

By Anna Vivienne

THERE are various ways to promote tourism in the State. Other than the substantial natural environment and its wild beauty, there are the various folk festivals that serve as tourism attractions here. And of course with the folk festivals, come traditional music.

One of the up coming attractions in the music sector is the Bamboo Orchestra.

Actually the bamboo orchestra is fairly new. It is new in the sense of its formation as a group of musician but it is not new in its musical instruments. The musical instruments utilized in the orchestra are traditional and has been used by the people to serenade celebrations such as weddings since time immemorial.

One of the initiator of such an orchestra, Kohadie Watiman from Kg Sinisian Kudasang shares that the establishment of his orchestra called Kinabalu Merdu Sounds was driven by the fact that he operates a homestay. As he wished to introduce something interesting in his operation, he created a bamboo orchestra just so he could serenade his guests.

One thing led to another.

He began to gather more and more talented people in his ensemble, until he reached a stage where he had a full orchestra; that is, more than ten people.

He slowly began to build them up and coached them until they could perform together and present a reasonably good performance.

Kohadie never looked back.

Nowadays, his orchestra does not only perform for homestay guests; they are now performing in Government and private functions. In fact they are in great demand.

“Actually we went through a lot to get where we are. We need to practice, practice and practice again. At times we have to improvise. But after a while, we got our bearing and we are now as comfortable as we will ever be in this business.”

“Yes, our first crop of musicians is still going strong. They are the pioneer and the second generation of musician are learning from them,” he shares adding that five years ago there were only five group members and but now there are 60 members, the youngest member being six years old.

“That may sound too young but I think that’s just the right age to start. They learn very fast and are so enthusiastic. I am proud of them.”

On the orchestra’s objectives, he says that it aims to ensure the perpetuity of the traditional bamboo instrument while promoting its entertainment value.

“So far we have tried to apply these objectives in our performances in Indonesia, Korea and Japan as well as in Kuala Lumpur,” he says, adding that his groups had performed in these places and the respond from the host countries have been encouraging.

Kohadie expresses his hope that his group will keep getting invitations to perform overseas as this can help to promote the State and the people’s cultural heritage.

“This way, we are helping our government



Serenading tourists to the State



to promote tourism and ensure that our traditional music will not fade with time,” he says.

So if you are interested in listening to a Bamboo Orchestra while you host a wedding or a visiting dignitary, get Kohadie and his group to perform; your guests will surely be impressed.

After all it is not everyday you can listen to a bamboo orchestra playing a Japanese tune or familiar classical tunes like ‘Bunyi Gitar’ and ‘Getaran Jiwa’ like an actual contemporary ensemble.