

The 2022 HAI-O ARTS & CULTURE GRANTS – LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER

Master Mathew Ngau Jau



Master Mathew Ngau Jau, is a 74 year old Kenyah Ngorek, a Bornean indigenous ethnic group from Long Semiyang, ulu Baram in Sarawak. He is a professional Sape' performer, maker and teacher and is one of the few community-recognised authority on the instrument.

He learned how to play the instrument during his childhood at Long Semiyang, Ulu Baram in Sarawak. After his school education, and having pursued a career in teaching, He came under the guidance of the late Tusau Padan, a master sape musician and artist.

Master Mathew has certainly put Sarawak on the map of traditional music with his special talent. He has introduced the unique sounds of the rainforest to the world through mesmerising sape music that only he and other Sarawakian musical geniuses like him can produce.

Since the death of Tusau Padan, Master Mathew has become the leading promoter of the art of sape music and also the art of painting Kenyah traditional motifs on bark. He is also an expert in the Orang-Ulu warrior dance and is a skilled blow-pipe exponent. He has performed in Paris, Germany, Australia and throughout the US. Combining all these skills, Mathew is much sought after to promote the traditional arts of Sarawak. He formed the traditional group Lan-e Tuyang (meaning among friends) together with his late uncle Uchau Bilung. He hopes to give the instrument and Kenyah traditions a new lease of life, preserving its traditional foundations yet giving it a chance to flourish outside of the rainforest.

With Lan-e Tuyang, Master Mathew has performed at numerous venues throughout the globe as well as tourism promotions in Europe, Australia and Asia.

- In 2015, Master Mathew was granted the title of “**Malaysia’s Living National Heritage**” by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture.
- He was awarded as the **Sarawak State Art and Culture Figure** for the year 2016.
- In 2018, Master Mathew had taught the sape to both children and adults at the Yayasan Sime Darby Arts Festival (YSDAF) and at The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac).
- In November 2022, Master Mathew received the **Anugerah Adiguru** in conjunction with **ASWARA's 17th Convocation Ceremony** in Kuala Lumpur.

To the community, Master Mathew is known as a cultural guardian or "the Keeper of the Kenyah Ngorek Songs". To the country, he is one of Malaysia's Living National Heritage.

Master Mathew continues his efforts in preserving the Sape' and the traditions of the Kenyah culture through various initiatives and platforms. He is managed by The Tuyang Initiative, a social enterprise whose focus is in economic and skill uplifting of Dayak (Bornean indigenous) communities. They work on inclusive and innovative indigenous cultural-related products & services. Their mission is in creating sustainable economic opportunities, as well as meaningful preservation and development of the communities' tradition, arts & culture.

Master Mathew is the winner of 2022 Hai-O Arts & Culture Grants Award “**Lifetime Achievement Award**” . He is a great advocate of the Kenyah culture as well as a shining example and mentor for the next generation. He was chosen for his dedication and exceptional contribution towards arts and culture.