

Braavo to more Encore!

The third year of Encore! The European Season will have more than 200 events which will showcase music and art from the continent

akshtita nanda

The annual celebration of European culture in Singapore is back for its third and biggest year. From now until May next year, Encore! The European Season in Singapore is promoting dance, drama, music and art from more countries on the continent to raise awareness and appreciation.

During a press conference at the Fullerton Hotel yesterday, it was revealed that more than 200 events have been lined up this year, compared to last year's 150.

The season aims to attract at least 250,000 visitors, compared to the 225,000 last year. The 2009 season had a budget of about \$2 million but this year's has yet to be finalised.

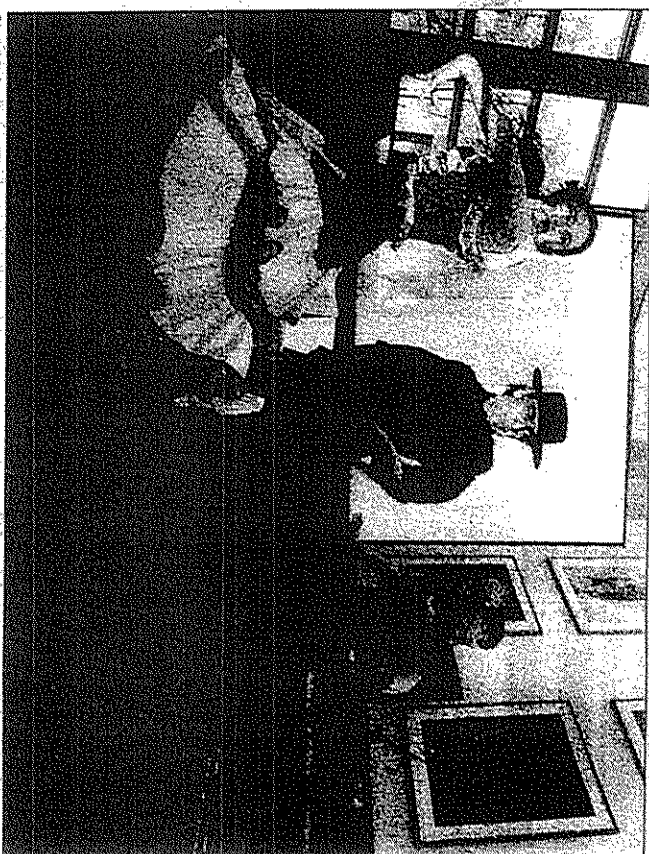
Poland and Ireland are among the nations represented for the first time, with a Chopin concert by Polish-Canadian pianist Daniel Wnukowski this month and a performance by the Irish Chamber Orchestra next month.

Encore! reaches out to presenters bringing in cultural events from European countries and helps with marketing and publicity. The ongoing European Union Film Festival until May 16 and Volahi French Festival, which is on till May 21, come under the Encore! umbrella.

The initiative was the brainchild of France's former ambassador here, Mr Pierre Butler, and is the only season of European culture in the world.

Ambassador Holger Standeritskjold, head of the delegation of the European Union to Singapore, told Life! yesterday: "We think it's fantastic. It's a great platform, a wonderful way to show all together the European cultural diversity that we have."

His views were echoed by the representatives of other nations, including Italy, France and Spain, at the press conference. Mr Standeritskjold called the festival a good way to bring Singapore and the EU closer together, adding: "Economic ties are very close, but it is also the interaction beyond trade and commerce that is very



Spanish flair: Flamenco dancers showing off their moves at the press conference. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

important."

The performance by pianist Wnukowski this month is being presented by the Polish Embassy and the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. The Irish Chamber Orchestra performance on June 22 at the Esplanade is being presented by the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and The Singapore Ireland Fund.

Encore! is also supporting made-in-Singapore events such as next month's Opera In The Park by the Singapore Lyric Opera. The event is being featured in the bi-monthly event calendars for the European season that will be distributed all over the island.

SLO general manager Ng Siew Eng appreciates the publicity, saying it complements existing marketing campaigns. Singapore Arts Festival general manager

Low Kee Hong echoes these views, as several events under the festival are getting a similar boost.

Mr Low also says this sort of support will help facilitate interactions with international artists and be "crucial" in the long term to helping the festival move from a showcase to an event where new works are created.

It is a win-win situation for all concerned, according to Ms Laurence Harel, executive director of Encore!

She says: "We would like more Singaporeans to have access to these events and also give more countries the opportunity to be visible."

akshtita@sph.com.sg

For more information on Encore! The European Season in Singapore, go to www.europeansseason.com