

# Notes of excellence

UCSI University's Institute of Music is consistently charting new grounds in international musical standards as Malaysia's leading music school.

Foundation in Music at UCSI University's Institute of Music (IMus) student Koay Wan Ern, 19, had wanted to be a professional pianist since the age of 10.

She was only in her second semester when she won the Best Etude Award in the Senior category at the Second International Piano Festival and Competition 2016 (IPFC).

"Etudes have a high level of technical difficulty and I did not expect to win," said Koay.

Organised biennially by IMus, this year's IPFC welcomed a total of 116 participants between the ages of seven and 25 from Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam for the competition, as well as for seminars, masterclasses and recitals.

These young pianists were able to perform for and receive constructive feedback from award-winning maestros-cum-professors such as Dr Peter Amstutz from West Virginia University, Professor Akira Imai from Kunitachi College of Music, Dr Lucas Wong from Soochow University School of Music, and more.

Ho Sue Jin, a Bachelor of Classical Music student, is Koay's senior and also a semi-finalist at IPFC.

"UCSI truly goes out of its way to encourage self-exploration," she said.

"I have enjoyed numerous opportunities to perform as I was studying and all these experiences have helped me immensely in learning more about myself as a

performer and how I can improve."

IPFC is only one of the many high-level and star-studded events that UCSI students are a part of.

Constantly seeking to enrich the learning experiences of their students, UCSI actively secures strong industry linkages and university affiliations to provide

engaging platforms for networking, performance and study at international levels.

Iconic artistes such as Malaysia's foremost jazz pianist Michael Veerapan; Malaysian drum virtuoso John Thomas; renowned violinist David Frühwirth; and international concert pianists Dennis Lee and Toh Chee Hung are just a few who have crossed UCSI's doorstep to showcase insightful masterclasses.

The Artist in Residence programme is another similar endeavour by UCSI to keep its students in touch with the world.

There, prominent or legendary musicians are invited to stay as visiting scholars for a period of time to enhance learning and teaching outcomes.

Earlier this year, UCSI hosted the Orfeo Trio from Wichita State University comprising visiting professor Dr Julie Bees, Evgeny Zvonnikov and Dr Leonid Shukaev.

Prof Dr Bees has conducted recitals and masterclasses around the world, while Zvonnikov and

Dr Shukaev are members of the famed St Petersburg String Quartet, which received numerous accolades, including a Grammy nomination.

Together, they held a variety of masterclasses, conversation sessions, individual coaching, ensemble group classes, and recitals at UCSI.

"UCSI has a very vibrant group of contemporary musicians and this speaks well of the quality of its programme and the students it attracts as well as graduates," said Prof Dr Bees, who was also treated to a performance by UCSI alumni, the Terrence Ling Group.

Prof Dr Bees did not only spend her time with students but enjoyed recitals from faculty members as well.

"The performances were outstanding," she said.

"They are experienced performers and teachers, some of whom are especially mature artists with fabulous gifts."

IMus' team of educators are 70-strong and together, they have a comprehensive range of expertise in the fields of performing, com-

posing, technology and pedagogy.

IMus director Prof Dr P'ng Tean Hwa said UCSI instructors are still involved in the industry.

"We stay at the top of our game so that we are able to provide the best guidance to our students."

Indeed, UCSI aims to lead music education in the region.

Its fully accredited study programmes are one of if not the strongest in the country, undergoing constant review to ensure that the syllabi respond to current developments.

Its alumni is testament to its success; UCSI is where musical forces the likes of performing artists Dr Joanne Yeoh and Dennis Lau, jazz pianist Liu Wei Zhong, acclaimed composer and music director Sen Weng Onn, as well as award-winning singer Tracy Wong, among others, got their first start in their professional careers.

"UCSI was my stepping stone to greater things in life," said Dr Yeoh, who just this April became the first Malaysian to perform an aerial violin act.

"Who I am today, I owe it largely to UCSI."

■ For details on UCSI University's Institute of Music programmes, call 03-9101 8882 or leave a query at [www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry](http://www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry).



Winners and finalists of the Second International Piano Festival and Competition 2016 pictured with UCSI's vice-chancellor and president Senior Prof Datuk Dr Khalid Yusoff (third from right), UCSI Institute of Music's director Prof Dr P'ng Tean Hwa (far right) and adjudicators.