

## What people say...

My daughter, Tan Xiao Zhuang, was in the Mandarin Early Readers class during the June holidays. Throughout that week, Xiao Zhuang thoroughly enjoyed the lessons and was always looking forward to going. The teacher, Ms Fang, was able to maintain my daughter's interest during the class while at the same time maintaining discipline in a fun way, e.g. getting the children to walk like ducks when visiting the bathroom during toilet break!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning and also to offer our compliments to Ms Fang, for her excellence in delivering the lessons, and for being a role model for others to follow.

- Parents of Xiao Zhuang, in Fang Ping's Mandarin Early Readers Nursery 2 holiday programme, June 2009

## EXPRESS YOUR BEST SELF FESTIVAL 2009 12th and 13th September



Let your senses come ALIVE as you experience with us two days of high energy fun and excitement at our EXPRESS YOUR BEST SELF FESTIVAL 2009.

Festival highlights include:

The loveable PlayClub Blue Bears, Chinese Cultural Arts performance by our talented Mandarin teachers, performances by JGCL and Chiltern House students, Monkey King adventure, Indian martial arts display, local bands Rogan Josh and We Gang, children's entertainers ToyBox, percussion group Wicked Aura, young drummers Sambassadors, free popcorn, daily lucky draw with fantastic prizes, games, workshops, plenty of music and family fun – and not forgetting our EXPRESS YOU BEST SELF CONTEST 2009 winners!

We look forward to seeing you there! For more details go to [www.juliagabriel.com](http://www.juliagabriel.com) or call 67334322.

## Trinity Guildhall Assessments

What happens and what are the benefits? Lynette Chua, Head of Julia Gabriel School of Education explains more about the assessment process



Sharing news with Jill Colby from Trinity Guildhall, London

An air of excitement and anticipation has developed throughout our centres as we gear up for the Trinity Guildhall Assessments, the second year of running this scheme since it replaced our previous assessment method, SACAB (Speech Arts Communication Assessment Board). A great deal of hard work, discussion, planning and preparation on the part of eager students, and teachers, will come to fruition when children from levels Kindergarten 2 and above, at Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning (JGCL) and Chiltern House, present to Susan McBurney, Trinity Guildhall (TG) examiner from London.

### What is a Trinity Guildhall Joint Assessment?

All-or-nothing on-the-day examinations are not always the most appropriate method of assessing the progress and achievements of students, particularly those who are very young and inexperienced. The Speech Communication Arts Joint Assessment Scheme allows teachers to assess achievement in language development, listening, comprehension and performance skills as part of an ongoing process within group sessions.

Teachers first assess their own students. This assessment is then verified and, if necessary, moderated by a TG examiner, who visits the centre. Students' individual reports are prepared by their teacher, who knows them best. All JGCL EduDrama teachers are trained and qualified as assessors by Trinity Guildhall, London. For the first time this

year, Mandarin EduDrama students also have the opportunity to be assessed in the same way, by a visiting assessor from NAFA.

### What are the benefits of Trinity Guildhall Joint Assessments for students, teachers and parents?

Candidates are assessed in groups of four to six students, to develop mutual enjoyment and generosity of communication, and to facilitate a smooth and natural transition from studio work to assessment. Each child has the opportunity to present to the examiner what they have prepared in their EduDrama sessions over the course of the year, in the presence of their peers. This takes the stress out of going into an exam alone, as support can be drawn from others in the group. For children taking Levels 1 and 2, the EduDrama teacher attends the examination to guide and support the children.

Parents have the confidence of knowing that their child's achievements are thoroughly and fairly assessed, in a pressure-free environment, and, that they will receive an internationally recognised certificate at the end.

### What is unique about this form of assessment?

SCA Joint Assessments and the Young Performers Certificate (YPC), for Kindergarten 2 students at JGCL and Chiltern House, do not award marks to the candidates which can be an unrealistic method of assessing achievement.

(cont'd next page side column)

(...cont'd)

The YPC aims to develop confidence, enjoyment and achievement in children up to the age of seven. It encourages children to integrate performance skills and to create a presentation with imaginative use of movement, music, voice and artwork. This syllabus provides a good foundation for children to take the SCA Joint Assessments when they are in Primary 1.

Groups of six to twelve children enter for the award, presenting their work to a Trinity Guildhall examiner. The children's teacher is present throughout and may lead or direct the performance.

The emphasis of the YPC is on rewarding and celebrating participation. Every child is recognised for their achievement upon completion of the presentation. The examiner writes a report recording the group's work, noting areas of outstanding achievement.

In the SCA syllabus, candidates are deemed to have 'Achieved' or 'Not Achieved'. For students taking Levels 3-6, outstanding candidates are recognised as having 'Achieved with Distinction'. The SCA Joint Assessment scheme provides structure for learning and international recognition for achievement in confident presentation and communication skills.

Candidates who have participated and achieved in both the YPC and SCA Joint Assessments are then awarded certificates from Trinity College London.

JGCL is currently the only organisation in Singapore offering the Joint Assessment scheme. Hopefully, this model will soon be adopted by other centres throughout South East Asia which is very exciting, as this will inevitably raise the standard generally of speech communication arts among young people in the region, something we look forward to continually being a part of.

Trinity Guildhall Assessments commence on 22nd August. Good luck everyone and enjoy the process!

## Happy Birthday to you!

After receiving so many requests from parents, we are happy to announce that our EduPlay Department has put together a team of talented teachers and musicians who are now available for children's birthday parties!

In June, Head of Early Childhood Programmes Raihan Jumari, along with teachers Gerry Nerva and Shane....were invited to join the birthday celebrations of Nicholas Moran (PlayClub student), at the Shangri-La Hotel, where they weaved their magic with games, stories, music and face painting. Nicholas' parents noted that it was a very special day for Nicholas and that all the children had great fun.

Our lively teachers will lead your children through 1 1/2 hours of fun and excitement, at the venue of your choice. To find out more about the Birthday Packages available please call us on 67334322 or write to us at enquiries@juliagabriel.com.

# Performance Arts

Creating a platform for holistic development



Tara Fields with her Rainforest Rappers

One Tuesday evening in January of this year, nine eager teenagers sat in a studio at Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning (JGCL) Forum debating "What is Performance Arts?" They were convinced it would include drama, dance and music, but beyond that they were a little uncertain.

Today, eight months into their course, they have tackled: scripted drama, a musical extract, choreography, different dance styles, writing scores for younger children, theatresports, costume design, anatomy of a theatre, directing, self-devised performance, and are currently immersed in developing a puppet show, with handmade puppets, a script and a group constructed puppet theatre, which they will eventually workshop with younger students.

Following the success of Performance Arts for this group of teenagers, the programme was opened for the primary 1 to 3 age range in Term 2, and an original and innovative programme ran during the June holidays, in which a group of primary 3 to 5 students devised their very own 'Rainforest Rap', complete with elaborate scenery and publicity work.

The Performance Arts curriculum successfully works in conjunction with, or as a progression from Speech and Drama, and is acknowledged by our associate awarding body, Trinity Guildhall. Activities promote imaginative thinking and teamwork, whilst encouraging students to develop an understanding and appreciation of the Arts in general, and of their own performance work and creativity in particular. In each session the students are stretched to generate original ideas and experiment with a range of art disciplines. As a result, there is such an amazing sense of pride and achievement when the students have the opportunity to share their work with an audience, sparking an evident growth in self-confidence and accomplishment.

The current group of teens enrolled in Performance Arts share the certainty that the course "brings out the best in them". Vanessa Chan (15), claims, "Combining my three loves of dance, drama and music, Tuesday nights at Forum are the highlights of my weeks!" and Kimberly Arriola (17), sees Performance Arts as "an individual expression of freedom".

Our youth in Singapore are so often thrust into the necessity for academic study that we sometimes forget about assisting them to become adept and confident in social and cultural settings. Arts based programmes that immerse students in a creative and exciting learning environment provide a solid platform for holistic development, helping to form aware, independent individuals, in addition to reliable team players.

Ai Zhen Ng, aged 17, attended EduDrama JGCL before joining Performance Arts when the programme was first introduced. Building on from the skills she gained through EduDrama, Ai Zhen feels, "Performance Arts has boosted my confidence, and enabled me to broaden my mindset and deepen my understanding of drama. A place where imagination runs wild, it has given me the opportunity to express my inner self and potential!"

- Tara Fields, Senior Teacher EduDrama

The Performance Arts programme curriculum was created by Senior Teacher, Tara Fields. Tara, who grew up studying the disciplines of stagecraft in the UK, holds a degree in Education and Drama, and has a strong passion for the Arts. She has been a teacher of the EduDrama programme at Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning since January 2004.

- GF

# Empowering young minds through visual expression

Little Art Bug programmes at Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning

Little Art Bug now offers two unique and exciting programmes at Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning (JGCL) Forum, for children from Nursery 2 to Primary 4: **Young@Art** and **Power Drawing**. Each programme places equal emphasis on technical competence in elements of art and principles of design, encouraging creative fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, association and expression. Skilled art educators inspire children's interest and imagination, sparking their creativity with a variety of materials.

Young@Art (3 to 10 years) is a foundation programme in basic art and design comprising four main artistic disciplines: drawing, painting, printing and sculpture. Children create two and three dimensional pieces with a variety of mediums, learning to understand visual literacy by developing their technical skills and nurturing their creative intelligence. A wide range of materials and resources are used to help students achieve a degree of artistic knowledge, enabling them to communicate and express their ideas in practical and highly creative ways.

Power Drawing (7 to 10 years) focuses primarily on drawing skills, principles of design, elements of art, creative exercises and expression. Students gain the tools necessary to compose varied art pieces and designs from a given brief. Throughout the

course students experiment with the five important elements of art and principles of design: lines, shapes and forms, textures, colour theory, art appreciation, figure drawing and portraits.

Jaelle Ang, Founder of Little Art Bug, explains how the programmes evolved: "The first version of Young@Art was created in 2002 and was predominantly a drawing programme for 7 to 12 year olds in primary schools. We started by working with teachers to create a programme that best suited the needs of students, who are naturally explorative and inventive, curious about art medium, and new to learning about drawing and art in a guided manner. In 2003 we introduced the programme to our centre in Monks Hill Terrace.

Using our experiences with the students, combined with the diverse backgrounds of our art educators and feedback from parents, we tirelessly edited and refined the programme to what it is today - a programme anchored in drawing, painting, printing and sculpture, with a strong framework to nurture the creative potential of the children who participate in it.

The Power Drawing programme is designed for those who want to focus on just sketching and drawing. Children create two dimensional works by sketching, drawing, colouring and painting."

Jaelle equates the learning of art techniques to learning the alphabet and words before writing a poem or story, or mastering musical notes and scales before playing a piece of music. "They are the building blocks and tools in a child's repertoire of skills and understanding that allow them to express themselves visually. Once children have established their own robust toolkit, then they are able to draw what they want to - what they feel - rather than simply what they can."

"Creative expression is what makes humans unique and young children especially, love the experience of art-making and expressing ideas visually. It's something instinctive to young children." Jaelle does caution however against giving too much free rein. "If we just 'let them be' without directing their creative energy towards worthwhile projects, children may get 'stuck in a rut'. They will continue creating and drawing the same thing. This is especially true when they have received adult praise for 'a princess' or 'a car' that they have drawn well. They will keep drawing that one thing until they have the guidance and confidence to move on to other subjects or try new media. Our role is to give them that confidence!"

What an empowering gift to offer our children!

- Gaynor Fitzgibbon

*Little Art Bug conducts weekly art sessions for children from Nursery 1 to Primary 4 at JGCL Forum. Classes take place on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. For more details about Little Art Bug programmes or information about how to register your child, please call 6733 4322 or email [info@littleartbug.com](mailto:info@littleartbug.com).*

## Behaving 'Artrageously' with Little Art Bug

In June and July, Little Art Bug collaborated with Forum, The Shopping Mall to present 'Get Artrageous!', a hands-on art programme that gives children the opportunity to participate in creating art work on a large scale.

Over two weeks, guided by a small team of experienced Art Educators, 240 children from five to twelve years old, painted motifs inspired by animals and nature in monochromatic colour schemes on wooden discs. The experience was a novel one for most of the children, as they had not painted on wood or used acrylic paint before. Some accompanying parents could not resist dabbling in the experience too! When the artworks were completed, many proud parents photographed their children with their art masterpieces. The activities also served as the ideal springboard for parents keen to learn how they too can nurture their children's appreciation for visual art.

Once completed the children's discs were varnished and assembled onto five wooden backgrounds, painted with animals and landscapes by Joanne Ng and Jessica Sinclair from Little Art Bug. The entire installation is now on display in Forum basement, just outside Spinelli coffee shop.

'Get Artrageous!' is part of Little Art Bug's Artrageous Spaces programme, a unique course that provides children with the opportunity to move away from the drawing paper, exploring artwork on a larger scale, using a wide range of mediums and materials. Children are introduced to art concepts, art mediums and art materials less commonly used and available to their age group, made manageable through structured lessons and small progressive tasks. Consequently they are able to explore new realms of visual expression, without pressure, discovering the fun of colour, shape and pattern along the way.

- Jean Chen, General Manager, Little Art Bug



Art Educator Jessica Sinclair applies her artistic strokes

# Ong Sheng Hua, Art Educator, Little Art Bug

Little Art Bug's Ong Sheng Hua lights up young imaginations

Little Art Bug, the newest member of Julia Gabriel Family of Services, is bursting at the seams with colour, pattern and design - not surprising when its team of educators is comprised of a diverse group of art practitioners including painters, sculptors, ceramists, architects, graphic designers, crafters and illustrators. Such diversity brings with it a wealth of talent, expertise, and trends, but all with one goal in mind - to impart a love of art to young children and provide them with a repertoire of skills that enables them to confidently express themselves through visual media.



Osh, (third from right) enjoys a wintery break in Japan

Ong Sheng Hua, aka Osh, has been doing just that since she made the transition from lighting designer to art educator for Little Art Bug in 2006. In addition to teaching the Young@Art programme (now at Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning, Forum on Saturdays), Osh conducts teacher-training courses in primary schools as well as at the Little Art Bug headquarters in Monks Hill Terrace. She is also involved in the design of Artrageous Spaces (see p3) and curriculum implementation.

Osh discusses here some of her views about the Little Art Bug programmes she teaches, as well as the benefits for children who are immersed in a visually creative environment:

## What do children gain from Little Art Bug programmes?

We teach fundamentals, without losing the creative edge. Our approach is systematic, providing children with simple tools to draw and render, yet allowing room for them to be creative in their own way. Each session is very tactile and hands-on with a substantial component of craftwork and play. Sessions are fun! The teachers themselves get excited about conducting the lessons!

## How important is it that children learn about 'Art'? Can this help them in other areas of learning?

Unlike mathematics or a science subject, Art does not have formulae to follow. There is never a right answer. The creative process requires a lot of questioning, especially of oneself. I think Art helps to develop confidence and an independent mind. The possibilities are endless as there is never one way or a correct way to do something. It helps us to recognise new perspectives and develop creative ways to do even a simple task.

## You have a Masters Degree in Architecture from NUS. How does this training help you in your present role?

Architecture training is a rigorous creative process that requires systematic thinking to make things work. I find this especially useful when working on curriculum development. It also opens up more possibilities when I am able to find tiny ways to link the two disciplines of design and drawing.

## You are illustrating your first children's book. This sounds very exciting. Tell us more about this.

A friend approached me to illustrate a story she had written as an entry to the 'First Time Writers and Illustrators Initiative', organised by the Singapore Book Council. I knew about the competition but as I have never tried writing before I decided to give it a miss. But when my friend approached me, I thought "why not give it a shot?", since I just need to illustrate. We made it through the selection process and were very thankful to be one of the ten entries to be selected for publication. The book is called 'The Little Red Helicopter' and it's about a pair of siblings who go on a flight of fantasy in a helicopter, in the playground, while their mum is shopping. It's launching at the end of October!

## Do you have time for any other hobbies - when you're not teaching or illustrating?

I love creating floral arrangements for weddings. I've been doing this since my architecture days. I also dabble in jewellery making, and anything that involves my hands to create something beautiful. I am also involved with a collective group of lighting designers called 'When Light Works' and we have an up-coming lighting design collaboration with Ikea which is very exciting.

## What tips can you offer parents to help them continue their child's enjoyment of 'Art' at home?

Truthfully, less television and computer games! More books! Create an environment in which the child can freely express himself and be creative. Do not be afraid of mess! Any creative process is messy - and that's what makes it so much fun! Make a 'creative corner' where the child can have fun doing anything, even drawing on the wall! (Of course, you need some preparation work for that!). Just don't limit art expression to a piece of paper. Do projects together, painting on tables and chairs or that wall in the bathroom you've been meaning to paint for ages!



Osh, (second left) enjoys a girls' night out with her Little Art Bug colleagues

- Gaynor Fitzgibbon

**Talk to us!** — 'Let's Talk' gladly welcomes dialogue with our readers. Please direct your emails to [gaynor@juliagabriel.com](mailto:gaynor@juliagabriel.com). We look forward to hearing from you.