

**SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU,
MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH
AT SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AWARDS DAY 2018
ON MONDAY, 30 JULY 2018, 3.00PM
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

INTRODUCTION

1 Good afternoon. First, I would like to congratulate all the awardees. You have made us all very proud with your accomplishments. Your hard work has paid off.

2 To the parents – thank you for believing in SOTA; your support and encouragement have been pivotal to the School's success. I would like to recognise the Principal, faculty, staff and partners of SOTA, for your dedication and support in nurturing the future creative leaders of our nation. My sincere thanks and appreciation to all of you!

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS AND CHARTING FUTURE DIRECTIONS

3 SOTA was established in 2008 to identify and nurture the artistic and creative talents of young Singaporeans. It was to provide a learning environment where both artistic and academic potential can be realised. The School has achieved much since then, as some of you have heard from President Halimah Yacob on 20 July. I congratulate SOTA on a successful first 10 years!

4 SOTA has not been content with what it has accomplished so far. Over the past year, the school has worked closely with NAC and MCCY to review its strengths and areas for improvement. The ***review considered how SOTA could best seize opportunities and address potential challenges in the years ahead***. This will help the School map out its next phase of development.

Refreshed Vision and Mission

5 Arising from the review, **SOTA's revised vision is to nurture "*Creative citizens for the future*"**. This is an important focus for the School, for it to remain relevant and deliver an education that equips its students with the right mind-sets as well as skill-sets. SOTA students must be able to meet and overcome the challenges posed by rapid changes in the world and increasingly complex societal issues. SOTA must also press ahead to realise **its refreshed mission to "*nurture artistic and creative learners who positively impact Singapore and the world, through a vibrant learning environment that is anchored in the arts*"**.

6 It is clear from SOTA's vision and mission that the school will continue to place students at the heart of what it does. As ***Singapore's only specialised pre-tertiary arts school***, SOTA is in a unique position to deliver a distinctive, arts-enhanced educational experience that is underpinned by creativity, innovation, cultural intelligence and lifelong learning. This will help prepare SOTA students to become our future generations of artists, creative professionals, and champions of

the arts who are: first, dedicated to growing Singapore's arts and cultural landscape; second, prepared for the Future Economy, and third, confident, resilient, and committed to building a caring and cohesive society.

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTS EDUCATION

7 A key recommendation of the review is for SOTA to broaden access to artistically-inclined youth ***from all walks of life***. This seeks to ensure that children who show early interest in, and aptitude for the arts, have opportunities to realise their potential regardless of their family circumstances. By imparting an appreciation of diversity, SOTA can help children from different backgrounds interact with one another and share common experiences, mould characters, and nurture adults who will contribute positively to Singapore.

Enhanced outreach to artistically-inclined Primary School pupils

8 To do so, SOTA will enhance its engagement with primary schools to ***identify and nurture young artistic talents through more targeted outreach***. The School will be working closely with MOE to introduce arts enrichment programmes for artistically-inclined primary school students, recognising those with the raw talents and may not have early arts training.

SOTA Arts Development Award and Buddy Programme

9 To ensure that artistically-talented primary school students are provided with opportunities to further their education with the school, SOTA is introducing a new initiative called ***the Arts Development Award (ADA)***. This Award is offered to artistically talented Primary 4 to 6 pupils from low-income families. It provides funding for them to participate in visual arts or dance enrichment programmes. This

will allow more of our children to begin honing their artistic abilities at an early age, and give them more options in life.

10 In addition to financial support, ADA recipients will also have opportunities to be mentored by SOTA students – in their academic and artistic pursuits, as well as their personal growth – under a new ***SOTA Buddy Programme***, which complements the ADA. This provides holistic support for Award recipients as they pursue their artistic interests from an early age; at the same time help their buddies from SOTA learn the value of being caring and considerate ‘mentors’.

11 I am happy to launch the Arts Development Award today. I would like to congratulate the first 23 recipients – I look forward to some of you being students of SOTA in a few years’ time! I would also like to thank Temasek Foundation Nurtures for supporting the award and the Buddy Programme.

DEEPER AND MORE SUSTAINED PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY

12 Another major area that SOTA will focus on, is to ***develop deeper and more sustained partnerships with the community***. While SOTA may be unique in our educational landscape, it is an integral part of our wider society. SOTA students will be given even more opportunities to learn from others with different experiences and perspectives, and apply their school learning in service of the wider community.

13 SOTA will enhance existing partnerships with local arts groups and cultural institutions such as the Orchestra of Music Makers and National Gallery Singapore. It will also explore new arrangements with groups who can add value to the students’ education beyond the school, including community service groups.

14 One example is how SOTA collaborates with the Muscular Dystrophy Association Singapore (MDAS). In 2017, some Year Two SOTA Visual Arts students conducted a lino print workshop for MDAS members. Together, they created many beautiful lino prints, some of which were exhibited at the SOTA Gallery. A group of Year 4 students recently conducted a 2-day holiday camp for the MDAS members, while some Year 3 students helped to digitise drawings done by the members for their fundraising. SOTA will develop more of such partnerships with organisations that focus on three beneficiary groups: children with special needs; children from disadvantaged families; and the elderly. This will help SOTA students put ***their learning and talents to meaningful community projects that benefit the community***, and enhance their development as young leaders.

CONTINUED EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS AND ACADEMICS

15 For SOTA to do all this that have been described, it has to entrench and build on the good foundations it has in the arts and the academics. A key recommendation from the review is for SOTA to develop an ***Arts Integrated curriculum*** that aims to strengthen learning through a ***multi-disciplinary approach***. For example, SOTA students currently learn about the mathematical concept of probability through the rolling of dice, and plotting them as coordinates on a grid. When the dice is rolled sufficient times, an irregular shape emerges. Putting these irregular shapes together forms a new piece of artwork. Thus, instead of merely focusing on the probability of numbers, SOTA students are encouraged to look for visual patterns – these can be in the physical form of the dice, or the images that are formed from rolling the dice repeatedly. When they do so, a new visual art piece can also be created by combining the numeric with the visual.

16 SOTA will further develop its teaching approach in areas like the one described. Design Thinking, Problem-based Learning, and technology will be applied

in new and innovative ways, to further broaden the perspectives and skillsets of its students.

17 In addition, SOTA will **enhance its customised learning approach**, to provide opportunities for its students to engage in the arts and academic subjects which best suit their interests and learning needs. For example, SOTA is studying how students who intend to pursue a career in the arts can be provided with more options in subject combinations at an earlier stage of their studies.

18 To deliver the School's desired educational outcomes, SOTA will strengthen its professional development framework to equip and empower faculty members with the necessary skills and knowledge. Through this framework, SOTA will reinforce a **strong professional and values-based culture** amongst its staff, so that they are effective as educators and role models.

CONCLUSION

19 SOTA has done well in its first 10 years. For the next lap of its journey, the School is committed to being accessible to students from all backgrounds, connected to the communities around it, and delivering a top-class education. I am confident that the SOTA community will continue working together closely to achieve these outcomes, as the school further develops and implements the initiatives in the coming years.

20 To students and graduates, congratulations once again. Your time in SOTA has not only honed your artistic talents, but also developed you into caring and well-rounded individuals who will contribute to our society in the years ahead. I wish all of you the very best in your future endeavours, and look forward to learning about your accomplishments. Thank you.