

Entertainment

Sammi Cheng is back to thrill in Malaysia

Malaysia. The Star-Fans of Sammi Cheng will be glad to know that the Hong Kong singer-actress is back for another two-night performance with popular hits and great showmanship.

Almost a year after her Show Mi Live in Genting concert, she will rock the stage again at the Genting Arena of Stars.

"I am in the midst of preparing for the concert. I'm exercising, building up my stamina and practising my songs."

"I hope I'll be more fit and slimmer by the time of the concert," said Hong Kong's Queen of Canto Pop during a phone interview recently.

So what can fans expect from the concert?

"It would be quite similar to last year's show. There would not be any changes except for the rundown and some of the songs. Hence, the theme 'Show Mi Again, Live in Genting'."

However, fans can look forward to Cheng's new song, "I've written a new song and I hope it will be ready for the concert."

She also revealed that fellow Hong Kong singer Wilfred Lau Hou Long will be the guest artiste.

"We'll be having a duet and he'll also be performing his new songs."

When asked why her concert outfits nowadays are simpler than the flamboyant costumes in previous concerts, she said: "At different phases, there are different needs and they need to suit the songs and performances. It won't be anything new if I were to wear the same (flamboyant) costumes. I hope there will

be new costumes this time around." Why is she back for another concert just after the one last year?

"The response was so good last year and I was very happy with it so I agreed to do it again this year when the organisers asked me," she replied.

Her fans would have to wait longer for a new album though as Cheng will not be releasing one too soon.

"I'm currently doing more singles. There's less pressure to produce singles and it is more in tune with my current lifestyle."

She said her new movie, Lady Cop and Papa Crook, will be in cinemas next month.

On her new project: "I'm looking at scripts now and having discussions with the director but even if I were to start filming now, the beginning of next year is the earliest I can have a new movie out."

"I'm not in too much of a hurry for a new movie, I'm used to the waiting game," she

said.

On her love life: "There are no suitors right now. I didn't notice any. I'll tell you if I do," she said with a laugh.

In a recent radio interview, Cheng revealed that she would like to have a family.

"Yes, but it's just plain yearning. God will lead me to it. I am enjoying my singlehood. When I have my own family, I'll have to handle more responsibilities."

Asked if she envies fellow Hong Kong actress/singer Kelly Chen who is about to wed, she replied: "I sincerely wish her all the best in her marriage. I also wish married couples well and I envy those with blissful marriages."

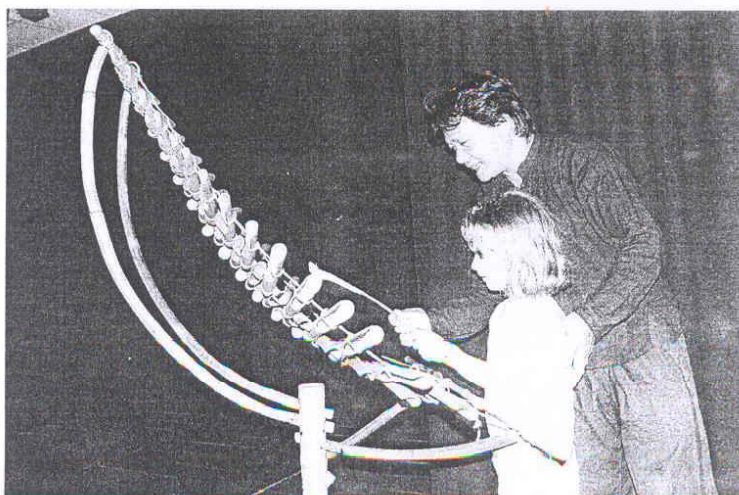
"Looking at my sister's marriage, I feel that there's a sweet side to marriage."

On her future plans, she said that with the rapid changes in the world, it's hard to know what's coming next.

"Previously, I used to think of what will happen in the future. Now, I only plan for the upcoming month or two," she said.



Sammi Cheng: "I'm currently doing more singles. There's less pressure to produce singles and it is more in tune with my current lifestyle."



Mr Khamphaeng Thammavongsa shows a young foreigner how to strike the tOUNGLING at the French Language Centre.

Lao artists crack barriers in percussion concert

PHOONSAB THEVONGSA

Spectators at the National Culture Hall on Wednesday were impressed with the International Percussion Music Festival's performance entitled Cracking Bamboo.

At this intriguing performance, Lao artist Khamphaeng Thammavongsa played the traditional Lao percussion instruments khim and tOUNGLING, and was one of the people responsible for arranging the Vientiane show.

The concert showcased some of his latest songs, which he sang during the concert which featured fresh and exciting performances from 12 other musicians from Asia and Europe.

Mr Khamphaeng is a music teacher at the National School of Music and Dance. He was selected as a Lao participant by the French Embassy to Laos to attend a workshop in Hanoi, Vietnam, from September 15-22, along with other 40 participants from Asia and Europe.

Mr Khamphaeng said he was very happy to participate in this event. Cracking Bamboo is the culmination of an international series of workshops, master classes and music festivals and the show was first performed in Hanoi last month.

The scope of the production is not limited to Vietnam, but rather provides a catalyst for possible future projects and network building in neighbouring countries in the region, such as Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia.

"Cracking Bamboo is a joint initiative from the Asia-Europe Foundation through its music programme I'mPULSE, the Goethe-Institut Vietnam and the Vietnam Academy of Music," Mr Khamphaeng said. The main objective of the event was to pick traditional Asian music instruments which blend with European ones to create more opportunities for exchange and encounters between Southeast Asian and European music and encourage all participants to create and perform music with a sense of freedom.

"I've gained a lot of experience through this programme as I've learned ways of playing percussion music in an unlimited way, to break the boundaries I was used to," Mr Khamphaeng said.

"We were told not to follow the same old style of playing music but to play with a sense of freedom, beating our chests and thighs and even lighting flames."

Mr Khamphaeng, 46, was selected for the programme because he is an expert in Lao percussion instruments. He has over 20 years of experience playing the khim and tOUNGLING and has been instructing students and researching the history of music at the National School of Music and Dance.

Currently his professional focus is on the tOUNGLING. The Vietnamese t'ung, or the tOUNGLING in Lao, is a musical instrument that Vietnamese people and some Lao ethnic groups near the Vietnamese border have been playing for

"The thing I like most about the tOUNGLING is that it's so similar to the xylophone and the khim. The instrument has the same principle of striking a short stick on bamboo tubes, so it's easy to adapt the style to play alongside traditional Lao and international instruments," he said.

He says that many might mistake it for a bamboo xylophone or a ponglang (a traditional Thai musical instrument), but in fact it has quite a different structure.

"Most people will recognise this instrument from having heard its smooth sound in Vietnam or at the Vietnamese concerts that were held in Vientiane recently to mark Lao-Viet relations," he said.

"I've found some people from the Lao Khmu ethnic group in the south who have been playing the tOUNGLING for many years, especially in Xekong and Attapeu provinces."

Mr Khamphaeng is often invited by offices and NGOs



Mr Khamphaeng performs a dance before he plays the tOUNGLING at the National Culture Hall last week.

generations.

He became inspired to play the tOUNGLING after attending a workshop at the Institute of Music in Hanoi in 2003. He decided on the spot to buy one and learn how to play it, and a Vietnamese teacher taught him the technique in only two weeks.

When he returned to Laos, he spent most of his free time practising the new technique and adapting it to play traditional Lao songs.

to perform on important occasions, sometimes alongside other performers, such as at the Lao Cabaret hosted by the French Language Centre last year.

He has played at many big events and is familiar to Vientiane and Luang Prabang audiences. He recently returned to Laos after a one-year sabbatical in Jakarta, where he studied Indonesian culture and musical instruments.



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