



*They had to undergo a lengthy journey in their education before finally being accepted into the arts courses at LASALLE College of the Arts. These three youth, who are about to complete their studies soon, have diverse backgrounds in differing fields, from information technology, events management to engineering. They recall their artistic journeys in and out of campus as they anticipate their final year project presentations that will happen this month and next month. Journalist HARYANI ISMAIL (haryani@sph.com.sg) reports.*

### **Empowering experience on the global stage at *iSing World* in France**

SWITCHING diploma courses was not something she had intended to do just because she was following her heart.

From a Diploma in Information Technology at Temasek Polytechnic (TP), she went directly to the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts to pursue theatre. However, eventually, Miss Nur Shahirah Othman, 23, returned to her first love in the field of singing.

As she brings her studies to a close in the Diploma in Music Programme at LASALLE College of the Arts, she is grateful that this course has opened up the door to financial rewards by giving her the exposure that she had always wanted.

Last year, Shai, the stage name she goes by, won the talent competition *iSing Singapore 2018*. That victory brought her to France where she competed in the international *iSing World* championship. She emerged among the top 15 best performers in the competition. This year she emerged runner-up in yet another talent competition, *Safra Ultimate Talent 2019*.

Her list of projects does not just end there. She has in fact just released her own single, *Fighter*, which combines pop, R&B and rock.

For her final year presentation on 16 May, Miss Nur Shahirah will be one of several LASALLE students involved in a concert tribute to the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin. *La Diva! Aretha Franklin and Her Music* is something this young lady, who has been singing since age three, has been eagerly anticipating.

Sharing at length about her artistic journey, Miss Nur Shahirah says, “Initially, I was a devoted fan of Datuk Seri Siti Nurhaliza. Mum says as I grew into adulthood, my interest shifted to English songs.

“Since my primary school did not have any choir, I joined the Drama Club to boost my confidence. However, I realized that music was a field I loved after I won the song writing competition for Total Defence Day. My teachers told me I had a natural talent in composing songs that were easy listening for the general public.”

The choice of Information Technology at TP was made because her mother was not comfortable with her enrolling in an art institution in order to pursue music.

“Like other parents, my mother worried about my future. She felt that with the General Certificate of Education (GCE) ‘O’ Level certificate I had, it was best that I enrol in the polytechnic and take up a course of study which could promise good employment prospects like information technology,” she added.

Miss Nur Shahirah only stayed in TP for a year, after which she followed up with theatre studies in NAFA for another year.

"After finally being accepted into LASALLE with my mother's blessings and support from my siblings, I realized this is the best place for me where I could give my best. In the first year, I certainly faced difficulties. I was criticized for my voice quality not being melodious enough or that I should just stick to singing only Malay songs. However, I felt my mastery of Malay was not quite polished enough for me to be able to phrase the lyrics as beautifully as I could in English," she shares.

Her experience at the competition in France was also a heart-racing one for her. She learnt by observing the determination and confidence of the other participants from all over the world.

"Among the things I learnt to do there was also what I need to do at the Aretha Franklin tribute, which is to sing from the heart without worrying about what people are going to say.

"I want to continue composing music and one day compose for my beloved mother. I know we often disagree because I have my own opinions. But in my heart, I love her," she also shares that her ambition had been to become a pre-school teacher.

Image Caption:

**EMPOWERING HERSELF THROUGH MUSIC:** Miss Nur Shahirah describes her experience singing on the international stage at *iSing World* in France and emerging among the Top 15 Performers as an eye-opening achievement. - Photographs by HARYANI ISMAIL

### **The further the LASALLE undergrad travels, the wider his worldview**

MELODIES depicting the wee hours of the morning are heard with insertions from the Muslim call to prayer (azan).

There is also music from Malay *bangsawan* interspersed with poetry recitation.

The haunting tunes of a solo cello performance can also be expected.

These are some of the compositions created by Mr Danial Ariffin Azman, an undergraduate from the BA(Hons) Music Programme specializing in Composition and Arrangement at LASALLE College of the Arts, for his final year recital on 18 April.

Mr Danial, 28, who regards the legendary orchestra conductor the late Ahmad Jaafar as his idol, uses the meeting of music from East and West which is very close to his heart as the central theme for his works. The recital will last for 22 minutes and is replete with his own original compositions.

The topic of the meeting of East and West is also the theme of his final year honours thesis which explores the identity of new music produced by incorporating traditional *bangsawan* and *dikir barat*. Such melodies are then mixed with Western music.

Source: Berita Harian © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.

11 April 2019, Page 10

Permission required for reproduction

During the interview at LASALLE the other day, Mr Danial explains that music is very close to his heart due to his early exposure to the local youth orchestra.

“Although I had enrolled in Business Studies and Events Management at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), music had already been an integral part of me since my youth. Sometimes people are amazed at how a young man like me can appreciate the music of bygone eras through the likes of Kartina Dahari, Black Dog Bone and Zubir Said even though I was only born in the 1990s.

“I once got to watch the late Ahmad Jaafar lead an orchestra. My dream of becoming like him has inspired the direction of my musical performances. Although the recording techniques of those times were not as sophisticated as those of today, there is something priceless captured in the music of yesteryears. It has ensured they remain evergreen when one looks at them through their melody and lyrics,” explains Mr Danial.

For his thesis, he met with the winner of *Anugerah Jauhari Harapan Berita Harian*, Miss Syafiqah ’Adha Mohamed Sallehin who is also hard at work with her own creation which combines *dikir barat* music with modern Western melodies.

Mr Danial is excited about each experience and opportunity that he gets, whether it is working with the Singapore Malay Orchestra (OMS) or its youth wing, Youth OMS.

As the current associate director of music at Nusantara Arts, he also appreciates the opportunity to be with the Singapore Armed Forces artistic wing, the Music & Drama Company.

“For two and a half years, I was with the SAF band at Rockhampton for various events including putting up free public concerts. We featured Singaporean music that put forth the identities of our local Malays, Indians and Chinese. There were also some compositions from Australian musicians presented at the same events. The visit opened my eyes to efforts aimed at introducing Singaporean music to foreign countries,” he says.

According to Mr Danial, his network of contacts, whether they are former musicians or new ones, has given him a lot of inspiration and opportunities to widen his talents.

For instance, he appreciates the offer by band leader and music director for a television programme, Mr Syawal Kassim, to rearrange the music for the programmes *Juara Mic Junior* and *Anugerah*.

Another source of inspiration for him is singer and fellow LASALLE graduate, Bakti Khair, for his contributions in spreading knowledge to children in an effective way.

“I aim to become a music teacher after graduating as I love sharing my knowledge with the future generation.

“Working together with musicians like Brother Syawal and Sis Ann Hussein has given me a lot of rich experiences.

“The task I have to handle now needs me to be brave in rearranging something that is already there and infuse new ideas into it. I anticipate even more new projects

once I have completed my studies. They give me the determination to carry on creating and exploring things that are meaningful and worthwhile for the local art scene,” he adds.

Image Caption:

**ANTICIPATING NEW PROJECTS:** Mr Danial Ariffin Azman willingly accepts new projects with open arms as they are a way for him to hone his talents and widen his networks. – Photographs courtesy of DANIAL ARIFFIN AZMAN

### **‘High School Musical’ inspires love for the arts**

Popular television musical, *High School Musical*, inspired Mr Nur Afiq Abdul Talib to pursue singing and dancing full time.

However, not wanting to go against his mother who was worried about his future, he took up an electrical engineering course at the Simei Institute of Technical Education (ITE) a few years ago. Mr Nur Afiq’s 27-year-old heart was not keen on that field though. Even his grades were not very satisfactory.

Fortunately, after convincing his mother that the arts too can reap rich rewards if he was to become an arts educator one day, the young man got her blessings to pursue his studies in performance at LASALLE College of the Arts.

Following his Diploma in Performance, Mr Nur Afiq carried on his studies to obtain a BA(Hons) Musical Theatre from the same institution.

He is now preparing for the rock opera musical *Aida* as his final year presentation and he has also just completed his thesis based on lessons learnt from the K-Pop phenomenon.

When he was interviewed at LASALLE the other day, Mr Nur Afiq, the third of four children, said, “My interest in the world of musicals was sparked when I was in secondary school. *High School Musical* got me attracted to the world of dance and singing simultaneously. My aunt and I also enjoy karaoke in our free time.

Unfortunately, my mother is not very keen on me pursuing the arts. She worries that it may be difficult for me to make a living.

“I enrolled in an engineering course as that was my mother’s wish. Eventually, I was able to persuade her and she admitted that the arts was my strength. She saw that I enjoyed teaching children to dance. I treated these children like they were my own. Whenever they succeeded, I shared their joy.”

Among the musicals that he has performed in is *The LKY Musical* by Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT).

He was also involved in several dance performances and is himself a founder of his own dance collective, MT Unite. He dedicates every Monday to dancing together and sharing ideas on how to add colour to each performance.

Source: Berita Harian © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.  
11 April 2019, Page 10  
Permission required for reproduction

Recounting his involvement in *Aida* which will be performed from 16 to 20 April at The Singapore Airlines Theatre in LASALLE, Mr Nur Afiq says:

"Usually I prefer to be the kind hero, but this time I play the bad guy who is always looking for trouble. It is a challenging and demanding role. *Aida* is a story of love, loyalty and betrayal. It makes use of Elton John's compositions as the musical backdrop."

On his K-Pop thesis, he has this to say: "I feel there is much the local music industry can learn from the K-Pop phenomena which has dominated the international stage. I examined it from the perspective of a local musician."

Image Caption:

**ARTISTIC SOUL:** Mr Nur Afiq shifted from engineering at ITE to Performance and Musical Theatre at LASALLE College of the Arts because he was convinced those were the skills which would empower him.