

# Helping young artistes through their struggles

By Sue-Ann Tan

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WRITING original songs takes skill, vulnerability and an ear for poetry. At 22, Beth Yap seems to have all three, having chosen the difficult path of writing and arranging countless original songs over simply doing covers.

She recently released *Beauty For Ashes*, her debut album of self-penned melodies, which went to No 1 on Singapore's iTunes and Apple Music Top 200 R&B/Soul songs charts in just three days.

Yap will also be performing her own song at this year's SHINE Festival, an annual event in July that celebrates the potential of youths in Singapore. She is one of 96 young people selected for the SHINE x \*SCAPE Talent Development Programme, which pairs aspiring performers with mentors in the business to create works specially for the festival.

Yap's mentor is 27-year-old singer-songwriter Charlie Lim, who wants to nurture young talents who might help to grow the local music industry.

"Teaching has always been a passion of mine," Lim says. "I help these kids through struggles that I also had."

He sees young artistes facing obstacles in everything from the creative process to social pressures in a pragmatic country.

"Singing and songwriting can also be rather solitary processes and these young artistes need every bit of support they can get," Lim adds.

Yap hasn't been short of support once her family got over their initial misgivings.

"My mother wanted me to go down the conventional junior college route," she reveals. "But when I told her that I would be just surviving and not truly thriving, she supported my decision to study music technology at Singapore Polytechnic."

Yap had enough "O" Level points to enter junior college, but took the path less-travelled by pursuing her music ambitions. She became a full-fledged musician in the polytechnic, joining bands and writing songs for them.

"I was always making up songs as a child," she laughs. "Even about subjects such as going to my grandmother's house."

Despite these early forays into music, she never thought she could write her own lyrics or compose original melodies professionally.

It was in polytechnic that she experimented with songwriting, a process that came to her "naturally".

Yap's lyrics have always sprung from a deep, personal place. Her album's title track was written at a "low point" in her life and she composed it to encourage herself. "It is about hope," Yap explains. "Music is my form of catharsis. I don't intentionally dig deep, but my experiences shape my writing."

The song she has written for SHINE Festival is also personal, based on the way she sees people neglecting relationships for material gains.

"We work very hard at the things we do, but this song reminds us to choose people over mere things," she notes.

Indeed, Yap's song captures the essence of what SHINE Festival hopes to achieve, which is to highlight the struggles and ambitions of the young.

David Chua, chief executive officer of National Youth Council, explains that SHINE allows youths to express



Lim mentoring Yap as part of the SHINE x \*SCAPE Talent Development Programme. PHOTO: NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

their "high hopes and dreams, their potential to realise them and resilience to overcome adversity".

To fulfil these lofty ambitions, Lim advises young artistes to work on their craft and do shows and open mics.

"Just put yourself out there without fear of criticism," he suggests.

"Being an artiste is both selfish and selfless. Art comes from a very personal place but at the same time it works because paradoxically, it is universal."

■ SHINE Festival will take place from July 1 to 3 along Orchard Road



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