

MALAYSIAN FILM Wednesday September



(From left) Tsukamoto, San and Khor are excited to bring the 'Ola Bola — Movie with Live Music' to Malaysians. — Picture by Mukhriz Hazim

Kicking it up a notch

By Melanie Chail
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COMPOSER Onn San was working on the music for local hit film *Ola Bola* when director Chiu Keng Guan broached the idea and said, "Wouldn't it be nice if an orchestra were to play the score live?"

San didn't imagine it to be a reality but this weekend, the beloved football flick will be screened at Dewan Filharmonik Petronas in Kuala Lumpur,

accompanied by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

The 2016 blockbuster, inspired by the Malaysian football team that successfully qualified for the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, Russia, raked in RM16 million at the box office.

The 33-year-old, whose music for the film earned him a best original score award at the 28th Malaysian Film Festival last year, approached the orchestra over a year ago but the programme had been finalised for the season.

All that changed when orchestra artistic administrator Khor Chin Yang reached out to him for this year's programme, realising the dream.

"To get the orchestra to play the score live is a rare opportunity.

"The film is amazing, it's the most Malaysian film I've seen and the story is truly a reflection of our country," said San.

The live orchestra film screening, in partnership with Astro, will feature never-before-heard music, which had been removed in the editing process, an added advantage that will delight audiences.

Additionally, the UCSI Chorale will perform at the concert along with Juwita Suwito who will sing a newer version of the movie theme song, *Arena Cahaya*.

Ola Bola — Movie with Live Music marks the orchestra's first screening of a local film.

"We try to come up with unique and creative

ideas — we last screened Pixar's *Ratatouille*, why not a Malaysian film in conjunction with Malaysia Day?

"*Ola Bola* is one of the most popular recent films with a memorable soundtrack," orchestra general manager Timothy Tsukamoto said.

Tisch School of Fine Arts graduate San said he did not need to look far for inspiration as the film's powerful narrative struck a chord.

"I remember watching a scene and teared up because I saw myself there in Stadium Merdeka. When I was a kid, my dad used to bring me there to watch football so I can relate to that."

To adapt the music for the live performance, San worked with orchestrators Isaac Chia and Chan Yuen Kaye to improvise the score for a 60-piece orchestra and 30-member choir.

"One of the challenges is for the conductor (Jessica Cottis) to sync the score with the film and getting the right tempo and timing — it will be amazing when everything comes together," said Tsukamoto.

Well over a year after its release, the film continues to capture the imaginations of Malaysians — fans can look forward to a musical slated for a release next year at Istana Budaya.

"When you watch the film, it's a picture of our own lives and experiences. There's so much appeal in it that it can be reconstructed into many other forms," said Khor.

While sports films are rare in Malaysia, *Ola Bola* is one of the few local movies that captures a sense of togetherness, on and off screen.

In that respect, sports, film and music possess the uncanny ability to bring people together.



'Ola Bola — Movie with Live Music' premieres this weekend in conjunction with Malaysia Day. — Picture by MPO

"Maybe it's something we don't often see in sports these days but at the recent SEA Games, we've seen Malaysians come together and people perhaps relate to a sports film in that way," said San, who serves as music director for the 2017 Asean Para Games opening and closing ceremonies.

Whether one is reliving the film or watching it for the first time this weekend, San hopes to invoke a sense of pride in audiences.

"There's something to be learned from these historical sporting figures who have gone through so much."

Catch *Ola Bola — Movie with Live Music* on Friday and Saturday, 8.30pm at Dewan Filharmonik Petronas. Ticket start at RM120. Call 03-2331 7007 or visit mpo.com.my for tickets.



Suwito will sing a newer version of 'Arena Cahaya' with the orchestra. — Picture by MPO