

BROUGHT TO YOU BY LIFE & TIMES **BOTS** cover story

MUSIC MADE EASIER

Self-taught musician Faridzz Muhamat Roli tells **Hanna Sheikh Mokhtar** that technology is a boon when it comes to music arrangement

HIS music arrangements move listeners but Faridzz Muhamat Roli, music teacher and conductor for the Warna-warni Assemblage Orchestra (which comprises teenagers), only studied music and learnt to play the violin when he was 17.

Faridzz, 32, learnt Melayu Asli Violin from the late Idris Mohamed and ghazal from Haji Jaafar, both from Yayasan Warisan Johor (YWJ), as well as Nizam Attan. He also played and studied under the late Brian Tan and Dr Chan of UPM.

He is active in many ensembles such as Malaysian Universiti Symphony Orchestra, Penang Philharmonic Orchestra, KLPaC Symphony Orchestra and Penang Symphony Orchestra.

SELF-TAUGHT

Previously, Faridzz taught music at a few schools before he took charge of Sri Mujiara Orchestra (OSEM), a pop orchestra at Sekolah Seni Malaysia Kuala Lumpur.

"I believe music can change people. It can change our moods and feelings, and the way we see the world. It brings inner peace too."

Faridzz Muhamat Roli

The MIDI Controller used in music arrangement.



professional musicians, how they play, think and react to different styles of music.

He watches performances on YouTube daily. "I practise violin by sight, reading classical scores from YouTube. There are hundreds of videos offering tips and masterclasses which are free for viewing," says Faridzz.

"I believe music can change people. It can change our moods and feelings, and the way we see the world. It brings inner peace too.

"I've seen how music has changed my students' attitudes towards their studies and their well-being."

TECH TOUCH

Faridzz says technology plays a vital part in his work. He uses music software such as Finale 2012, Reason & GarageBand and hardware like Alesis iO2.

"I use Finale 2012 to arrange songs for school shows, concerts and to arrange or transcribe songs for others," he says.

It helps him to write better as he can listen to his arrangements as compared to arranging by hand.

YOUTUBE TUTORIALS

Faridzz learnt a lot by observing other



Teaching children at Sekolah Seni Malaysia Kuala Lumpur.



Faridzz (centre) with the WWA Orchestra.

Instruments are selected according to the line-up, the score is viewed as the conductor's score and notes are put in. The dynamics and articulations are also placed at this point as well as the repeats.

"After the arrangement, the software can automatically extract parts and they are ready to be printed and be handed over to the musicians," he says.

Another software, Reason, is Faridzz's favourite platform in making a good minus-1, in terms of programming music. "The sound samplers are not as good as the sound from real musicians but it basically produces base minus-1s before entering the recording studio," he says.

"Instruments are selected and Midi (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) mapping is done using the Midi controller which looks just like a normal keyboard. Here, the music editing can be done, as well as some simple mixing on the samplers and quantisation is applied for a more precise notation."

THE HARDWARE

On the hardware side, Faridzz uses an audio interface like the Alesis iO2, for



Faridzz conducting the Warna-warni Assemblage Orchestra using his music arrangements. The songs included Stay with Me by Sam Smith and Cinta Pantai Merdeka by the 1990s rock band Jinbara.



Faridzz uses a Mac Pro and Finale 2012 for his music arrangement.

recording purposes. This small gadget is used to change sounds collected from microphones into sound waves in the computer.

"Sound waves are mapped in computer software such as Sonar or Cubase. The recorded sounds are then edited, quantised, stretched and doubled up with sounds from other instruments or vocals. Minus-1s produced from programming can be edited here, and we can also add

live instruments recorded using this audio interface," he says.

These technologies help arrangers share new sound samplers, arrangement files and sub jobs. The printing of scores too are more tidy and clean compared to handwritten scores.

"Editing is made easier with these software and creative works flow faster for arrangers. Mixing of stereo audios is easier too with the software," says Faridzz.

TECH IN MUSIC EDUCATION

Faridzz hopes creative music work using technology can be included in music education, starting in the primary schools.

"However, it must be handled by people who actually know and appreciate music. Hopefully the software will also become more user-friendly and will not require high-end computers so that everybody can have the opportunity to explore this field," he says.

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Faridzz (right) after one of his performances.



The Alesis iO2.



Faridzz discussing his work with his friend Zulhishah Abu Bakar after completing an arrangement.