

By FAWWAZ FADZLULLAH
educate@thestar.com.my

IT'S not every day that one gets to perform for the country's King and Queen.

For Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology's (TAR UMT) young talents, it was the chance of a lifetime to shine before a royal audience when Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tunku Hajah Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah graced the momentous launch of the varsity on Jan 5.

"We knew we would be singing for a big crowd but performing for His Majesty was not something I had ever imagined I would get a chance to do even in a million years.

"That's why this is very special for us," said the varsity's data science student Yap Cher En, who is a tenor singer in the choir.

For psychology major Chong Bi Tian, receiving a thumbs up from the King as the choir bowed at the end of their performance is a moment that will forever be etched in her memory.

"It was surreal and unforgettable to know that the King enjoyed our performance," she added.

Agreeing, analytical chemistry student Wong Siew Munn said the King's gesture made her feel that all their effort had paid off.

"This is a big motivation for us to keep improving our singing," Wong, a sectional leader in the choir, said.

Led by conductor Ang Yaw Feng and advisor Regina Ong Ween Yen, Voichestra – the TAR UMT Choir Society – gave top-notch renditions of *Wau Bulan* and *Hela Rotan*.

'Be our guests, Your Majesties'

TAR UMT students savour rare chance of performing for royal couple



Royal wave: Students waving to the King, accompanied by Dr Wee (second from right), as His Majesty prepares to leave the varsity.



Soaring voices: Voichestra singing the *Wau Bulan*.

The former is a popular local folk song, while the latter is an Indonesian tune from the islands of Maluku which describes a traditional tug-of-war game with the rope that is made of rattan.

The choir, said Ang, had been practising since July last year.

"It was most exciting for me as most of the students who sang did not have any sort of music background," she said when interviewed after the launch.

Wong added that learning and understanding the stories, and being exposed to different cultures as they were rehearsing for the show were also a highlight.

Other student performances at the event included a unique cultural blend of Malay, Chinese and Indian dances, a contemporary Latin and street dance perfor-

mance, and renditions of popular songs *Cinta Luar Biasa* by Andmesh and *How Far I'll Go* by Auli'i Cravalho.

The crowd of over 1,500 attendees were also treated to violin and cello recital of *Canon in D* and popular local folk songs such as *Chan Mali Chan* and *Ikan Kekek* by the Chinese orchestra.

Preparing for an event with royalty present was challenging and thrilling in equal measures, said lead performance coordinator and floor manager Anne Elisha Shaari.

"Students from the varsity's clubs and societies worked hard to make sure the show was a success.

"It took two months of intensive planning to figure out the flow, recruit the performers, manage the timing and logistics, and coordinate the team," Anne, who

is also the varsity's sports and activities coordinator, shared.

At the end of the event, groups of students were seen rushing to take photos of the royal couple.

And the King and Queen were more than happy to oblige.

His Majesty even made the "finger heart" gesture as he was leaving, which thrilled the young Malaysians.

TAR UMT, which started out as TAR College in 1969 before being upgraded to university college status known as Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) in 2012, became a full-fledged university upon receiving the certificate of registration from the Higher Education Department on Nov 7 last year.

TARC Education Foundation board of trustees chairman and MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Wee

Ka Siong, in a Facebook post, said TAR UMT is among the country's education institutions that have benefited many Malaysians, irrespective of their religious or racial backgrounds.

Indeed, the performances were a testament to how varsities can unite and empower students beyond academics.

Also present at the launch were Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin – who was the higher education minister when TAR College was upgraded to university college status in 2012 – TAR UMT board of governors chairman Tan Sri Liow Tiong Lai, TAR UMT alumni council chairman and board of governors member Tan Sri Chan Kong Choy and TAR UMT president Prof Dr Lee Sze Wei.