

**SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU, MINISTER FOR CULTURE,
COMMUNITY AND YOUTH AT THE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
AWARDS DAY 2016 ON MONDAY, 16 MAY 2016, 4.00PM AT SOTA
CONCERT HALL**

Ms Lim Geok Cheng
Principal, School of the Arts (SOTA)

Board Members of SOTA

Teachers and staff

Parents and students

Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to be here today.

2 As we celebrate our SOTA students' accomplishments, I would like to give special thanks to the many who have given of themselves to make them happen. Many of you here have been instrumental in their journey to success as it takes a community to educate a child. I particularly would like the students to pay attention to the people I am about to mention as I believe you should thank them in your own way after the ceremony.

Efforts of Parents and Teachers

3 I would like to first and foremost recognise the parents, who have been so supportive of your children's pursuit of their passion and education. The part that you play in your child's development cannot be overstated. You have allowed your children to take the unconventional path by placing their education in the hands of SOTA. On behalf of SOTA, I thank you for your trust which I am certain was well placed.

4 Next, the Principal and teachers of SOTA who have devoted themselves to an education system that allows the creativity and artistry of their charges to be nurtured and fully realised. Running an unconventional system has its challenges – you are in uncharted waters without the support that your peers in mainstream schools receive, you have to meet expectations of parents and stakeholders of a school that is one of its kind. But you have more than met those challenges. Our students have done well. Your care and guidance give them the skills and the values to face their next phase in life.

Support from Donors and Partners

5 SOTA and her students have benefited from the generous contributions of donors and patrons. From corporations to individuals, the support given to SOTA allows us to sustain the costly unconventional education. Dr Lee Boon Yang, my predecessor as the

Arts Minister, is one of them. Dr Lee was deeply involved in the setting up of SOTA and till this day, he holds SOTA dearly in his heart. The award which he sponsors, the Dr Lee Boon Yang Student of the Year Award, is given to students with all-round excellence.

6 I would also like to mention the support of our partners and neighbours in the Bras Basah-Bugis cultural precinct and the Civic District who have given our students many opportunities to showcase their talents. The light installations during the Singapore Night Festival and the interactive works at the National Museum's Children's Season are examples of exposure that offers invaluable experience for our students.

New Art Form – Literary Arts

7 The school and its teachers are always looking out for ways to provide the opportunities for our students to pursue their passions and prepare them with skills for fulfilling lives. In 2013, SOTA was the first school in Singapore to offer Film under its IB Diploma Programme. In 2014, SOTA introduced the IB Career-related Programme for students who want to pursue their art forms professionally. The inaugural batch of IB Career-related Programme students has graduated this year and many will continue their education with prestigious arts institutions.

8 And now, I am happy to announce that SOTA will be offering a new art form, the Literary Arts. The Literary Arts programme will develop students as writers; exposing them to a range of writing genres including poetry, short stories, screenplays and journalistic writing. Mr Philip Jeyaretnam and Dr Meira Chand, both acclaimed writers, are part of the Literary Arts Advisory Panel to oversee programme development. I am sure this is exciting news for our Literary Arts students.

Developing Students with a Social Consciousness

9 Beyond the attainment of certificates, the school has always emphasised developing students with a sense of social responsibility. Rachel Chew is a good example. She was a recipient of the Dr Lee Boon Yang Student of the Year Award and the President of SOTA's Leadership Academy. In 2014, when Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, Rachel stepped up and organised a spoken word performance series to raise fund for the victims. Rachel will be receiving a Liberal Arts education in Yale University, and I look forward to Rachel making a positive impact to Singapore after her studies.

10 Another recipient is Sabrina Dzulkifli, one of our IB Career-related Programme¹ graduates in Theatre and a recipient of SOTA-Ngee Ann Kongsi Outstanding Young Artist Award. Earlier this year, Sabrina was commissioned by the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival to co-write BI(CARA), a play about how we appreciate and interact with animals. I was told that the play was staged to full houses and tickets to all shows were sold-out. I am excited to see her produce more of these socially relevant plays.

11 Lin Xiangning is this year's Prime Minister's Valedictorian. She is one of the pioneers in the IB Career-related Programme. She will be continuing her music studies at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. Xiangning has spoken of her role as a musician in the Singapore scene, and wants to teach and collaborate with other musicians to build a distinctive Singaporean music culture. I am sure that her passion will help us grow more engaged audiences and I look forward to her contributions.

Conclusion

¹ The International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme (IBCP) was introduced in 2014 as an option for year 5 and 6 students who want to pursue a professional career in the arts. This programme that focusses on art skills complements the more academically rigorous IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) option. Graduates of the IBCP receive an IB Career Certificate that is recognised by local and international art institutions.

12 I hope that you, our students, have come to realise and appreciate the extensive support you have received during your years in SOTA, and are inspired to return that generosity and give back to society.

13 Some of you will devote yourselves to the arts professionally and raise the standards in your respective art forms. Others will be art administrators and teachers, supporting our creative industries. Others may not work in the art sectors directly, but will nevertheless have the power to apply your knowledge to the development and promotion of art. Your understanding of the craft and profession, your training in critical thinking, and your sense of creativity can be put to good use by enriching our society.

14 Let me at this juncture congratulate all our award winners for their outstanding achievements. You have worked hard and made a mark. Persevere and stay eager to learn as you have a long road ahead of you.

15 Ultimately, the legacy of SOTA will be for our students to create. Our students, you sitting among us, will decide the future of SOTA by what you make out of the education that you have received here. SOTA will depend on you to realise the vision of the school – shaping and

impacting society through an education in the arts. I look forward to your contributions as the future of Singapore's art and cultural scene.