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A song in her heart

A song in her heart



Madam Susan Teo gained confidence in singing under vocal coach Desmond Moey. ST PHOTO: LEE JIA WEN

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Madam Susan Teo improves her singing and social life at a voice-training course

Hedy Khoo

You might have spotted her all dolled up as Marilyn Monroe at the recent Chingay parade. It was Madam Susan Teo's big breakout performance as she sang the R&B classic, Rockin' Robin, backed by a guitar ensemble.

Preparation for her solo started more than a year ago, even before she knew about her Chingay gig.

A keen fan of the performing arts, the 64-year-old retired secretary took up a voice-training course organised by the Singapore Association for Continuing Education (SACE) last March.

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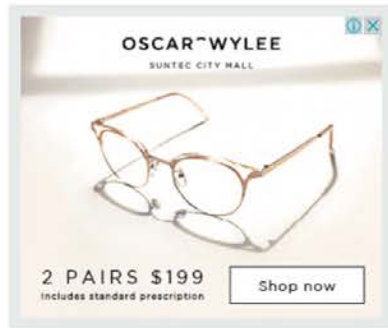
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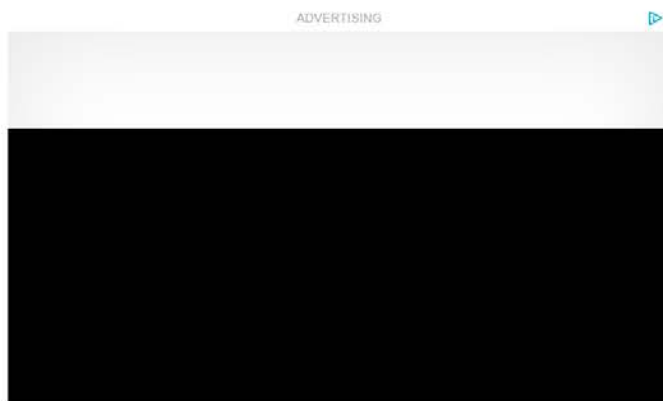
course organised by the Singapore Association for Continuing Education (SACE) last March.



She says: "Learning about song structure, voice projection and breathing techniques made me more confident about singing in public and I can better express myself through song."

The coaching paid off, she says. "It was thrilling to perform a solo in front of such a large crowd at the Chingay parade. My fellow performers were supportive and it was rewarding to see the audience smile, clap and wave at us."

Madam Teo credits the voice-training course for improving her singing and giving her the confidence to tackle the solo. Over eight sessions, she was taught to identify her vocal range and develop her voice for solo or choir singing.



SACE began offering the course in 2016 and, to date, 350 participants have taken it.

Vocal coach Desmond Moey, 59, who is also a singer-songwriter and show producer, says most of the participants do not have any musical background, but their enthusiasm and interest help them keep up.

The seniors also make new friends, set up group chats and stay in touch after their course.

SACE vice-president Irene Wee, 67, says: "For many seniors, learning during their younger days was often for practical reasons, like making a living. Now, they can take the opportunity to pursue enrichment courses out of interest and widen their social network."

Madam Teo started working when she was 18 and left her position as a secretary at a civil engineering and marine works company in 2004 as she was burnt out.

Initially, she worried about boredom, but a friend suggested she join a karaoke group. Her new friends introduced her to other hobbies and she learnt to play the ukulele and guitar. She also joined theatre workshops before her voice-training course.

The course is under the National Silver Academy (NSA), which is a network of post-secondary education institutions and community-based organisations offering a range of learning opportunities for seniors. There are more than 900 courses and 21,000 learning places available.

Learning more about the performing arts also inspired Madam Teo to do voluntary work, such as visiting nursing homes to stage performances for the residents.



She says: "I find it meaningful to use what I learnt to bring happiness to others."

Last September, she also attended the HappinessAct, an NSA programme by the Society for Wings, which aims to empower women to embrace ageing with confidence. The six-session course covered topics such as self-awareness, developing self-esteem and good family and social relationships.

"I learnt to communicate better and be more patient and understanding towards my family and friends," says the mother of two.

"There is so much to learn and such a wide range of activities to take part in that I now have to make sure I have time for my family, exercise and rest."


- For more details on learning a new skill, go to www.nsa.org.sg or call the National Silver Academy hotline on 6478-5029.

- This series is an initiative under the Action Plan for Successful Ageing.

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