

Singapore Government

Press Release

Media Division, Ministry of Information & the Arts, #36-00, PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963, Tel: 3757795

**SPEECH BY DPM BG LEE HSIEN LOONG
AT THE INAUGURATION OF
THE SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA COMPANY
AT THE PINETREE TOWN & COUNTRY CLUB
8 pm 24 JUNE 1996.**

The inauguration of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra Company is a significant milestone in the development of the arts in Singapore. The Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) is the second orchestra in Singapore after the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) to turn professional.

There are more than 100 Chinese orchestras in Singapore. But SCO is the only full-time one. It was first established as the People's Association Chinese Orchestra in 1968. Over the years it has gradually grown, to reach its present size of 32 full-time members. In 1992 we renamed it the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, to pave the way for its eventual development into a full-fledge professional orchestra. Now we have set up a company limited by guarantee to manage the Orchestra. The company plans to expand the SCO from its present strength of 32 members to 62 over 5 years.

Singapore has made good progress in the economic and social areas. Our standard of living in material terms is equivalent to many developed nations. But we must not neglect cultural and artistic pursuits. A full-fledged professional Chinese orchestra will be an important part of our cultural scene. Chinese music is already popular among Singaporeans. There is much amateur talent, especially in the SAP schools. The SCO must reach out to Singaporeans who are interested in Chinese music. It should also try to expand the audience for Chinese music, to sustain itself and to help to fulfil our vision of a more gracious and artistically vibrant society.

Establishing a full-fledged orchestra is no easy feat. The Singapore Symphony Orchestra took 15 years of concerted effort by the Government, the community and the full dedication of its Board of Directors, Ladies League members & staff to reach its current status. The SCO will need equally strong community support to establish itself as an orchestra of distinction.

To give the SCO a head-start, the Government has agreed to let the orchestra use the Singapore Conference Hall as its permanent home where it can conduct practices and stage regular concerts. The Government will renovate the Conference Hall at an estimated cost of \$22 million and provide an annual grant to SCO to cover the rental of the premises.

The Singapore Totalisator Board is also supporting the SCO. It has set up a \$10m reversionary trust fund for the SCO. In addition, it has given the SCO a \$1m grant to meet its immediate operational costs.

The interest from the trust fund, and the grants from the Tote Board and the Government will, however, only meet a part of SCO's operational expenses. This is why the SCO Board of Directors is also raising money to build up an Endowment Fund for the SCO. It has already raised \$2.3m within a short time. This shows the support which the SCO enjoys, and the generosity of the community in support of a worthy cause . I thank the donors for their unstinting support. On its part the Government will exempt from tax all the donations to the SCO Endowment Fund.

I am happy to see so many well-wishers and supporters here tonight. Under the able leadership of Mr Chng Heng Thiu and the members of SCO Board of Management, I am confident that the SCO will develop into an outstanding orchestra which all Singaporeans can be proud of.

National Archives**** of Singapore