

Children raise a record \$506,000

THERE was not an empty seat in the house at this year's ChildAid Concert after tickets sold out for both last night and tonight's shows.

The annual charity concert, which is now in its fourth year, is organised by the The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund and The Business Times Budding Artists Fund.

The concerts have raised a record \$506,000 for the two charities this year, surpassing last year's total of \$450,000.

The concerts, which showcase young musical talent, have raised a total of more than \$1.5 million since they were launched in 2005.

"This proves that despite the challenging economic climate, the Singapore public and corporate sector have big hearts," said Mr Peter Khoo, ChildAid's organising chairman. "It signals to the needy children that our society cares for them."

Last night's concert at the National University of Singapore's University Cultural Centre opened with a Broadway number by students from the Crestar School of Dance, who danced to Frank Sinatra's Fly Me To The Moon.

A total of 16 acts and 64 performers, aged from 6 to 19,

were involved in the performance last night.

The same children will be performing before the guest-of-honour, Dr Ng Eng Hen, the Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence, and Dr Tony Tan, Singapore Press Holdings chairman, tonight at the Gala Night.

Performances last night ranged from singers to piano and violin players, guitarists and dance performances.

For the first time, international acts were part of the line-up. The winner of last year's Hong Kong Young Artist Award, 12-year-old pianist Aristo Sham, and 10-year-old Tiger Onitsuka from Japan, one of the world's youngest professional jazz percussionists, performed last night.

Aristo, who has played at charity concerts in Hong Kong, is performing at ChildAid because he wants to "help other children".

The youngest student in the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory's Young Artist Programme, 12-year-old Choon Hong Yi, also took centrestage with his violin.

Having performed at ChildAid 2006, he returned this year because he really enjoyed his experience the first time.

"I want to use my talent to give back to society," he added.

Concert lights up the crowd

■ Amni Musfirah Abdul Rashid (right), 14, belting out Kelly Clarkson's Because Of You, accompanied by Charis Tan, 13, on the piano. Both girls are students at the School of the Arts.



■ Violinist Choon Hong Yi (below), 12, playing the First Movement, Allegro Non Troppo, of Symphonie Espagnole by Edouard Lalo. He was accompanied by his brother, 14-year-old Choon Hong Xiang, on the piano.



■ Tiger Onitsuka, 10, drumming out Dear Mr B, a jazz variation on Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8 Pathetique.



■ Thirteen-year-old Julia Abueva, who had a video of her performing shown on The Oprah Winfrey Show, moved the audience with her soulful rendition of Smokey Mountain's Better World.