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 Headline: Semakin popular di kalangan masyarakat Melayu

ESPLANADE - TEATER DI PESIRAN

Sektor persembahan dan pentas Melayu di sini semakin berkembang pesat. Bilakah, persembahan jalinan penonton yang menyaksikan pentas yang semakin bergai. Dengan adanya Eplanade - Teater Di Pesiran, yang menjadi tempat mengumpulnya pelbagai persembahan seni Melayu di sini, maka dapat sektor tersebut dipuja terus mempunyai pentas yang cerah, lucu seperti PADI BUKAN... dan SARIWA BUKAN... bertaraf persembahan sektor tersebut.

Semakin popular di kalangan masyarakat Melayu



Seni Melayu di Eplanade, di pentas yang semakin bergai. Teater Di Pesiran terus bertaraf persembahan seni Melayu. - Foto MZ

Jumlah penonton Pesta Seni Melayu berkembang tiap tahun

PERSEMBAHAN dan pentas seni Melayu, khususnya seni pertunjukan, semakin bergai dan berkembang pesat di sini. Dengan adanya Eplanade - Teater Di Pesiran, maka dapat sektor tersebut dipuja terus mempunyai pentas yang cerah, lucu seperti PADI BUKAN... dan SARIWA BUKAN... bertaraf persembahan sektor tersebut.

Penonton Pesta Raya

Tahun	Jumlah
2002	5,500
2003	6,400
2004	17,800
2005	29,100
2006	38,500
2007	37,700
2008	46,700

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Cuba tarik penonton muda, pupuk lebih ramai bakat

Untuk menarik minat penonton muda dan memupuk bakat seni Melayu, pihak Eplanade - Teater Di Pesiran akan mengadakan pertandingan seni Melayu untuk golongan muda. Dengan adanya pertandingan ini, diharapkan dapat menarik minat penonton muda dan memupuk bakat seni Melayu.



Seni Melayu di Eplanade, di pentas yang semakin bergai. - Foto MZ

ESPLANADE - TEATER DI PESIRAN



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Adakahlah pementasan sepanjang tahun

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The Malay performing arts sector is growing in Singapore. Turnout at shows indicates a highly encouraging trend. With Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay as the platform for various Malay arts performances, the future looks bright. PUAD IBRAHIM (puad@sph.com.sg) and SAFHRAS KHAN (safkhan@sph.com.sg) report.

Scoring at the Malay popularity stakes

Audiences for the Pesta Raya - Malay Festival of Arts grow in number each year

Captions:

TICKETS SOLD OUT: 1,600 people thronged the concert hall at Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay when Sweet Charity returned to the stage.

ROMZI AND JULEHA: This performance attracted many people's attention.

NO LESS IN PERFORMANCE QUALITY: Quality arts performances can also be enjoyed at the Outdoor Theatre, not far from Marina Bay.

Since Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay launched Malay programmes actively in 2002, audience response to the shows organised for the community has been overwhelming.

Audience numbers for *the Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts*, a festival held annually during the Hari Raya season in 2002, have grown every year. It hit a record high last year.

According to Esplanade, the festival attracted approximately 1,500 people when it was first held in 2002. A year later, it attracted 5,400 people.

In 2005, the number jumped to 29,100 people before reaching its peak at 46,700 people last year.

Pesta Raya started as a three-day festival in 2002 and 2003. Since 2004, it has become a 10-day celebration.

The festival offers all kinds of free arts performances and activities as well as ticketed concerts, musicals, cultural shows, dances and poetry.

The most glamorous performance staged so far during the festival has been the performance of *Puteri Gunung Ledang* in 2006.

Realising the high expectations of the Malay community for quality programmes, Esplanade started the series *Pentas – Setting the Stage* in 2007. This series showcased various forms of arts and artists in a bid to satisfy the demands of Malay audiences.

Shows which attracted the most attention included the Indonesian traditional dance *Calonarang*, Siti Nurhaliza's concert, the *P Ramlee The Musical*, the staging of *Romzi and Juleha* as well as the Sweet Charity concert held on 31 May.

Romzi and Juleha and *P Ramlee The Musical* gathered approximately 5,800 show-goers while the Sweet Charity concert, held in the 1,600-capacity concert hall, was sold out.

Recounting the beginnings of the *Pesta Raya*, Esplanade's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Benson Puah, said that people were doubtful when the idea was first mooted. The Malay community might not have had time to attend the festival as they were held during the Hari Raya festive season, he said.

Apart from the unfamiliar practice of buying tickets for Malay performances, the small number of show-goers among the Malay community was also a challenge.

"We launched *Pesta Raya* despite the skepticism. We needed to let the Malay community know that they had a place here (at Esplanade) and we wanted to develop the (Malay) artists and the audience," Mr Puah said.

Pentas – Setting the Stage was launched in order to meet Malay viewers' increasing demands and interest for quality shows and performances.

Commenting on the quality of Malay shows and performances at Esplanade, show-goer Mr Hamdan Mohamed, 49, said that Esplanade offered an arts-viewing experience that was not confined to the main halls of the theatre.

"The public can also enjoy quality arts performances at the Outdoor Theatre, close to Marina Bay," he said.

Effort to attract a young audience and develop greater talent

Caption:

MR BENSON PUAH: The Malay arts can be further enhanced.

Attracting a younger audience and developing more local talent in the arts.

This is the one of the main focus of Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay as it tries to give the Malay performing arts industry a greater boost for the future.

Its Chief Executive Officer, Mr Benson Puah, said that the young would be more open and accepting of their cultural heritage if they were involved in the arts.

"Today, the pervasiveness of MTV and other western media and lifestyle influences among our youth have resulted in the need for some rebalancing. The sights and sounds associated with our own cultural heritage must also be present in their lives so that when they grow up, these are not alien to them," said Mr Puah in an e-mail reply to *Berita Harian* recently.

He hopes that involving youths in the arts will help nurture some to develop an aesthetic sense, as well as develop a more wholesome group of viewers in the future.

Realising the importance of building a generation of young viewers in the future, Esplanade pioneered its vision by organising several performances that have exposed the young to the arts. These include *100% Cilik*, a production which took

place last year during *Pesta Raya* and an introduction to Malay music programme that was attended by more than 600 students last year.

Other than the audience, Esplanade also wants to develop local artists, using *Pesta Raya* as a platform to give exposure to local and regional talent.

“The Malay arts community is very gifted and can develop much further. Local arts groups and artists can grow through collaborations and workshops with more established artists from the region that take place at *Pesta* and our genre festivals,” Mr Puah added.

He cited local scriptwriter and director, Rifaat Haji Hamzah, as an example. Rifaat was showcased in *Wangi Jadi Saksi* in *Pesta Raya* 2007 in a theatrical piece about Hang Tuah. The show was helmed by respected theatre and film director, U-Wei Haji Saari.

Esplanade has also sought to develop new production content here, given that the region is rich in cultural variety and is a melting pot of the giant civilisations of Asia, the Middle East and the West.

Hold shows throughout the year

Audiences hope shows are not limited to the festive Hari Raya season only

Caption:

OUTSIDE THE FESTIVE SEASON: Year-round shows pose no limits on enjoying performances

Malay audiences would like to see more shows and performances held at Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay year-round, and not just during the Hari Raya season.

This is because shows and performances targeted at the Malay community in the last few years have proven to be of high quality, satisfying the cravings of Malay audiences.

Show-goer, Ms Zanariah Said, said having such performances throughout the year allow audiences to enjoy them for a longer period of time.

“I hope that more shows are held during the other months and not just during the Hari Raya season.

“If held throughout the year, it would give the audience time to enjoy the performances,” said Ms Zanariah.

She said attending the concerts or shows at Esplanade was an enjoyable experience. She praised the theatre's service.

“When I watched the Anuar Zain concert, everything went smoothly. Their officers were polite and ushered me to my seat,” she said.

Ms Zanariah was not the only one who lauded the Malay shows and concerts held at Esplanade.

Another fan, Mr Hamdan Mohamed, echoed her sentiments.

Mr Hamdan, who recently attended the Sweet Charity concert, was impressed with the way Esplanade staff conducted security checks.

“With thorough security checks in place, concert-goers feel secure. There were some who wanted to bring in unauthorised objects. The Esplanade officials handled such situations with tact,” said the 49-year-old.

He also shared his experience watching *P Ramlee The Musical*.

“That was the first time I watched a musical and it was an eye-opening experience. I enjoyed it,” he said.

Another theatre fan, Ms Suzana Aziz, who watched *Puteri Gunung Ledang*, agreed.

The 34-year-old was apprehensive at first, having arrived five minutes late.

“Even though I was late, Esplanade ushers politely showed me to my seat,” she said.

For Ms Suzana, the atmosphere she felt during the show was very magnetic.

“I sat in the last row, but I was still able to relate to and enjoy the story,” she added.

It was the same for Ms Norazlina Wagiman, who had fond memories of the Ungu concert last year.

“I was very entertained by the concert. The attractive lighting effects and sound quality made the concert a memorable one for me,” she said.

“I am enthusiastic about Esplanade's plans to hold more Malay concerts and shows,” she added.

Mr Hamdan would like to see more artistes from across the Causeway perform at Esplanade.

“I would like to see more concerts by Malay artistes from Malaysia since these artists are popular and I am a very big fan,” said Mr Hamdan.

“Local artistes have been given the chance to do shows and performances at the Esplanade. The local arts scene has improved a lot and there are now more windows of opportunity. The challenge is to encourage the community to watch and appreciate the productions and performances. Local artistes have worked hard and shown that they are progressive and contemporary. The artist needs an audience and they receive satisfaction and affirmation when audiences show their appreciation for their art.”

– Ms Oniatta Effendi (*right*), theatre lecturer at LASALLE College of the Arts and host of children's TV show, *Krayon*