary, secondary and junior college levels. The SCO also has the "Tunes of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra" program that aims to promote appreciation of Chinese orchestra music amongst the young Singaporeans. This program is somewhat similar to the "*Community Series*" concerts.

SCO is also making use of other channels to reach out to its audience like broadcasting its performance on radio channels like Passion 99.5FM or advertising on newspapers like The Straits Times. This can help them reach out to the potential English educated audience. Tickets are sold at all SISTIC outlets to make it easily available to the audience.

As part of its long-term audience development strategy, SCO has also launched a "*Friends of Singapore Chinese Orchestra*" program that hopes to attract more attention and interest. A person has to pay a fee of \$50 per year to be a member. Fees are subsidised to about \$30 for students, NS men or senior citizens. As a member, privileges would be priority booking for SCO's concerts and Subscription Series concerts; invitations to meet the conductors, performers and guest performers; enjoyment of 10% discounts at all F&B outlets operated by Allson Hotel Singapore and so on. Members will also receive SCO's newsletter entitled "Hua Yue".

(G) The Future of the Local Arts Scene

The development of institutions and infrastructure has put in place much "hardware" for the development of the culture and the arts, so now it is necessary to give more focus to the "software" aspect. The Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) has developed a vision for Singapore to be a renaissance city and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has promised to set aside more funds for the Arts. MITA has two aims: firstly to establish Singapore as a global hub for flourishing of the arts, to position Singapore as a key city in Asia and as one of the cultural centres in the world. And secondly, to provide cultural ballast in the nation-building efforts.

In order to develop the arts and cultural scene, MITA has developed two approaches. That is to nurture a pool of people with the appreciation of the arts and a keen sense of aesthetic. Furthermore, more efforts will be made to attract, develop and support both local and overseas talent. This includes the support of arts making and investment programs that will contribute to the creative scene in Singapore. MITA will pursue six strategies and they are:

1. Develop a strong arts and cultural base. This involves enthusing Singaporeans with an interest in culture, particularly through arts education programmes, and supporting their research in our local arts and heritage.
2. Develop major arts companies, which are driven by artistic vision and leadership to produce work of consistently high quality, and are managed by a core of full-time artistic and administrative personnel. They are dedicated to nurturing new works, new talent and new audience.
3. Identify and groom talent. This requires initiatives to discover and nurture and recognise artistic talents that can contribute to the arts and cultural scene in Singapore.
4. Provide good infrastructure and facilities. The provision and maintenance of good infrastructure will continue to be an important factor in supporting the culture and arts.
5. Go international. In order for Singapore to be the cultural centre in the world, our arts and heritage must be promoted in the international arena and encouragement must be made for international collaboration between Singapore and overseas talent.
6. Develop what we call an arts and cultural "renaissance" economy. Investments have to be made on programs that will add to the excitement and attraction of our cultural scene, and do this in such a way that positions Singapore as an international city of culture.

With such enthusiastic support from the government, the future arts scene is bound to be a vibrant one. In addition, the efforts of NAC will have an impact on the arts scene too. This is because the NAC was set up to spearhead the development of arts in Singapore and to help nurture the arts and develop Singapore into a vibrant global city for the arts. It provides financial assistance and arts housing for artists and arts groups, and actively promotes them locally and abroad.

To identify talents, NAC organises competitions for various arts forms. It also organises arts events to enliven the city and develops the audience base through

outreach programs, which bring arts to the masses. The young are given the opportunity for arts appreciation through arts education programs in schools. Awards are given to artists for their achievements and to patrons for their sponsorship. It actively participates in cultural exchange programs and engages in international networking and marketing. Furthermore, more venues for arts have been set up such as the Esplande, NUS concert hall, Asian Civilisations Museum and more.

(H) The Future of SCO

With greater support from the government, the future of SCO will be an optimistic one. Furthermore, more people are becoming aware of the activities of SCO and there has been a rise of Chinese-educated listeners in the past years although the numbers of English-educated listeners are still relatively low. In addition, more private companies are supporting the activities of SCO. There are also more media channels such as Lianhe Zaobao and Passion 99.5 FM putting in effort to publicise the upcoming performances of SCO.

(I) CONCLUSION

The SCO has taken a great leap since its transition into a professional, national Chinese Orchestra. It has benefited from the government's initiatives to develop the arts and culture in Singapore, and has grown significantly within a short span of five years. The future of SCO is not only dependent on its own internal growth and development, but also on the keenness of the state to support its growth. Hence, the state of the arts and cultural scene in Singapore will have a major influence on the direction the SCO is heading.

"Artistic creativity is an important element of a knowledge-based economy", said PM Goh Chok Tong during this National Day Rally speech. Singapore is in the top league of cities in terms of our economic performance, however, we fare less based on cultural indicators. Hence, the government is taking an enormous step to cultivate the arts in Singapore. Culture and the arts serves to enhance our quality of life, Singaporean's sense of national identity and the attractiveness of our country both as an investment hub, a place to stay and as a tourist attraction.

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