

E-CONCERT PROGRAMME

Malaysian
Philharmonic
Orchestra



SYMPHONIC GHIBLI

2026 SEASON

PERFORMANCES AT
DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS



MALAYSIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) gave its inaugural performance at Dewan Filharmonik PETRONAS (DFP) on 17 August 1998 and has since provided the ultimate concert experience through music that entertains, educates and inspires.

Today, the MPO is made up of talented musicians from Malaysia and other nations, a beautiful example of harmony among different cultures and nationalities.

With immaculate versatility that transcends genres, the MPO continues to present classical masterpieces, film music, pop, jazz, traditional and contemporary works including anime music.

The MPO's artistry and vitality have been lauded by acclaimed international luminaries such as Lorin Maazel, Sir Neville Marriner, Joshua Bell, Harry Connick Jr., José Carreras, Andrea Bocelli, Kiri Te Kanawa, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Chris Botti and Branford Marsalis. Renowned local artists who

have performed with the MPO include S.M. Salim, Sheila Majid, M Nasir, Siti Nurhaliza, Jamal Abdillah, Ella, Dayang Nurfaizah and Aishah.

Affirming its stature in the Asian region, the MPO has performed in Singapore, Japan, Korea, Australia, China, Taiwan and Vietnam besides national tours around Malaysia. The MPO has also released 21 CDs.

Through its talent development programme, the MPO is dedicated in nurturing an appreciation among the young generation through its knowledge and skills transfer to the Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. This initiative is supported by contributions from the public.

Beyond its concert schedule, the MPO expands its services to commercial purposes such as musician hire, tours, education and outreach programme and beneficial partnerships.

The MPO remains steadfast in its mission to share the depth and power of great music for all walks of life. Its main benefactor is PETRONAS and its patron is YABhg. Tun Dr. Siti Hasmah Haji Mohd Ali.

Symphonic Ghibli II

Thu 2 Jul 2026, 8:00PM
Fri 3 Jul 2026, 8:00PM
Sat 4 Jul 2026, 8:00PM
Sun 5 Jul 2026, 3:00PM
Wed 8 Jul 2026, 8:00PM
Thu 9 Jul 2026, 8:00PM
Fri 10 Jul 2026, 8:00PM
Sat 11 Jul 2026, 8:00PM
Sun 12 Jul 2026, 3:00PM

02 Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
05 Gerard Salonga, conductor
06 Qahar Aqilah, narrator
06 Nadia Aqilah, narrator

PROGRAMME

HISAISHI

Kiki's Delivery Service: Symphonic Suite 25 mins

On a Clear Day
A Town with an Ocean View
The Baker's Assistant
Starting the Job
Surrogate Jiji
Jeff
A Very Busy Kiki
Late for the Party
A Propeller Driven Bicycle
I Can't Fly!
Heartbroken Kiki
An Unusual Painting
The Adventure of Freedom
Out of Control
The Old Man's Push Broom
Rendezvous on the Push Broom
Mother's Broom

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HISAISHI

My Neighbour Totoro: Orchestra Stories *25 mins*

Hey Let's Go
The Village in May
Dust Bunnies - Mother
A Little Monster Totoro
The Path of the Wind
A Lost Child
Cat Bus
My Neighbour Totoro

20-mins intermission

HISAISHI

Howl's Moving Castle: Symphonic Variation Merry-Go-Round and Cave of Mind *14 mins*

HISAISHI

Spirited Away: Symphonic Suite *27 mins*

One Summer's Day
Nighttime Coming
The Gods
View of the Morning
The Bottomless Pit
The Dragon Boy
No Face
The Sixth Station
Reprise
The Return



conductor

Gerard Salonga

Past collaborations have included with renowned artists such as Lea Salonga, Sumi Jo, Wang Leehom, Wu Tong, Tengku Irfan, Hacken Lee, Michael Ball, Il Divo, Danielle de Niese, Ksenija Sidorova, Shen Yang, James Ehnes, Jan Lisiecki and The Beach Boys.

Salonga has conducted a wide range of concerts with the MPO including film, pop, symphony and family concerts. His arrangements were performed by the BBC, Indianapolis and Guangzhou Symphony Orchestras, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops and Royal Philharmonics. He has conducted the recordings of the Hong Kong Philharmonic for Sony Classical as well as the Sønderjyllands Symfoniorkester for Danacord.

For musical theatre, he has led *Carousel*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *Dreamgirls*, *Baby*, *West Side Story*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Little Women* in Manila and Singapore.

He has served as a jury at competitions in Malaysia, The Philippines and Singapore, and given lectures at universities and higher learning institutions in Malaysia.

In 2012, Salonga was honoured as one of The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM), The Philippines' highest civilian award to achievers under 40. In 2021, he received the SUDI National Music Award by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

Gerard Salonga has held the position of Resident Conductor of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) since 2019. He has served as Assistant Conductor of the Hong Kong Philharmonic (appointed by Jaap van Zweden) and Music Director of the ABS-CBN Philharmonic Orchestra in Manila. In 2021, he became Music Director of the Orchestra of the Filipino Youth (OFY).

He has worked as an assistant to conductors such as Jun Märkl, Hans Graf, Yu Long, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Mark Wigglesworth and Leonard Slatkin. He has conducted The Philippines, Thailand and South Denmark Philharmonics, Shanghai Opera House Orchestra and Chorus, Kunming Nie-Er Symphony, Evergreen Symphony of Taiwan, and the Bangkok, Singapore and Sydney Symphonies at iconic venues including London's Royal Albert Hall and Sydney Opera House.



narrator

Qahar Aqilah

Qahar Aqilah has been primarily an actor, acting teacher and a voice enthusiast for over 20 years. He was trained as an actor at the Michael Howard Studios in New York where he studied voicework with David Wells and the *Shakespeare in the Present* series of workshops with Patsy Rodenburg. He was a Best Supporting Actor (Theatre) nominee at the 17th BOH Cameronian Arts Awards in 2020. He was involved in *The Merry Widow* (KL City Opera, 2026), *Young Mozart Voyager* and *The Golden Age of Broadway* (KL City Opera, 2025) and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (2024).

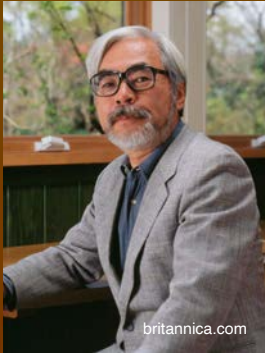


narrator

Nadia Aqilah

Nadia Aqilah Bajuri is a multifaceted talent, excelling as an actor, stage performer and songwriter. She initially gained recognition in the musical scene as a member of two female R&B groups, M'Braze and Luscious. Transitioning into acting and dancing, she started as an ensemble member in local musical theatres but swiftly rose to prominence, securing lead roles. Notable achievements include winning Best Performance as Saloma in *P. Ramlee The Musical* and as Cathy in the award-winning *The Last Five Years*. She has also received various nominations for her work on both screen and stage. She remains active in her pursuits and aspires to collaborate with more inspiring projects in the future.

PROGRAMME NOTES



There is something inherently mesmerising about the work of Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki, who's also the co-founder of Studio Ghibli which produces some of the world's beloved animations including 2003 Academy Awards' best animated feature *Spirited Away* and the beloved classic *My Neighbour Totoro*.

Widely regarded as one of the most influential filmmakers in animation history, Miyazaki shares a longstanding creative partnership with composer and pianist Joe Hisaishi – a collaboration whose emotional resonance continues to transcend time, trends and changing tastes.



Hisaishi is celebrated for his memorable orchestral themes and deeply expressive storytelling, blending minimalist repetition with lyrical piano melodies to create beautiful and memorable music.

For the MPO, the anime-themed concert series has been its popular concerts for a few years running, with performances selling out almost immediately after tickets are available. A manifestation of both Hisaishi's enduring film scores and the MPO's expertise in elevating and translating the pieces in a multitude of ways, it reflects the MPO's versatility and its ability in consistently expanding its audience demographics.

Conductor Gerard Salonga said the concerts are popular thanks to the films they are taken from. "Just as an actor would be catapulted to fame by a hit movie, that's how music became popular; through the successful animations," he said.

But the films have never overshadowed the music by Hisaishi. "The very fact that we have had successful concerts featuring the music – without the film – is a testament to the ability of Maestro Hisaishi's music to stand on its own," he said.

Salonga says no matter how many times the same score is performed, the songs will never be identical to one another. "Musicians always search for new things to say and new ways to express their music. Great scores always have something new to say to us, no matter how many times we perform it," he said.

"A 'live' performance is not frozen in time. A phrase or a whole piece of music only exists in the time it is actually being performed and those moments can never be replicated. That's the beauty of 'live' musical performance," he added.

This year, the MPO presents all four suites from four animations in their full length. “These are unedited symphonic suites and the MPO performs them the exactly the way Hisaishi originally wished for them to be performed in a concert.”

“The audience will find that in their full length, these suites tell the stories better musically, with all the thematic development, character, drama, humour and ups and downs that are only possible when there is enough time for them to come together in a story.”

“Can you imagine the suite from *Spirited Away* performed with *No Face* but without *The Sixth Station*? Neither can I. It won’t do the story justice, and this year, we give the audience exactly that, the whole story that they love.”

Salonga said by listening to these scores, fans will be transported back to the moments they first experienced the films. “Those who do not know the films will be touched by the music in a different way.” he said.

While the compositions are very relatable and the melodies, easy to remember, Salonga maintained that Hisaishi’s “harmonic language is simultaneously simple and complex.”

“It is his mastery of orchestration that creates images through sound, perfectly matched to the characters and circumstances in the films.”



The concert starts with the music from *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), a light yet memorable story about a young witch who travels with her cat Jiji, on her magic broom, to start living independently.

Kiki's Delivery Service: Symphonic Suite is a 25-minute extravaganza that narrates the emotional development of the protagonist and for many, listening to the score from start to finish allows them to witness Kiki's character development.

Brights strings and sunny harmonies in *On a Clear Day* opens the movie as Kiki leaves home but the crowd favourite and the most recognisable piece from this animation is definitely *A Town with an Ocean View*. It contains almost everything from the movie's plot, from freedom, loneliness and independence to excitement and nostalgia, Hishaishi's early tune foretells what's going to happen in the rest of the story.

The Baker's Assistant encapsulates the work Kiki does at Osono's bakery before the sounds move to something practical as Kiki starts her delivery service in *Starting the Job*. Playful woodwinds in *Surrogate Jiji* deliver sneaky, cat-like nuances, imitating tiptoeing and hiding. The comedy of deception is at play here before it moves to *Jeff*, about the kind dog that represents kindness, shown through a relaxed tempo.

As Kiki's delivery business takes flight, the score is faster with sounds of constant motion in *A Very Busy Kiki*. Quick note patterns reflect Kiki's anxiety in *Late to the Party* as she tries hard to fulfil a delivery for Tombo. Next, *A Propeller Driven Bicycle* compares both Tombo and Kiki; while the former sees flying as an engineering feat, the latter sees it purely as magic.

And that magic stops (albeit temporarily) in *I Can't Fly!*, with the absence of musical motion reflecting Kiki's inability to fly with her broom. *Heartbroken Kiki* is about frustration and self-doubt. The music is sad but it stops short from being melodramatic.

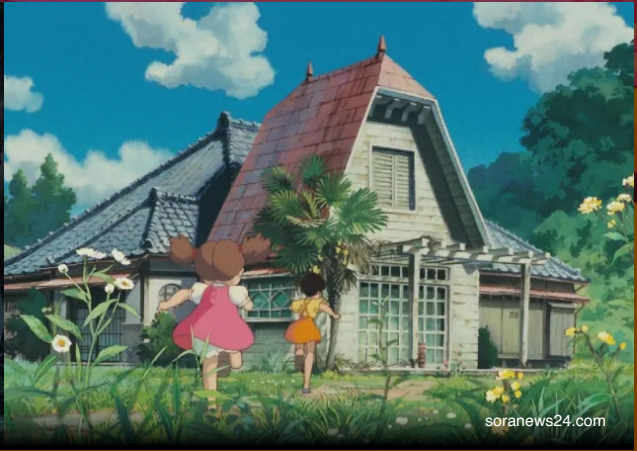


Kiki's visit to Ursula is depicted in *An Unusual Painting* where atmospheric textures and abstract melodies explain both artist's block and Kiki's loss of magic. The *Adventure of Freedom's* upward melodic gestures is about freedom, especially about young people planning their future.

As the dirigible accident begins, *Out of Control* reflects danger through increased tempo. Meanwhile, *The Old Man's Push Broom* is about both gentle optimism and simplicity, as Kiki realises that the broom is ordinary. Her recovery won't come from magic, something she has always depended on. In *Rendezvous on the Push Broom*, Kiki rescues Tombo. Soaring melodic lines signifies that she has regained herself.

Often associated with the ending and Kiki's acceptance of herself, *Mother's Broom* brings the story full circle, connecting Kiki again to her home and identity while accepting that true magic comes from within.

Released in 1988, *My Neighbour Totoro* is a landmark animation about two young sisters – Satsuki and Mei – who move to a rural area with their father as their mother recovers from an illness in the hospital. Their adventure begins as they explore the forest near their house, meeting, among others, the rounded, fluffy Totoro and the glowing, yellow-eyed Cat Bus.



In *Orchestra Stories: My Neighbour Totoro*, Hisaishi arranges the compositions to depict the emotional and narrative flow of the film. The suite begins with *Hey Let's Go*, an upbeat opening theme that stamps a high-energy spirit and optimism of the sisters as they begin on a new journey. Represented by the flute and light oboe, the music depicting the sisters is often playful with bird-like fluttering.

Meanwhile *The Village in May* is bright and nostalgic, about the family's arrival as they settle into their new place in the countryside. *Dust Bunnies* is paired with *Mother*, and the sound moves from the playful and skittering discovery of dust bunnies or *susuwatari*, to the worry for their ill mum. Meanwhile, *A Little Monster* and *Totoro* are about the meeting of Mei and Totoro, the sleepy, furry forest king, represented by the deep sounds of the tuba and trombone.



The spiritual presence of nature and the magic of the forest are depicted in *The Path of the Wind*. The composition uses both electronic synthesizers and traditional orchestral woodwinds to achieve a mystical feel. *A Lost Child* starts with a fragile melody on flute, accompanied by a melancholic harp to reflect Mei's isolation in the forest. The tempo picks up in *Cat Bus*, a jazzy and dynamic theme that narrates the rescue ride as Cat Bus runs across fields to save Mei.

Providing a joyful and comforting resolution, the closing theme, *My Neighbour Totoro*, wraps up this much-loved story. The finale mirrors the rhythmic motifs found in *A Little Monster* and *Cat Bus*, symbolising Hisaishi's style of musical continuity, evoking a powerful sense of nostalgia.



With a fictional kingdom backdrop, **Howl's Moving Castle** (2004) mixes technology and magic. It's the story of Sophie, a young milliner cursed by a witch into the body of a very old woman. In her pursuit to break the spell, she boards a chaotic machine owned by the wizard Howl.



In *Howl's Moving Castle: Symphonic Variation Merry-Go-Round and Cave of Mind* Hisaishi brings together the tale's two contrasting thematic ideas. *Merry-Go-Round of Life* is the story's iconic theme that "captures the circular, cyclical nature of time, age and destiny in Sophie and Howl's journey," according to an article by San Gabriel Valley Symphony. The song moves from light playfulness to heavy drama as the characters change. The strings section – violin, viola and cellos – play the sweeping, romantic main melody while flute, oboe and clarinet give the flutterings that mimic the castle's lighthearted movement.

On the other end of the spectrum, *Cave of Mind* is deeply introspective, mysterious and melancholic. The music tells the story of Howl's internal battles and his mental weight. While a single instrument carries a long, weeping melody, the horns and trombones provide dark brass chords to build tension and fear.

Together, these tunes are representations of Sophie and Howl, their contrasting worlds, transformation and ultimately, similarities. Because while one is a young girl trapped in an aged body, the other is a powerful wizard with a childish heart underneath.



Spirited Away (2001) is perhaps the most globally known Studio Ghibli animation. It is about Chihiro, whose parents are transformed into pigs by Yubaba the witch. She has to work in a bathhouse to find a way to release her family of the curse.

Hisaishi's *Spirited Away: Symphonic Suite* reflects Chihiro's psychological evolution and journey through the spirit world as her adventure unfolds. The story's iconic main theme *One Summer's Day* is made up of a solo piano melody with soft strings as Chihiro pouts about moving away from her old friends. The plot shifts into a tense atmosphere with *Nighttime Coming*, capturing the transition as dusk falls and Chihiro realises her fate.



In *The Gods*, brassy and traditional Japanese-style orchestration that sounds like a bustling festival signifies the parade of ancient deities marching toward the bathhouse. This is followed by *View of the Morning*, a peaceful composition of music relief after a night of terror when Chihiro looks out over the sea, absorbing her isolation. A dark tune, *The Bottomless Pit* tracks Chihiro going down the

stairs, capturing her descent into the underbelly of this world. *The Dragon Boy* is a soaring composition driven by energetic strings and booming percussion, representing the world of Yubaba, her apprentice Haku and his dragon.



Characterised by eerie, minimalist electronic synthesisers, *No Face* reveals the evolution of the lonely spirit No Face from a quiet shadow into a rampaging monster. Often described as a masterpiece of restraint, *The Sixth Station* is a hypnotic piano melody (with strings accompaniment) which scores the famous train ride when Chihiro travels to find Yubaba's twin sister, Zeniba, displaying her growth from childish to a determined young girl.

Heavy in orchestral romance and emotional weight, *Reprise* is a triumphant melody that plays as Chihiro rides on Haku's dragon's back. Finally, *The Return* brings a sense of accomplishment with a touch of nostalgia. Chihiro is reunited with her parents but she is forever changed by her adventure.

Salonga said when it comes to musical performance, the shift from opera stage or cinema to concert hall isn't new. "Music from opera and ballet have found their way into the concert repertoire. It should therefore be no surprise that symphony orchestras are programming more modern film music in their concerts." he said.

"Regardless of its original purpose, the music is beautiful and it is a great way for people to get to know what an orchestra is."

MALAYSIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



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Junichi Hirokami

RESIDENT CONDUCTOR

Gerard Salonga

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Co-Concertmaster
Ming Goh
Principal
Zhenzhen Liang

Tan Ka Ming
Wong Lu Ee
Sherwin Thia

SECOND VIOLIN

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Ionut Mazareanu

*Miroslav Daniš
*Lee Sing Hong
*Philip Jeremy Law
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*Leonard Yeap Lin Soon

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*Mirzan Mohd Isa

Note: Sectional string players are rotated within their sections. *Extra musician.

WHERE EVERY BEAT TELLS A STORY

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Mohd Afiq Shah Azman Shah

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Nor Afidah Nordin

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Mohd Najib Khalim

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Mohd Fahmi Md Radzi

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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Qaleeda Talib
Ong Li-Huey
Wynn Ch'ng Way Sean
Muhammad Fikrizaki Zakaria

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Farah Diyana Ishak
Khairul Anuar Mohd Sabri

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Shireen Jasin Mokhtar
Amin Mikhail Ahmad Zabidi

COMMUNICATIONS & CREATIVE SERVICES

Munshi Ariff Abu Hassan

BUSINESS & STRATEGIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT

At Ziafrizani Chek Pa (covering)

FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES

Mohamed Sultan Haja Mohideen

HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

Mohd Fahmi Md Radzi

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STRATEGIC PARTNER



Thank you to all our donors and collaborators for your support.



METROPOLITAN RHYTHMS:
*The Emigré and
the American*

**18
JUL
2026
SAT 8:00PM**

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Aziz Shokhakimov, conductor
Makoto Ozone, piano

WEILL *Lady in the Dark*: Symphonic Nocturne
GERSHWIN Concerto in F
STRAVINSKY *Petrushka* (1947 version)

Join the MPO and dynamic conductor Aziz Shokhakimov for an electrifying night. Jazz phenomenon Makoto Ozone brings improvisational flair to Gershwin's Concerto in F. The journey begins with Weill's sophisticated *Symphonic Nocturne* from his Broadway hit *Lady in the Dark* and culminates in the explosive energy of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. A brilliant celebration of rhythm and orchestral colours!

Normal:
RM249 RM299
RM349 RM399

Suite:
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RM499/Seat*

**inclusive of light refreshments*

Classical

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PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

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WE ACCEPT





A Heart Unveiled: MUSIC OF TCHAIKOVSKY

22
AUG
2026
SAT 8:00PM

PERFORMANCE AT
DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS
PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Junichi Hirokami, conductor
Elias David Moncado, violin

TCHAIKOVSKY
TCHAIKOVSKY

Violin Concerto
Symphony No. 6,
'Pathétique'

Normal:
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RM299 RM349

Suite:
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**inclusive of light refreshments*

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WE ACCEPT





A KNIGHT'S TALE: VALOR AND *Romance* IN MUSIC

29
AUG
2026
SAT 8:00PM

PERFORMANCE AT
DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS
PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Junichi Hirokami, conductor
Santiago Cañón-Valencia, cello

DVOŘÁK Cello Concerto in B minor
WALTON Henry V: Touch her soft lips and
part
SCHUMANN Symphony No. 2

Normal:
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WE ACCEPT





Tribute to Alfonso Soliano

2
SEP
2026
WED 8:00PM

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Ahmad Muriz Che Rose, conductor
The Solianos

Experience a meaningful celebration of Malaysia's musical heritage as the MPO pays tribute to one of the country's greatest cultural icons, Alfonso Soliano. A visionary pianist, arranger and conductor, Soliano is widely known as a pioneer who laid the foundation for the country's music scene especially jazz. Led by Ahmad Muriz Che Rose and with The Solianos as vocalists and instrumentalists, this special performance brings his timeless works back on stage in a heartfelt homage.

Normal:
RM249 RM299
RM349 RM399

Suite:
RM449/Seat*
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PERFORMANCE AT
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Locals

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WE ACCEPT





MAURICE STEGER'S

Nature Concerti

**12
SEP
2026
SAT 8:00PM**

PERFORMANCE AT
DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS
PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Maurice Steger, conductor & recorder

Programme to include:

TELEMANN Sinfonia TWV 50:1 in G major "Cricket
Symphony"
TELEMANN Violin Concerto, TWV 51:A4 "The Frogs"
VIVALDI Concerto for Flute Op. 10 No. 2 RV439
"La notte"
VIVALDI Concerto for Flute Op. 10 No. 3 RV428
"Il Gardellino"

Normal:
RM149 RM199
RM249 RM299

Suite:
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RM399/Seat*
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FAMILY FUN DAY



Age 4+ years
and above

Vivaldi's Ring of Mystery

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Gerard Salonga, conductor
Classical Kids Live!, presenter

**19
SEP
2026
SAT 2:30PM**

PERFORMANCE AT
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PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

Calling all parents and children! An exciting concert awaits you at DFP.

Based on the highly acclaimed Classical Kids' recording of Vivaldi's Ring of Mystery, this theatrical symphonic concert is an imaginative way to introduce young audiences and families to the life and music of composer Antonio Lucio Vivaldi. The programme includes familiar music such as The Four Seasons, Violin Concerto in A minor and the Guitar Concerto.

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Suite:
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From Broadway to Disney:

Lea Salonga

WITH THE MPO

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24 | ~~**26-27**~~
SEP | ~~**SEP**~~
2026 | 2026
THU 8:00PM | SAT - SUN

PERFORMANCE AT
DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS
PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Gerard Salonga, conductor
Lea Salonga, vocals

A heartfelt musical reunion featuring Lea Salonga, renowned Tony Award-winner for *Miss Saigon*, in a special concert led by her brother, Gerard, the first such performance in Malaysia. Listen to classics ranging from Broadway hits to popular songs from Disney's animation in an evening of transcendent artistry, cinematic memories and timeless tunes. This is a showcase of soaring vocals, and a celebration of two siblings whose legacy is their steadfast devotion to music.

Normal:
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RM499 RM549

Suite:
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Pops

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*Require a valid student ID



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