

WOMEN POWER

淑女会的软实力

Rosy Ho, who is among the SSO Ladies' League of volunteers, has raised more than \$1.26 million for the orchestra with her husband over the last 16 years
加入新加坡交响乐团淑女会16年的余露丝, 不仅为乐团筹划多项筹款活动, 她也与富商丈夫捐出超过126万新元给乐团。

TEXT NG SIANG PING / 黄向京 PHOTOGRAPHY 龙国雄



SSO's recording studio in Victoria Concert Hall is named after Rosy Ho.

A group of women has played a pivotal role in keeping the show going at the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO). Set up in 1984, the SSO Ladies' League started with a small group of volunteers who raised funds for the installation of the pipe organ at Victoria Concert Hall. Since then, it has raised more than \$18 million for the orchestra. The money helps to fund SSO's concerts and overseas tours, pay

for musical instruments and so on.

The Ladies' League comprises a dozen or so volunteers from various fields. Among them is Rosy Ho, who joined in 2001 and is the longest-serving member. She and her businessman husband Christopher have donated more than \$1.26 million to the SSO over the years and are recipients of the SSO Benefactor Award. The award is given to those

who have given a cumulative sum of \$1 million or more. In 2015, the couple also made a generous donation for a recording studio to be built for SSO in Victoria Concert Hall. In recognition of the couple's contribution, the fully equipped digital facility, called Rose Studio, was named after Ho.

Ho, who moved here from Hong Kong with her husband in 1994, is now a Singapore

citizen. She likes calligraphy and takes lessons in classical singing. But she recalls with a laugh that she used to know nothing about classical music. Still, she joined the SSO Ladies' League at a friend's recommendation as she believed it championed a worthy cause.

"Many people donate to organisations such as hospitals and schools, and don't view cultural activities as a priority," she says. "The younger generation today also prefers pop music, so there is a need to steer them towards classical music and raise awareness of the genre." To achieve this, the Singapore Symphony Group, SSO's managing company, is grooming young talent through other groups that it manages, including the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir. "This is very meaningful work," Ho adds.

She and her husband have been named Principal Champion of the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir. Last year, they pledged to donate \$300,000 to the choir within three years and have given another \$25,000 for the group to record a CD to mark its 10th anniversary.

Ho's ardent support of the children is evident. A staff member of the SSO recounts how encouraging she was towards a young singer once. Tasked with presenting flowers to Ho on stage, the child was a bundle of nerves. To ease her anxiety, Ho reassured her constantly backstage and later praised her for a job well done. "These children have the opportunity to train, perform and see the world. They are the future," she says.

Besides signing cheques, Ho also ensures that the Benefit Dinner, organised by the Ladies League every April, is a success. She often books the priciest table and fills it with her friends, and urges other pals to buy tables. Two years ago, she co-chaired the event with another Ladies League member, Paige Parker, and threw the Red & White Ball. As Singapore was marking its 50th birthday that year with

a slew of official events, they were unable to secure a VIP as guest of honour. Still, all 35 tables were snapped up and they managed to raise close to \$1 million.

Among its various fundraising activities, the SSO Ladies' League has found the Benefit Dinner to be the most effective. Besides drawing the cream of society, the event is also a good platform to promote classical music. The amount raised from the annual gala has jumped from \$700,000 10 years ago to an average of \$1 million today, or 5 per cent of the SSO's annual expenses. Such generous donations help to keep concert ticket prices stable.

This year's Benefit Dinner, themed Cafe Society, presented a blend of classical compositions and familiar hits, such as the theme song of the musical Cats. Through their myriad connections, the Ladies' League pulled off another successful edition. One member, Kwan Lui, who owns At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy, helped to draw up the menu and invite the guest chef for the night.

Other members from overseas showed up with their expatriate friends from countries such as Italy and the United States. Then there were local lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs and hoteliers who all tapped their powerful networks for a common cause. "Singapore is a beautiful city as it is," says Ho. "But with its own symphony orchestra, with culture, it is even more beautiful."

新加坡交响乐团幕后的慈善推手之一，是1984年成立的淑女会。该会最初由一小群志工组成，为维多利亚音乐厅装置管风琴筹款，至今，该会已为乐团筹募超过1800万新元，用来赞助乐团音乐会、购买乐器、乐团欧洲巡演等。

淑女会会员人数维持十几名，来自各行各业，2001年经朋友介绍加入至今的余露丝是志愿服务最久的会员，她也与富商丈夫何永安捐献超过126万新元给交响乐团，并因而获颁“赞助人类”，此奖项颁给累积捐献乐团100万新元以上者。

与丈夫1994年从香港移居新加坡，已是公民的余露丝，平时学声乐，喜欢写书法，尤好隶书。她在ION乌节的威士忌酒吧Saint-Louise House受访时笑说，加入淑女会之前对古典音乐没概念，但这是有益大众的义务志工。

她说：“很多人会捐钱给医院、学校等机构，艺文活动常常不是优先赞助选项。当前很多年轻人喜欢流行音乐，忽略了古典音乐，因此我们有必要将他们导向古典乐。新加坡交响乐



新加坡交响儿童合唱团代表献花给余露丝。(Photo: SSO)

团旗下的新加坡交响儿童合唱团志在栽培下一代人才，这是很有意义的工作。”

余露丝与丈夫今年被授予新加坡交响儿童合唱团特别捐献人头衔。他们去年承诺三年内捐献30万元给合唱团，并另外捐助了2万5000新元给合唱团灌录成立十周年的首张唱片。

据乐团工作人员叙述，当时，合唱团派代表献花给余露丝，这名小朋友在后台表现得很紧张，对小孩子很有一手的余露丝不断安慰她，赞她做得好。余露丝说：“合唱团这些孩子有机会训练、表演和接触世界，他们是未来的栋梁！”

2015年，余露丝与丈夫还捐献赞助交响乐团的录音室。这间位于维多利亚音乐厅、设备齐全的数码录音室，以余露丝英文名Rose命名为“玫瑰室”。

筹款晚宴可筹百万新元

余露丝并不只是签支票而已，她为每年4月淑女会举行的筹款晚宴付出时间与心血，经常购买最贵的桌子邀请朋友出席，也鼓励朋友购票。两年前，她与淑女会另一名会员佩琦派克一起筹办“红与白”主题筹款晚宴。她指出，当时正值新加坡建国50周年，有很多官方活动举行，很难请到VIP嘉宾出席晚宴，但她们最终在没有VIP出席下达成任务——35张桌子筹得近100万。

多年来，淑女会尝试几种筹款方法，包括高尔夫锦标赛，发现最有效的是一年一度的筹款晚宴。这不仅是社会名流期盼参与的社交活动，更是推广古典音乐的管道。晚宴筹得款项从十年前的70万元，增至目前的平均百万元。筹款所得贡献乐团常年开支的5%。有了这些捐款，乐团和儿童合唱团的票价才能维持大众化水平。

每一年的筹款晚宴都得绞尽脑汁想主题，今年主题是Cafe Society，余露丝说，晚宴选曲一般结合经典与轻经典曲目，比如大众熟悉的音乐剧（如《猫》）主题曲，加上淑女会会员都有很强的社交能力，晚宴因此很成功。

淑女会会员中有新加坡香环全球厨师学院（At-sunrice）创办人蕾陈娟负责为晚宴策划菜单，有的会员则请来律师、医生、企业家、教授、酒店业者等，衣香鬓影。

余露丝说：“新加坡是很美的城市，有了自己的交响乐团，有文化，更美。”



Rosy Ho co-chaired the Red & White Ball at the SSO Benefit Dinner in 2015. (Photo: SSO)