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PM Lawrence Wong auctions his guitar to empower 600 young musicians

His James Reed Smith headlines a charity fundraiser for BT Budding Artists Fund

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Helmi Yusof Published Tue, Apr 8, 2025 · 02:00 PM



Prime Minister Lawrence Wong – then the acting minister for culture, community and youth – surprised the audience at the ChildAid 2012 charity concert with an impromptu performance. PHOTO: BT FILE

[SINGAPORE] It's not every day that a prime minister parts with his prized guitar – but Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong is doing just that to help raise funds for The Business Times' own charity, The Business Times Budding Artists Fund (BT BAF).

His personal guitar, a striking Paul Reed Smith (PRS) 25th Anniversary Custom 24 Artist Package, will headline a charity auction this August. The auction is part of Gift a Guitar, a new initiative by The Music Society, Singapore (SGMUSO) and The Rice Company Limited (TRCL), launched to commemorate the Republic's 60th year of independence.

Signed by PM Wong himself, the rare flame maple-topped six-string is not only a collector's gem but also a heartfelt contribution to a cause close to his own journey with music.

The proceeds from the auction will fund acoustic guitars and a year of structured lessons for 600 underserved young people aged 13 to 19 – giving them a chance to find their own voice through music.



PM Wong's personal guitar, a striking PRS 25th Anniversary Custom 24 Artist Package, is a collector's item. PHOTO: SGMUSO, TRCL

PM Wong's love for the guitar began in childhood, when his father gifted him one as a birthday present. While his day job leaves him little time for jam sessions, he has, on occasion, swapped the podium for the stage.

At ChildAid – the annual charity concert co-organised by BT and The Straits Times – he performed in both 2012 and 2014, joining young musicians in a memorable rendition of Ed Sheeran's hit Thinking Out Loud for the latter edition.

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"Music is more than enjoyment; it shapes lives, providing a powerful outlet for self-expression and bringing joy to others," says Danny Loong, chairman of SGMUSO and founder of Timbre Group. "This initiative is about giving youth the same opportunity I had when I picked up my first guitar."

The prime minister first lent his support to Gift a Guitar in 2023 through a video endorsement. His donation now adds a deeply personal and symbolic touch to the campaign.



Then acting minister for culture, community and youth Lawrence Wong (left) on stage at ChildAid 2012 with singer Dominic Chin. PHOTO: BT FILE

In total, 60 guitars will be auctioned, each bearing its own story. They were donated by local and regional artists, prominent figures, and corporate partners. Prior to the auction, the instruments will be exhibited at a public venue, allowing the community to connect with the music and meaning behind each piece. The auction will be held online, inviting global participation.

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"Guitar playing has always been a powerful way for Singaporeans to express their rock-star dreams," notes David Ebenezer Toh, vice-chairman of SGMUSO and chief executive of The Ebenex Group.

Applications for youth interested in joining the programme will open in July 2025. Successful applicants will receive their own guitar and access to music mentorship.



PM Wong's signed guitar held by Timbre Group founder and CEO Danny Loong (right). With him is Colin Goh, CEO of TRCL. PHOTO: SGMUSO, TRCL

Now in its 20th year, BT BAF has supported more than 23,000 children and youth from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, opening doors to music, dance, theatre and the visual arts. The fund continues to ensure that no young talent is left behind due to a lack of means.

Individuals and organisations keen to contribute may donate guitars or make a cash donation. For more information, contact danny.loong@timbregroup.asia or peishan_lim@trcl.sg

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