

**SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU,
MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH
AT THE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AWARDS DAY 2017
ON MONDAY, 15 MAY 2017, 2:20PM
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

INTRODUCTION

1 Good afternoon, I am most delighted to join you here today. First, I would like to congratulate all the awardees and graduates; you have made all of us very proud with your accomplishments.

2 To the parents – thank you for your support and encouragement given to SOTA. We recognise the Principal and teachers of SOTA, for your dedication in educating our nation’s future creative leaders and thinkers. My sincere thanks to all of you!

BUILDING A VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURE LANDSCAPE

3 **At MCCY, we are committed to growing a vibrant arts and culture landscape.** We recognise the role of the arts in broadening our perspectives and enriching our lives. At the community level, the arts bring people of diverse backgrounds together, thus building strong social bonds. At the national level, it strengthens our national identity, and contributes to a more confident and resilient

Singapore. This is why we are working hard to raise arts excellence, grow audiences, and ensure that our arts offerings are accessible to all.

4 To nurture a society that values the importance of the arts, we provide our young with access and exposure to the arts. We are working closely with MOE to develop more structured student visits to our arts and heritage institutions. SOTA plays an instrumental role in our arts ecosystem. Through its innovative and holistic curriculum, SOTA grooms not only future generations of artists, but also creative professionals who can be leaders in all fields, as well as future patrons and avid supporters of the arts.

BUILDING A CARING AND COHESIVE SOCIETY THROUGH THE ARTS

5 **SOTA also believes in contributing to a more caring and cohesive society.** I am heartened to learn that many SOTA students have reached out to the community through their creative endeavours, and made a positive impact in the lives of others.

6 Take for example, Ashley Ho, a year 6 Dance Student who initiated a project titled 'Parkinson's Grooves' with the Parkinson's Society of Singapore. Together with her schoolmates, she choreographed a dance routine for people with Parkinson's disease, and conducted dance sessions for them as a means of catharsis. She hopes to inspire her juniors to continue the project, and I hope they do.

7 Another year 6 Theatre student, Raiya Binti Bashir Basalamah, helped organise a musical performance in the Year End Concert for the *Before and After School Individualised Care* (BASIC) at Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre. From the casting of roles, to teaching the children stage work and caring for their well-being, Raiya has brought the joy of theatre performance to underprivileged children. This gave them the

opportunity to learn more about the performing arts and I am glad to learn that the children enjoyed themselves onstage.

8 These are just two of the many meaningful projects undertaken by SOTA students. There are many more who have similarly started such meaningful projects during your time in SOTA. I hope you will continue after you graduate, and inspire others to join you and contribute to the society. There are many ways to benefit the community through the arts. For example, we believe in harnessing the creative and therapeutic process of art-making to improve the well-being of individuals, including the elderly or persons with special needs. You can also help us bring the arts to the community, and making it accessible to all.

SOTA STUDENTS EXCELLING IN THE ARTS AND ACROSS MULTIPLE PATHWAYS

9 As you enter the next stage of your career, I trust that you will venture confidently into the future as arts practitioners and enthusiasts. In fact, SOTA's pioneer batch of graduates have already commenced their careers in the arts and arts-related industries. For example, dance alumna Yeo Chan Yee is now a ballet dancer with the Singapore Dance Theatre; Joy Ho an illustrator, while Clare Chong an independent film maker.

10 **SOTA also provides multiple pathways and varied career options.** Over 70% of its graduates have gone on to pursue non-arts related university courses such as Law, Journalism and Engineering and some have taken arts and arts-related courses in prestigious arts institutions and conservatories.

11 The training that you have received in the arts will help you analyse issues from different perspectives. This gives you an added advantage in your chosen course of study and future professions. Visual Arts graduate Wong Hui Yu of class 2012 is a

good example. After graduating from SOTA, Hui Yu went on to major in Arts History at Columbia College in New York. In her nomination to be this year's Salutatorian at her college, Hui Yu was described by faculty members as "*one of those rare, genuinely brilliant students who moves with much intelligence and grace across a number of fields of inquiry*". Her work has also been described as "*always so smart, inventive, and remarkably well researched*". I am happy to note that Hui Yu is currently planning and developing workshops at this year's Singapore International Festival of Arts O.P.E.N Festival.

CONCLUSION

12 SOTA will be celebrating its 10th anniversary next year. It has come a long way, and it takes pride in growing the arts and culture scene, and nurturing well-rounded individuals with a heart for the community. I urge SOTA **to continue its good work in shaping and impacting our society through arts education.**

13 To the students, congratulations once again. I wish all of you the very best for a bright future ahead, and hope you will continue to make positive contributions to society. I would like to leave you with a quote from the late Steve Jobs. In 2011, he gave this insightful comment when introducing the iPad 2, "*It is in Apple's DNA that technology is not enough – it's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our hearts sing.*" I hope that regardless of your chosen path, you too will draw upon your multi-disciplinary training here in SOTA, to innovate and bring about results that make your hearts sing. Thank you!