

YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD
2013
RUTH LING
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Born in 1980 in Singapore, Ruth graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2002 from Berklee College of Music with a Bachelor of Music (Production and Engineering) from the US. A music producer, arranger, composer and performer well versed in different facets of contemporary music, Ruth has demonstrated her versatility and dynamism in diverse styles and genres, constantly pushing the boundaries of traditional orchestration to create new and original works. In 2011, she completed her MA in Contemporary Music Performance at the Academy of Contemporary Music (UK).

Ruth is recognised for her sensibility and innovation in interpreting and creating moods through her arrangements for musical theatre. Her remarkable abilities in arranging music have sparked off her collaborations with award-winning composers such as George Stiles and Anthony Drewe on *Three Little Pigs* (2013, 2012) & *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (2013) as well as, Dick Lee on *Fried Rice Paradise*:

The Musical (2010). She also worked on arrangements for Singapore Repertory Theatre's *Twelfth Night* (2012) and *Othello* (2013). Ruth was also involved in the musical arrangements of national projects such as the National Day Parade and Youth Olympics Games Closing Ceremony (both 2010), where she co-wrote the theme song with Iskandar Ismail and Ivan Heng.

Besides her works in the local scene, Ruth has proven to be an arranger and keyboardist of choice in the field of popular music. She has performed extensively on the international stage with popular artistes such as A-mei in a world tour to over 50 cities (2011, 2012) and with Stefanie Sun (2004-2009). She has also directed music concerts for numerous international artistes such as Chyi Yu and Wanfang (Taiwan), and the Crystals (USA). Her original songs can be heard on the albums of other popular Mando-pop artistes, such as Jam Hsiao and Sandy Lam.

Active in contemporary music production and music performance, Ruth has released a total of five albums, the most recent being *Christmas Never Ends* (2011), which was recorded and mixed by Grammy Award winner, Simon Osborne at Abbey Road Studios in the UK. As an avid producer, Ruth embraces her role to facilitate and collaborate with local musicians, composers and singers in producing top quality, original Singaporean music.



Recording for 'Christmas Never Ends' CD at Abbey Road Studios (2011)
Photo Credit: Alycia Pow



A CONVERSATION WITH RUTH LING

How did you first get into the arts?

I started learning the piano at the age of 4 and soon discovered that I had perfect pitch. When I was listening to music, in my mind, I could picture where every note was.

By the age of 12, I developed a love for contemporary music and was often improvising on the electone. I also took classes in guitar, drums, bass and saxophone.

I started writing songs for self-expression at the age of 14, and took part in numerous song-writing competitions with positive results. At 15, together with a lyricist friend, we produced our first album of 12 songs on cassette tape using an electone for backing tracks and a hi-fi set for recording.

Then an older musician friend introduced me to music sequencer programmes and helped me to set up my first computer music workstation. Throughout secondary school and JC, I had many opportunities to lead productions and performances in school,

and produced not only class CDs but also a CD of original songs from a musical. I had arranged all of the backing tracks using the workstation.

Throughout my teenage years, I was an active participant of a song-writing group outside of school, which gave me performing opportunities at restaurants and live music venues.

At 18, I produced my second CD album of original songs and recorded the vocals at a local studio. By this time, I knew that I felt most at home in a recording studio and developed a strong passion for song-writing and production. I wanted to learn better production techniques so that I could pursue music production as a career, thus, I set out for Berklee College of Music to study a hands-on course in Music Production and Engineering.

My key influences are Quincy Jones, David Foster, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Prince, Sting, Stevie Wonder and Herbie Hancock.

What are the biggest challenges you face as an artist?

The music that I am naturally passionate about is not popular with the local and regional audience which then translates poorly in remuneration.

Lack of inspiration or opportunities for creativity—after awhile, you're just going through the motions especially playing functions, even concerts, for income.

Disappointment and apathy often set in when you realise that the average listener doesn't care about the details you care deeply about.

Ensuring high standards despite tight deadlines and small budgets

Wondering if my creativity will be appreciated or rejected by the client/market.

Being organised with my time and having enough time for loved ones, exercise and rest. Passion and work often converge into one big blur.

How have you tried to overcome those challenges?

- ▶ Balance personal artistic endeavours with commercial ones
- ▶ I took some time off for a sabbatical, for further education, for travel and finding interests in other areas such as history and politics.
- ▶ Instead of judging, trying to understand what are the details they do care about, and finding people who do care about the things I do
- ▶ With personal conviction
- ▶ With thick skin and courage—it has mostly turned out well, and the returning clients appreciate you for churning out unique pieces
- ▶ This is still being sorted!

What motivates you to continue despite these challenges?

The desire to connect with the audience and with the creative community. The inspiring works of artists I admire. Finding people who truly appreciate you for your uniqueness.

When you set about creating a new work, what inspires you?

My usual process for creating a new work is to spend some time researching existing successful productions that are similar in nature. I assess what I think made those productions successful and may use some of these formulas in my own productions. I love being authentic and fusing different genres to create delightful sonic surprises.

What does the Young Artist Award mean to you?

The YAA reminds me of my calling as an artist. It affirms the responsibility I have in contributing to Singapore's arts scene. It is a huge honour and a milestone for me in my journey as a musician. When I look around me, I see many artists in the community who are as deserving of the award, and I try to look for ways we can collaborate.

I have been developing a music production label and exploring collaborations with talented local artists this past year. The YAA grant will go towards an exciting project lined up for 2014. It will be a fresh and dynamic contribution to Singapore's English pop, R&B and jazz music.

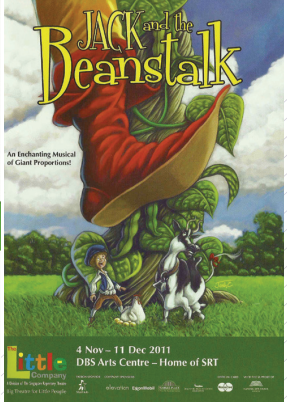
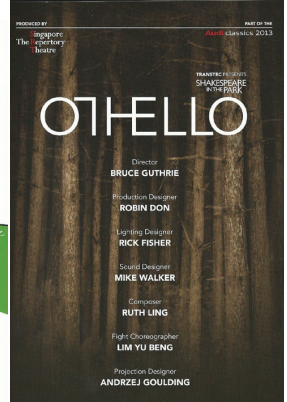
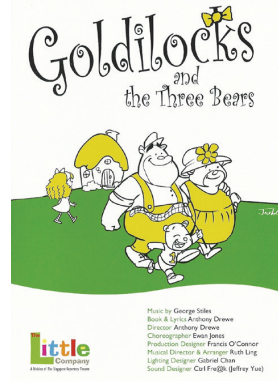


Photo Credit: Singapore Repertory Theatre

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

“ God, for your provision of this award when I most needed the assurance that I was not alone in my artistic journey.

NAC, for the public recognition of my work as art and for the YAA grant that will kickstart my artistic dreams for 2014.

SRT, your nomination is a nod of approval to the work I have been delightfully crafting with you.

Stiles and Drewe, for being my role models, inspiring me with your passion, talent, work ethic and warm personalities.

Benson Puah, Dick Lee, Iskandar Ismail, Sydney Tan, Martin Tang, Jon Koh, Frank Lee, Kenn C, Hanjin Tan, Vocaluptuous, TCR Music Station, my loving SG musician community and all other companies and individuals that have believed in me and given me opportunities to soar artistically.

Teachers and friends from Raffles Girls' Secondary School, Raffles Junior College, Berklee College of Music and Academy of Contemporary Music for your guidance love and support.

Jeanie, Charlene, Liz, Dree, Mylene and Christine for not only being sisters I can count on, but who also get my music.

Tina, Siow Yee, Sharon, Mimei and Adeline for your unconditional love.

So Heng, for helping to set up my first computer music workstation in 1995, sparking off a career in music production.

Dad and Mom, for the time and money you have invested in giving me a good music education, and for being proud of who I am and what I do.

Thank you all. ”

Ruth Ling