

Young stars rising to the challenge

Over 150 teen contestants took to the stage to showcase their talents in the performing arts at an annual contest.

SOLO singing, modern dancing and cultural dancing – these were the categories that were open for competition at the Berjaya TeenStar Challenge (BTSC) 2018 held at the Damansara Performing Arts Centre (DPAC) in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, recently.

Other awards that were coveted by the 157 finalists were the Best Creativity Award, the Best Dancer Award and the Berjaya Teen Star of the Year (Male/Female) Award.

Each finalist was required to competitively outdo each other through three “battle” rounds.

Solo singing category champion Siti Erinshahira Jamalludin, fondly known as Erin, wowed the audience with her powerful vocals and stunning costume during each round of her challenge.

The 15-year-old’s performance also won her the Berjaya Teen Star of the Year (Female) Award.

Erin attributed her success to her sister, Lisa, and parents, who are her biggest fans. She was also grateful for the good luck messages she received from her friends via social media.

Every bit of support counts, said Erin, revealing that she was 11 years old when she realised that she had a talent for singing.

“I went for a birthday party and there was a karaoke set there. I decided to grab the microphone and sing. My parents were amazed, and decided to hone my talent,” said the SMK (P) Methodist, Melaka, student. In the modern dance category, cousins Joshua and Saibya Thialan, both 17, from Sunway International School in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, clinched the top prize.

Joshua’s foray into dance started



Erin’s performance won her the Berjaya Teen Star of the Year (Female) Award.

early. He was six years old when his mother enrolled him in ballet classes. But he got off on the wrong foot.

“To my friends, it was rare and silly for a boy to take up ballet. I was made fun of and picked on, so I stopped,” said Joshua.

However, with support from his teachers and family, he re-enrolled himself in ballet lessons a few months later, after discovering that he still had passion for it.

He continued pursuing it until three years ago when he took up contemporary dancing. It proved to be a worthwhile endeavour. In addition to bagging the top prize at the BTSC, his performance earned him the Berjaya Teen Star of the Year (Male) Award.

Joshua’s dance partner of many years, Saibya, also began her dance journey as a ballet dancer before exploring different genres such as jazz, Latin and contemporary dancing.

Having a background in gymnastics helped elevate her



Cousins Joshua and Saibya clinched the top prize in the modern dance category. — Credit: Ryan Lim

performance in dance, she said.

For Saibya, being crowned champion with her cousin gave her much needed encouragement to continue pursuing her passion.

“Joshua and I would rush to finish our homework in school, and then proceed with our dance practices. Sometimes, the practices would end late at night or even midnight if a competition is nearing,” she said.

First held in 2016, the BTSC is organised by Berjaya Corporation Berhad under its Berjaya Youth programme. Open to teens aged 13 to 17, the BTSC 2018 saw the participation of young talents from the Klang Valley, Putrajaya, Negri Sembilan and Melaka.

Berjaya Corporation Berhad group corporate communications senior manager Shirley Quah said, “The BTSC is an avenue for young people to showcase their talents, express their creativity and develop their passion for the performing arts. We believe that their participation in the performing arts allows them to grow their self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as build leadership skills.”

“We plan to take BTSC to more states next year besides reaching out to schools in the central region,” she added.

BTSC creator and producer Zachary Wong said, “Through this programme, I have seen personal

growth and character development among the teenagers.

“There are so many talented young Malaysians out there who lack proper training. I think it’s my duty to provide basic training for them to improve their skills because these talents are going to be our future stars if we groom them properly.”

By **GABRIELLE ANN JEREMIAH,** 16

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THE Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) is where theatre lovers – spectators and performers alike – gather to get their drama fix. It makes perfect sense then that Amelia Tan is no stranger to the place, having co-directed *Super Woman* and acted in numerous plays including Shakespeare’s *Richard III* there.

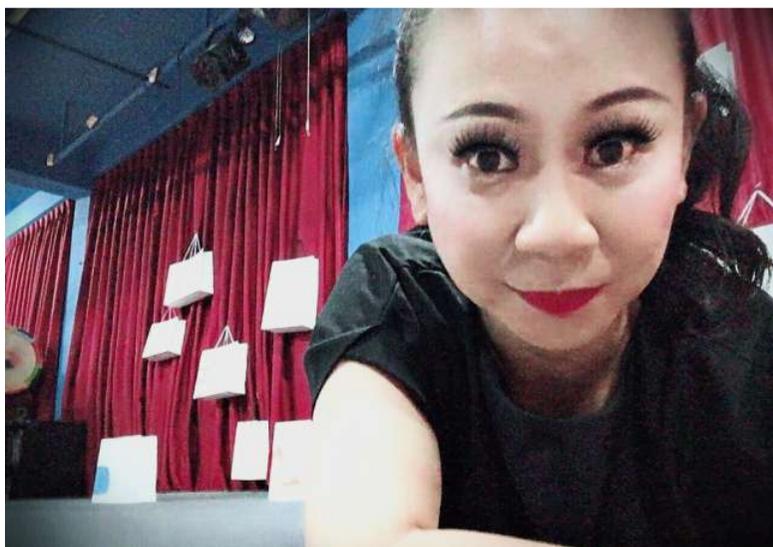
A stage performer and director, Tan also works behind the scenes as a lighting designer. In addition, she has widened her repertoire to include being a drama, film and television performance instructor, as well as a children’s drama and dance instructor.

“Theatre widens my horizons, allowing me to meet different people, understand more about human nature and become more philosophical. These are all very different compared to what I learned back in secondary school,” said the Malaysian Institute of Art alumnus.

“Creating plays also allows me to better view the world, understand the people and things around me and in the process, understand myself,” she added.

Despite having a deep passion for the performing arts, Tan did not initially plan to make it her full-time career.

Her world is the stage



Tan: There isn’t anything I like more in life than performing.

“There were new challenges every day, be it improving my skills or my performance. These challenges continuously pushed me to overcome them. Eventually, it turned into my full-time career,” said Tan.

But she revealed that she once contemplated giving up the

performing arts altogether. In the end, she decided not to throw in the towel. “There isn’t anything I like more in life than performing,” she explained.

Other than klpac, Tan has performed at various other arenas locally and abroad, including countries like Singapore, Thailand,

Indonesia and Japan.

She has just returned from a three-year performing arts tour in Taiwan – an opportunity she values greatly.

“The director for the programme was Shaghayegh Beheshti, a world-renowned Iranian-French actress from Théâtre du Soleil. Time flew when you were working, creating and living with 20 actors from different nations who were bonded by the same passion for the performing arts,” she said.

“We had to create non-stop, then criticise each other’s work, before creating again from scratch. This cycle of rejection and creation ensured that we came up with the best product possible,” she continued, adding, “I was exposed to how others think, and the differences in cultures and feelings. All of these were precious experiences.”

Throughout her 25 years in the performing arts, she has won a string of rewards, most notably the ASLI Drama Award (ADA) for best actress in 2014 and 2015, and best supporting actress in 2010 and 2018. She has also won the ADA for

best lighting in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Despite the accolades, Tan remains humble and down-to-earth.

“It doesn’t matter whether or not I win an award. Awards will not change my life; awards will not make me the president; awards also will not suddenly turn me into a beauty,” she said.

What is more important to her is that she is doing what she loves.

“I like every single one of my performances. All my characters have different lives, thoughts and worlds. Knowing and understanding them equates to knowing myself and the people around me.”

To budding performers, she advised: “This is a path that’s full of challenges and new things, but remember, as long as you persevere, you will be able to see the rainbow after the rain.”

By **CHIA ZHI ZHI,** 17

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