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Chinese, Venezuelan artists join Cuban celebrations of Children's Day

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Chinese and Venezuelan artists on Saturday joined a local children's guitar orchestra to perform in the Cuban capital, adding flavor to the celebrations of International Children's Day.

The performances at the Mella theater by Pu Jie and Huo Yaofei of China, and Luis Sierra of Venezuela also honored the same event to mark the 10th anniversary of the children's orchestra Vocal Clave de Sol, according to the orchestra's music director Nuria Garcia.

"We had been planning for some time that they could come here, and which can be a better date than today, International Children's Day, and to celebrate the ten years with us," said Garcia, who has devoted herself to teaching singing and guitar playing.

In the show called "Melodies from the Heart," Garcia brought to life on the stage the realization of a workshop with 180 children from the orchestra, who were divided into choir and orchestra formats, and by ages that ran from 8 to 19.

Accompanied by the children, the young Sierra from Caracas, who is a concert player and a guitar teacher, offered a solo show of Venezuelan waltz.

Three years ago, on his first trip to Cuba, Sierra learned about the orchestra project and taught lessons. He said he was "totally fascinated," because "we talked about 180 children on the stage, and everyone plays, and everyone sings. It is something awesome."

"A child with an instrument in his hand, who is making music, is a miracle, because it is an opportunity to separate him from vices and bad habits," he said.

The relations between Chinese singer Pu and the orchestra go back even further. She studied Spanish in the Caribbean island state not long after the orchestra started to operate, and she took part in some workshops. At a previous concert, she performed eight Cuban songs and two Chinese songs.

"This is the second time I am working with the orchestra and it is always very rewarding," said the vocalist.

On Saturday night, she sang the songs "I Come to Offer My Heart," and "Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps" together with her compatriot Huo.

The audience loudly applauded Pu's vocal skills, but above all they enjoyed the charismatic performance by Huo, a dancer who can move with the same rhythm, ease and passion of a Cuban native born in any of Havana's neighborhoods.

Huo, together with a Cuban dancer, danced to conclude the concert while children played instruments and sang the famous song "El Manisero."

The Chinese dancer considers himself almost as a member of the Cuban children's group, adding the Cuban children "are like my own children."

Established on May 2, 2009 in the Havana neighborhood of San Agustin, in the municipality of La Lisa, Vocal Clave de Sol is a project focused on helping children to develop vocal and instrumental skills while contributing to promoting traditional Cuban music.

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