

NUSChoir brings home Pavarotti trophy

The win marks the first time a Singapore choir has been named the best at the Llangollen International Musical Eistedfodd

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The National University of Singapore's NUSChoir has won the top prize at the Llangollen International Musical Eistedfodd, a storied Welsh music festival.

It is the first Singapore choir to be named the best of the festival – Choir of the World – and to bring home the coveted trophy named after the late tenor Luciano Pavarotti.

The 60-member choir also received a £3,000 (S\$5,400) prize at the contest on Sunday evening. Its winning repertoire included a Humpty Dumpty Medley arranged by Paul Hart with choir members fielding props such as a fake frying pan.

Resident conductor and choral director Nelson Kwei, 57, said via e-mail: "Our repertoire is colourful and displays a wide spectrum of artistic presentation."

He added: "I hope we have done our country proud by showing the world our artistic skill and total commitment to choral excellence."

The Llangollen International Musical Eistedfodd was started in 1947 and has grown to an internationally renowned event welcoming 4,000 performers and as many as 50,000 visitors every year.

It has launched the career of many famous musicians. Pavarotti himself sang in the Chorus Rossini from Modena at the festival in 1955 when he was 20 years old. His en-



NUSChoir's resident conductor and choral director Nelson Kwei with the Pavarotti trophy and members of the choir.

PHOTO: LLANGOLLEN INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL EISTEDFODD

semble won the overall prize and he became determined to make singing his career.

The trophy given to the winner of the Choir of the World category was renamed for him in 2005.

Other singers and choirs from Singapore have competed at the Eistedfodd, including the Singapore Youth Choir, now SYC Ensemble Singers, which won first prize in the youth choir section in 1989.

The NUSChoir last competed at the Eistedfodd in 2012, winning in three individual categories – youth,

folk song and mixed choir – but not the overall trophy.

This year, it competed in the mixed, youth and open choir categories to qualify for the main event, Choir of the World.

Up against five to 16 rivals in the individual categories, NUSChoir faced three others in the final event: the 441Hz Chamber Choir from Poland, the Froncysyllte Male Choir from Wales and the Stellenbosch University Choir from South Africa, which had ranked first in the earlier categories.

NUSChoir president Samoel Tan, 21, a second-year science undergraduate, said via e-mail that choir members were deeply disappointed by their performance last Saturday in the mixed category as they came fourth out of eight contestants.

"The marks for the open category gave us another chance to run for the win and that was when the sun rose. We delivered. We sang without regrets. We made it. We won," he said.

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