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# Un-MASK-ing *the face of success*

> Mohd Amer Syafiq Khalip's dream of taking his theatre company all the way to Istana Budaya has now come true with its first major production, *Projek Kahwin*

BY **BISSME S.**

**W**ORLD-FAMOUS animator Walt Disney once said that all your dreams can come true if you have the courage to pursue them.

Mohd Amer Syafiq Khalip (*right*) seems to have taken Disney's advice to heart.

In 2011, he started a small theatre company called MASK Team which began putting on small-scale productions at small theatre venues in the Klang Valley such as Stor Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka in Kuala Lumpur.

"On the day I set up my theatre company, I told myself that one day my company will perform at the prestigious national theatre (Istana Budaya)," says the 27-year-old who holds a degree in Mass Communication from UiTM (Universiti Teknologi Mara).

After three years of hard work, his dream is finally coming true.

Mohd Amer's little theatre company will be staging its first major production titled *Projek Kahwin* at the Panggung Sari, Istana Budaya, from June 6 to June 14.

"I thought I could possibly make my dream a reality in maybe five years' time," says Mohd Amer, who is also a TV producer at Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) as well as being the manager of a number of local artistes.

"Although I've achieved my target earlier than expected, I still have a hard time believing

my dream is now a reality.

"I started my work at a venue that could only seat up to 120 people a night. And now, I am opening at a venue that is 10 times that size (with a seating capacity of 1,300 people)."

*Projek Kahwin* is a comedy that follows the lives of a couple, Rizal and Nisa, who hope to tie the knot. The couple soon learn that preparing for a wedding is not a piece of cake.

The play stars Izzue Islam, Kilafairy, Shah Iskandar, Kaka Azraff and Imam Muda. It is written by 25-year-old director Muhammad Azri Ali (*far right, inset*) who will also be helming the project.

Muhammad Azri has directed a few productions before but this will be his first big-scale project at a top venue like Istana Budaya.

One would have thought Mohd Amer

would have chosen a more experienced director to handle this major production but he says: "I believe in giving opportunities to the youth to prove themselves."

He points out that Muhammad Azri has a degree in theatre directing from UiTM and has presented *Projek Kahwin* as his final project for his thesis last year.

"The play won best theatre and best script at UiTM," says Mohd Amer. "It was

a small production at UiTM but now, we are going on a bigger scale with a larger cast."

He added that UiTM had also sent Muhammad Azri for a three-month course in acting and directing at Lethbridge University in Canada.

As if having his long-held dream coming true is not enough, two productions (*Teater Juta-Juta* and *Maduku Kalut*) from his MASK Team theatre company have been nominated for nine awards in the Boh Cameronian Arts Awards on April 27.

"This is my debut in the Boh Cameronian Arts Awards and I can't believe that my theatre company received nine nominations," says Mohd Amer.

*Teater Juta-Juta*, which was staged early last year, has been nominated for best group performance, best director and best original script while *Maduku Kalut* received nominations for best actor, two best supporting actors, best set design, best music & sound design and best costume.

*Teater Juta Juta*, which was written and directed by Fasyali Fadzly, was MASK Team's first production. It proved to be so popular that it was restaged twice.

Other productions under the MASK banner include *Satu Plastik Hitam* and *Kawan-Kawan Kita Suka*.

When asked where he sees himself in five years' time, Mohd Amer says: "I would like to see the MASK Team staging a play outside of Malaysia, perhaps in Indonesia or Singapore."

He hopes his success will motivate the youths out there. "I want to tell them that if I can do it, so can they! All they need is to have passion, and to be prepared to put in a lot of hard work along with that passion."

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