

## **MA Music Therapy Launch, 13 April 2024**

**Welcome by Dr Venka Purushothaman, Deputy President and Provost, LASALLE College of the Arts**

### Introduction

Good morning, I warmly welcome

Professor Kwok Kian Woon, Vice Chancellor, University of the Arts Singapore

Ms Usha Chandradas, Nominated Member of Parliament, Republic of Singapore

Ms Vivian Chan, President of the World Federation of Music Therapy

Dr Tan Xueli, President, Association for Music Therapy (Singapore)

Participants, friends and students.

Welcome to LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore, and *Shaping the Future of the Music Therapy Profession in Singapore: Anchoring and Launching*.

This is a significant moment.

Our gathering today witnesses the launch of Singapore's first Master of Arts in Music Therapy, the country's first programme dedicated to the training of music therapists and to building research and discourse in the field.

We will be welcoming our first intake of students into the two-year full-time programme this coming August. Upon completion, they will graduate with a degree from the University of the Arts Singapore, Singapore's seventh university dedicated to the arts and its allied fields of education, therapies and management.

Today also marks the joint journey between LASALLE and the Association of Music Therapy Singapore, who have been a fantastic ally in our aspiration to develop this programme.

As a University dedicated to the arts, we give meaning and texture to the transformation potential of the arts on people, their communities, economies, and societies. The aesthetic goes beyond the visual and experiential into the embodied space of mind, body, and soul, encouraging every one of us to dig deep into the recesses of our existence to be not only a culturally aware and informed citizen but also one who is empathetic and enabling.

Perhaps I am speaking to the converted here, but it is important to ponder why an MA in Music Therapy is needed now.

Launching this programme is a natural progression for us.

18 years ago, we launched a pathbreaking Master's in Art Therapy. Today, it leads the region in not only preparing clinically trained and internationally credentialed therapists but also in producing pioneering research in the field. Our alumni work across the world and in Singapore. For example, our alumni Laurence de Groot founded the global humanitarian mission *The Red Pencil*, which has chapters worldwide providing key therapy services in challenging environments.

The new programme will draw on our extensive experience in creative arts therapy education and elevate the profession and practice in Singapore and the region at a time when mental health is a matter of national interest.

However, the creative therapies do not function in isolation at LASALLE. Two systems are integral.

First, a postgraduate community. Since the 1990s, LASALLE's postgraduate programme has been developing and providing arts leadership through pioneering programmes for Singapore and the region, fostering imagination, experimentation, and new knowledge in creative practice and research. With a strong and highly respective teaching faculty, our alumni have placed alumni as lighthouses to their disciplinary practice.

Secondly, LASALLE has had a strong mission of community engagement, especially with people with varying needs, since its founding 40 years ago. We nurture an empathetic learning environment that is diverse and inclusive, giving voice to the complex and rich weave of multicultural Singapore.

At LASALLE, we keep abreast of developments as the field of the arts expands and becomes intentional. We collaborate increasingly with clinical and non-clinical science to better prepare and engage with today's communities. This integration is essential for the progress of society and the economy. Last year, we held a *Performance and Health Symposium* in collaboration with the National University of Singapore to examine the multifaceted intersection of performance and health.

### Acknowledgements and conclusion

In closing, I would like to thank the Association for Music Therapy (Singapore) first and foremost, whose partnership has been invaluable throughout the planning and launch of this MA. I would also like to thank our friends The Ireland Funds Singapore for their generous provision of scholarships for the programme.

I also thank my LASALLE colleagues from the Faculty of Fine Arts Media and Creative Industries, Faculty of Performing Arts, School of Creative Industries and the School of

Contemporary Music for coming together to bring disciplines together to imagine a new field of study. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Jonathan Gander, Dr Tim O Dwyer, Professor Adam Knee, Professor Leon Rubin, MA Art Therapy Programme Leader Ron Lay, Faculty Administrator Ms Nurulain and Ms Cindy Phua, Director of Quality and Planning and Global Engagement, for their avowed commitment to shaping a new programme.

I thank our illustrious guest speakers and participants, whose insights and perspectives in today's forum, *Launching and Anchoring*, will be key to setting the tone for discourse in music therapy.

Culture is to cultivate. The benefits of music therapy require a community of practitioners, educators, researchers, employers and advocates. I am, therefore, delighted so many of you could join us today.

Thank you and enjoy the day!