



# STAR-POST (MUSIC)

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# LIVING A MUSIC LEGACY

Mrs Joanne Yeo  
Programme Manager

Each of us has memories of our time in school, and how we have benefitted from the care and guidance of a particular teacher. For some of us, we might even have been moved to join the education service because of a teacher's impact in our lives. Indeed, in education, it is so much more than what we leave behind, but the legacies that live and take on multiple possibilities.

In this issue, we celebrate the different roles that our fraternity of music educators perform. Mrs Constance Loke, Principal of Haig Girls' School, joins us in paying tribute to the leadership of our pioneer music educators. We place under the spotlight Ms Kon Mei Leen, who dedicated her career to mentoring her young charges, supporting them in chasing their dreams. We thank her and all pioneer music educators for their pioneering work in arts education, and for having groomed many educators and leaders in various fields and industries who continue to further the cause of education today.

This issue also shares how twelve music teachers who participated in our PAM Research from 2013 to 2014 have become pathfinders for the music teaching fraternity, and share the findings on music pedagogies that nurture 21st century competencies. We also share how we could have the guidance of artist-mentors and research consultants to engage in reflective practice and to guide us as we live our own music legacy.

The STAR team salutes all our music teachers – past and present – who have taken the lead to effect their various legacies, and celebrate the ripple effect of each legacy that continues into the future. We hope that the articles in this issue will inspire you as we each hold fast and live out our mission in education. STAR supports your journey with professional development opportunities that build your leadership as a reflective practitioner and musician-educator.

Each of us, in our different capacity, can be a pathfinder living a music legacy.

# TEACHERS AS LEADERS

*Mrs Constance Loke, Principal of Haig Girls' School, pays tribute to her music teacher, Ms Kon Mei Leen, who had shaped her philosophy and practice as a school leader.*

I was in the pioneer cohort of the Music Elective Programme (MEP) at Methodist Girls' School (MGS) and had the privilege of being taught by Ms Kon Mei Leen from Secondary 1-3 (1983-85). Ms Kon was an inspiring and creative teacher who was ahead of her time. Long before there was talk about 21st century competencies, Ms Kon designed learning experiences that gave us many opportunities to develop our creative and critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills, self-directed learning and cross-cultural awareness.



Ms Kon taught us to listen, to appreciate music in an informed manner and to think about the qualities of a good performance. Engaging in creative, collaborative work was the norm in her lessons – each time she taught us a new music concept, we would apply what we learnt in instrumental and vocal compositions that we performed. Ms Kon bought a wide range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments, including Orff xylophones, metallophones, glockenspiels and concert band-grade cymbals, snare and bass drums. The aesthetic flow during the ensemble playing in our lessons was palpable and we enjoyed the music-making and camaraderie so much that we were intrinsically motivated to spend time during recess and after school 'musicking' on these instruments with our friends, exploring timbre and creating our own arrangements and compositions.

Each year, Ms Kon involved us in a music project that sparked our creative juices, engaging us in self-directed and collaborative learning that challenged us beyond our comfort zone. I still remember the operettas based on fairy tales that we composed and performed in Secondary 1, the traditional weddings project we performed in Secondary 2 and the radio programmes about composers we produced in Secondary 3.

At the beginning of Secondary 3, Ms Kon asked me to start and run a new CCA – the MGS string ensemble. For the first 1½ years, we did not have a teacher in-charge. I am deeply grateful for the trust and autonomy she gave me by putting me in-charge. I learnt first-hand what it meant to be a leader – leading by example, taking initiative and mentoring the ensemble peers under my care. I treasure the teamwork, camaraderie and the lasting friendships made during our student-run ensemble rehearsals.

One of our most memorable performances was that of 'The Heavens are Telling' from Haydn's oratorio, *The Creation*, performed during Founder's Day in 1985 and conducted by Ms Kon. We needed an orchestra to accompany the school choir, so we roped in our schoolmates who played woodwind and brass instruments in the Singapore Youth Orchestra. Having studied the work during our MEP lessons, it was a deeply satisfying and exhilarating experience to be able to perform it with the orchestral forces originally used by Haydn.



Looking back, I marvel at the creative risks that Ms Kon took when she assigned what could have seemed such ambitious projects for young teenagers to accomplish. Those formative creative and leadership experiences have helped to shape who I am and my educational and leadership philosophy and practice. I became a teacher because inspiring MGS teachers like Ms Kon brought so much joy and meaning to my learning experiences in school that I wanted to pay it forward by doing likewise for my students. The trust and autonomy I now give my teachers and students and the creative work that they engage in – Ms Kon sowed the seeds more than 30 years ago when she taught me.



## TEACHERS AS PATHFINDERS FOR STUDENT- CENTRIC MUSIC TEACHING

Chua Siew Ling  
Programme Director &  
Master Teacher (Music)

In 2012, 12 teachers decided to accept an invitation from STAR to participate in the PAM research (2013-4) which seeks to study the impact of (in this case) Music pedagogies on the delivery of 21st century competencies (21CC) and student outcomes. Little did they know, they would become the pathfinders for student-centric music teaching for the music teaching fraternity. The research findings have contributed to shaping STAR's professional development curriculum, and some videos of their lessons have been used as examples to illustrate teaching strategies,

As a community of practice, the 12 teachers spent two years - trialling, experimenting, innovating and reflecting on their teaching approaches, and being observed in their classes, thrice, by an international panel comprising local and overseas music pedagogues and music administrators. Despite the challenges and several humbling moments, they held on to a common faith that their work will improve their own teaching. More significantly, their efforts have contributed to important findings that will benefit the music teaching community and enhance music education in Singapore.

MRS  
KIMBERLEY SNG,  
ANGLICAN  
HIGH

MS  
FELICIA TOH,  
BUKIT PANJANG  
PRIMARY

MDM  
LIM HWEE SIAN,  
CEDAR GIRLS'  
SECONDARY

MRS  
BRIDGETTE TEH,  
CHONGZHENG  
PRIMARY

MS  
DESIREE CHUA,  
CLEMENTI TOWN  
SECONDARY

MS  
LOI WEI LING,  
EDGEFIELD  
PRIMARY

MRS  
GERALDINE TAY,  
HOLY  
INNOCENTS'  
HIGH

MS  
SHARON TAN,  
KEMING  
PRIMARY

MRS  
ANGELA LIM,  
ST. ANDREW'S  
JUNIOR

MS  
DEBORAH GAN,  
ST. ANDREW'S  
SECONDARY

MRS  
IRENE CHIN,  
WEST GROVE  
PRIMARY

MR  
LOO TENG KIAT,  
ZHENGHUA  
PRIMARY



# FINDINGS ON MUSIC PEDAGOGIES THAT NURTURE 21ST CENTURY COMPETENCIES

There are four pedagogical leverages for the development of the 21CC, represented graphically below.

## Aesthetic Musical Flow

### Musical Communication & Cultures

Provide Meaningful Choices & Empowerment

### Musical Creativity

Facilitate Creative Process

### Critical Thinking in Music

Develop reflection of and responding to music

Musical  
Voice of  
Students

### Musical Collaboration

Facilitate collaborative group work and musical ensemble

## MUSICAL COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

Teachers facilitate students to communicate through music making, and provide exposure to a variety of local and global repertoire, and make explicit connections of music and its socio-cultural contexts.

## CRITICAL THINKING

Teachers empower students to make informed judgements and decisions in creating, making and presenting music. They use critical thinking strategies to help students reflect on the creative decisions that they make.

## MUSICAL CREATIVITY

Teachers plan for the entire creative process (generating, clarifying, developing, refining, evaluating ideas) and allow sufficient time for the process to take place over a series of lessons. They make room for open-ended tasks through exploration within parameters guided by learning objectives, which allows for diversity of outcomes and differentiated learning. They encourage students to provide alternative musical interpretations through performing, responding and creating.

## MUSICAL COLLABORATION

Teachers are facilitators and co-learners, facilitating the social dimensions of learning. They systematically teach students the processes to successful group work, and encourage students to listen attentively to themselves vis-à-vis the whole ensemble.



On the whole, Music lessons that provide quality music experiences have a strong musical flow throughout the lesson. For example, teachers use musical routines for smooth transitions and classroom management during lessons and model musically expressive behaviours for students.

## REFLECTIONS FROM TEACHERS

*"The more we let go, the more students will and can learn."*

*"I see the need for the students to articulate their thought processes and to show reflection of critical thinking through, for example, commentary about their work."*

*"Never underestimate the students' potential."*

*"Now I believe that student-centric pedagogies indeed make the lessons more rewarding for the students. And they better prepare them as life-long learners."*



## TEACHERS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS

*"I appreciated the opportunity to have a first-hand experience of Indian music in Singapore from the practitioners themselves.... To translate all the Indian musical concepts into terms that could be understood by Western musicians like us; and also be present to observe and finally to comment on our lessons such that we can teach Indian music in the classroom from a more emic perspective."*

—  
AMS PARTICIPANT WHO WAS MENTORED UNDER INDIAN MUSIC EXPERT MR GHANAVENTHAN RETNAM.

It is important for us as teachers to take time to reflect, continue to learn and re-learn, and improve on our musical and pedagogical practice. Only then will we not fall into the trap of complacency and stagnation, but retain the sharpness necessary to continue to make that difference in the lives of our students.

Over the past two years, our teachers have benefitted from the Artist-Mentor Scheme (AMS) and the Arts Pedagogical Research Fund (APRF). Through these schemes, they have received the support and funding they needed to broaden their knowledge and understanding in areas of need, and also to go deeper into a specific area, applying research methodology to shed greater light on the implementation of student-centric pedagogy and 21CC.

Through this rich learning and study in pioneering areas, we become the creators of new knowledge, and leave behind a rich legacy of fresh musical and pedagogical understanding for our students and colleagues as we share our experiences and findings.

### ARTIST-MENTOR SCHEME

The AMS aims to develop teachers' teaching competencies through being mentored by outstanding practitioners of the visual arts, music, drama and dance. Under this scheme, co-funding of up to \$8,000 is available to engage artist-mentors to carry out workshops for teachers, to co-teach with teachers, and to mentor teachers in the art form, in the context of the curriculum or co-curriculum.



## ARTS PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH FUND

The APRF aims to support teachers in researching effective student-centred arts pedagogies in order to improve teaching practices. Under this scheme, funding of up to \$20,000 is available to fund the purchase of teaching resources, music instruments, equipment and tools relevant to the research, professional development of teachers, hire research assistants to aid in the research process and dissemination of findings.

For more information on these schemes, do refer to the official notifications and FAQs using the following links:

- **Notification for AMS:**  
[http://icollaborate.moe.gov.sg/nai/Lists/Document/Attachments/1638/PA\\_18\\_14.pdf](http://icollaborate.moe.gov.sg/nai/Lists/Document/Attachments/1638/PA_18_14.pdf)
- **Notification for APRF:**  
[http://icollaborate.moe.gov.sg/nai/Lists/Document/Attachments/1637/PA\\_17\\_14.pdf](http://icollaborate.moe.gov.sg/nai/Lists/Document/Attachments/1637/PA_17_14.pdf)
- **Softcopy Application Forms and FAQs:**  
<http://www.star.moe.edu.sg/resources/arts-education-resources>

Application for both schemes close on 30 October.

*“Through the APRF journey, I’ve been challenged to think more deeply about pedagogical issues in the music classroom and have learnt more about research methodology. We were also given opportunities to share what we have learnt to the greater community of music educators.”*

–  
APRF PARTICIPANT



Research findings of the 2013 STAR teacher-researchers have been published and sent to all schools. We hope you will enjoy reading **“Essays in Music Pedagogical Research: Student-Centricity in the 21st Century”**





## TEACHERS AS MUSICIAN- EDUCATORS

On 3 September 2014, more than 40 music teachers from all over Singapore made time to come together to perform at the MOE HQ Teachers' Day celebrations. The Teachers' Choir gave a beautiful rendition of "Take These Wings". We were also honoured to have our Master Teachers from the Malay Language Centre of Singapore, the Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre and Curriculum Planning & Development Division join us in the Ethnic Fusion Ensemble to perform a collaborative arrangement of the classic SBC drama serial theme song "Good Morning, Sir!" In the finale, all the performers came together to lead the entire audience in singing Josh Groban's "You Raise Me Up".



# PROGRAMMES

	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES	DETAILS	PARTICIPANTS
<b>SINGAPORE ARTS PEDAGOGY SEMINAR</b> This year, STAR is organising the inaugural "Singapore Arts Pedagogy Seminar", which will incorporate the Kodály, Orff and Dalcroze Milestone Workshops into an integrated two week seminar series.	Contemporary Trends in Music Education Lecture by Outstanding Educator-in-Residence, A/P Jane Southcott from Monash University. <a href="#">CLICK HERE TO REGISTER</a>	14 Nov 2014 3:00pm – 4:30pm Theatrette, Blk J AST	CS1, 2 & 3 Primary & Secondary music teachers & allied educators
	Kodály Approach <a href="#">CLICK HERE TO REGISTER</a>	Pri & Sec: 3 – 7 Nov 2014 (5 full days) 8:00am – 5:00pm STAR Blk K	<b>BASIC LEVEL:</b> CS1, 2 & 3 Primary & Secondary music teachers  <b>ADVANCED LEVEL:</b> Music teachers who have completed the Kodály Basic Level course
	Orff Approach <a href="#">CLICK HERE TO REGISTER</a>	Pri: 3 – 7 Nov 2014 (5 full days) Sec: 10 – 14 Nov 2014 (5 full days) 8:00am – 5:00pm STAR Blk K	CS1, 2 & 3 Primary & Secondary music teachers
	Dalcroze Approach <a href="#">CLICK HERE TO REGISTER</a>	Pri: 10 – 14 Nov 2014 (5 full days) 8:00am – 5:00pm STAR Blk K	CS1, 2 & 3 Primary music teachers

	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES	DETAILS	PARTICIPANTS
<b>EVENTS</b>	Celebración	31 Oct 2014 (PM) More details will be emailed to invitees	By invitation: Art & Music Teacher-Leaders, STAR Champions, STAR Associates, STAR Teacher-Researchers

	NAME OF COP	DATE
<b>COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COP)</b> Programmes that are premised on collaboration and sharing to collectively improve music skills and/or teaching practices.	Teachers' Choir	4:00pm – 6:00pm, Tuesdays STAR Blk K Lvl 3 Recital Studio Please email <a href="mailto:Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg">Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg</a> if you are interested to sign up!
	<i>*We welcome all teachers and Allied Educators to participate in the CoP. Please contact our Programme Executive Ms Tan Bee Ngoh (<a href="mailto:Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg">Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg</a>) and let her know your area of interest.</i>	

