

Themed Urban Symphony, the exterior of the circular Singapore Pavilion alludes to the strip of perforated paper, or Mobius strip, that a music box runs to play the tune.

Instead of holes, however, the three-storey building has stylish fins, which catch the light and give the pavilion a futuristic feel.

The slits are also a green feature meant to help keep the building cool with the free flow of air.

"I wanted something three-dimensional and circular to change people's perception of Singapore being very square and rigid," says the pavilion's principal architect, Mr Tan Kay Ngee of Kay Ngee Tan Architects.

He explains that although Singapore is known as a commercially successful and economically well-to-do place, most of the world does not know about the strong culture and sub-cultures here.

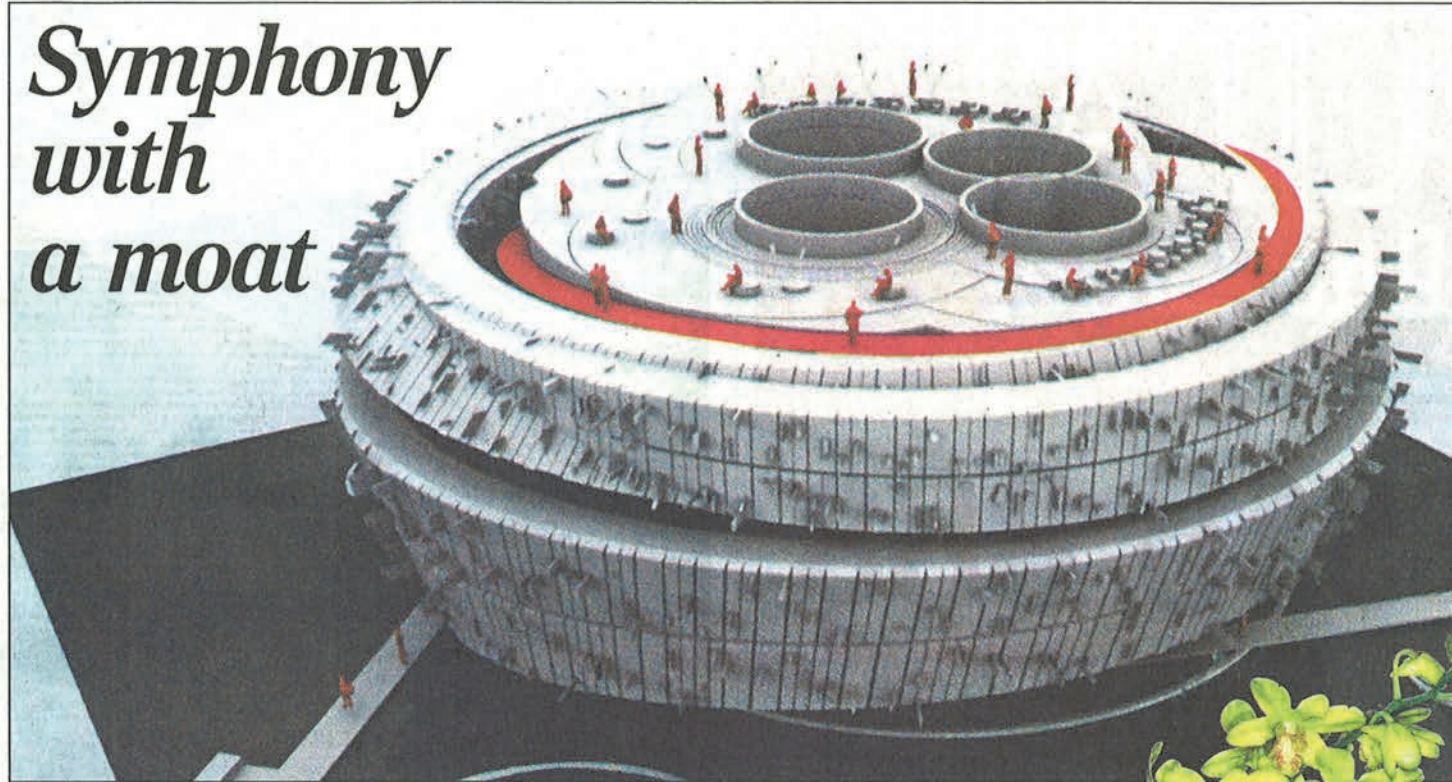
"We have really good musicians and playwrights and even our club scene is lively. Not many people know about this," he says.

Aside from the music-inspired facade, which is made out of recyclable materials such as aluminium and steel, the structure's four supporting columns of different sizes represent the four races in Singapore, a witty and key feature that Mr Tan says posed a challenge to the engineers.

"People from China think we're all Chinese, but in fact, we're formed from different races where harmony is very important."

The three-storey pavilion spans 3,000

Symphony with a moat



PHOTOS: SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD

sq m and is located in the Expo's Oceania and South-east Asia zone in Pudong, between the Nanpu and Lupu bridges.

Sandwiched between Australia and Malaysia's pavilions, the site was picked for its visibility from the Lupu Bridge, says Singapore Tourism Board's director of World Expo, Ms Leong See Kay.

The pavilion's base, which spreads out towards the top to look like the bill of a

baseball cap, is meant to create shade for the structure's lower levels. It was designed after studying the different angles of sunlight at the site throughout the day for the six months of the event, as the designers have projected.

Other green features include a moat of water surrounding the building and a roof-top garden filled with tropical plants, such as the orchid hybrid



Dendrobium Singapore Shanghai Symphony (left) that was specially created by the National Parks Board for the Shanghai World Expo. According to the

tourism board, the Urban Symphony theme represents a harmony of elements in Singapore's society - progress and sustainability; urbanisation and greenery; tradition and modernity; and the different races living in harmony.

A theme that was a good fit with the Shanghai World Expo's Better City, Better Life theme, as Mr Tan says: "Singapore is perfect for this as we're always trying to better the lives of our people."

Wanting to make a statement with the pavilion's design without coming across as being too "in your face", he began in 2008 to solicit ideas from his team of designers and architects.

Construction began last June, with input from engineers from Arup, the same company behind world icons such as the Sydney Opera House and, most recently, the Beijing National Stadium and National Aquatics Centre for the Beijing Olympics.

The pavilion is expected to be completed towards the end of next month to allow for one month of performance rehearsals. The tourism board declines to reveal the cost of the pavilion.

There will be daily performances staged by local company Muse Inc, a light and music fountain show in the garden, multimedia exhibits and videos presenting Singapore and its people at the pavilion's second-floor theatre.

Of course, there will be local cuisine ranging from Peranakan and Malay to Indian. STB's Ms Leong says: "We want to bring a big slice of Singapore to China."

