

# Spring songs

**Dama Orchestra stages *I Have A Date With Spring - The Musical*, which offers golden melodies and the interesting tale of four friends.**

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**S**IT in a nightclub and spanning three decades, *I Have A Date With Spring - The Musical* features some two dozen songs, including 1960s and 70s Mandarin songs and 70s English oldies.

The Dama Orchestra production called Ngo Wu Chan Tin Ho Go Yrak Hui in Cantonese will be staged at Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac) starting tomorrow.

Expect classic, catchy Chinese tunes such as *Tou You Mo Mo* (Smoking Around) and *Ni Wei Nei Wei Li Niqi Cheng* (All Because of Love).

The story centres on the endearing friendships involving four cabaret singers - Butterfly, Lulu, Fong Ping and Nancy - who dream of achieving fame and fortune through singing.

Butterfly is the only one who achieves stardom but she looks out in love as her love interest Karl leaves the country for greener pastures.

Dama Orchestra music director Khor Seong Chew and director Pua Kai Ioon co-produced the musical.

Khor, who calls it the Chinese *Memorabilia*, says the musical is similar except the setting - originally in Hong Kong - has been changed for Malaysian audiences.

The musical is an adaptation of an award-winning Hong Kong play written by Raymond To, which has been adapted into a 1994 movie and a 1995 ATV television series as well as other stage productions in Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai.

The Hong Kong TV series starring Sherry Tang, Kin Sheng and Kwong Wah is airing on tv7 at 1.30pm on weekdays.

"Many people have asked whether we planned it but I tell them that it's just a



**Cheerful:** Main cast of Dama Orchestra's *I Have A Date With Spring - The Musical*: (from left) Chris Tong Bing Yu (who plays Fong Ping), Tan Soo Suan (Butterfly Yu), Steve Yap (Karl), Janet Lee (Lulu) and Chang Fang Chyi (Nancy).

coincidence, a very fortunate one!" said Khor.

*I Have A Date With Spring - The Musical* will be staged by a talented Malaysian cast of 10 actors, including 32-year-old Tan Soo Suan, Chris Tong (26), Janet Lee (32), Chang Fang Chyi (38) and Steve Yap (38).

Bushy actor/model Yap is a familiar face on TV and televisions as well as TV commercials and print advertisements, but it is the first time he is attempting a musical. Yap plays Karl, Butterfly's love interest, in the musical.

Although he lacks experience in singing, Yap came highly recommended by the show's language coach Lee Jin West. With his good looks and lively look, he easily got the role of the male lead.

Yap, who modestly calls himself a non-singer, quipped: "It's a great learning experience for me. Moreover, I get to practice Mandarin and take singing and dancing lessons from professional coaches for free."

Dama's resident soprano Tan plays the part of female lead Butterfly as well as the vocal coach. The winner of 2004 and 2005 Reb Cameroonian Arts Awards for Best Solo

Performance (Voice) had her hands full guiding all the other performers and making sure everyone's vocals were in top form.

"In this musical, we have to present Cantonese, Mandarin and English songs in all genres such as a go go and disco. It's all very high energy stuff but I find it very enjoyable - the combination of adrenalin and stress."

Performing in her first Chinese language production, Chang plays Nancy, a lounge singer who prefers singing English songs.

In the musical, she gets to sing English tunes like *As Time Goes By* and *Kim Mr. Honey, Kiss Me* as well as Chinese songs.

As an director by day and performer by night, Chang said she took on the role of Nancy for the opportunity to play a more feminine character and get all dolled up in a performer.

"I usually play strong females and sometimes even male characters. Nancy is the



**Songbirds:** Fong, Tan, Lee and Chang in their respective personas - Fong Ping, Butterfly, Lulu and Nancy - in the musical.

strongest, most independent of the girls."

Bouty upon-urned-actress Fong portrays the unfortunate Fong Ping. The Miss Malaysia Chinese International 2006 says her character is the saddest of the four.

"My character falls in love and wants to be with her man so she sacrifices her career for love."

Classically trained as a singer, actress Lee plays the ditzy Lulu. "She's a bit of a scatterbrain. Although she is not as successful in her career, Lulu's story has the happiest ending compared to the others."



**Hitting the high notes:** Resident soprano-cum-vocal coach Tan Soo Suan helps to guide her co-stars in the vocals department.

■ Dama Orchestra's *I Have A Date With Spring - The Musical* will be staged at Arena 1, Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac), Sentul Park, from tomorrow until Oct 25.

The musical will be in Cantonese with English and Mandarin subtitles. Showtime is at 8.30pm while on Sundays, there will be matinee shows at 3pm. Tickets for shows on Wednesday and Thursday are priced at RM50, RM95, RM130, RM165, RM200 and RM235. Tickets for shows on Friday, Saturday and Sunday are priced at RM75, RM115, RM155, RM200 and RM275.

For further details and ticket reservation, contact Dama Orchestra (☎ 03-6201 9107/9108 / dorama@damaochestra.com) or KLPac (☎ 03-4047 9600 / klpac.com) or Arena (☎ 03-7711 5000/5030 / arena.com.my).

The musical also allocates four of its shows to raising funds for charity. The show on Oct 10 is a fund-raising effort for Melaka Institute Building, Education & Development Fund. Tickets are selling at AM08, RM120, RM150, RM200 and RM250. For further details and ticket reservation, visit malakainstitute.org.my or call Dr Kim Siew (012-3454 448); Kevin Ooi (019-2187 088) or Angie Teo (013-3362 501).

The show on Oct 18 is a charity fund-raiser for Rotary Club of Petaling Jaya. For enquiries, call Sherry Lam (018-2270 4231). Shows on Oct 24 and 25 are fund-raisers for Tzu Chi Buddhist Merit Society.