



The Vice President's Message

From my heart to yours...

"Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey. At other times, it is allowing another to take yours." ~ Vera Nazarian

As part of the Canossian education, we embrace compassion and kindness towards those around us by reaching out to others, thus forming a **CONNECTION**.

It is this same **CONNECTION** that **CONNECTS** us all. As the Canossian Alumni Association celebrates our 40th Anniversary with the theme '**Viva La MusiCAA**', we connected with two teachers, **Mrs Christine Kanagarajah** and **Miss Monica Toh** who has sown seeds into the schools' music education and established SACSS' niche in the performing arts.

We, too, reached out to beneficiaries of our Canossian education, who in turn gave generously to the ones they touched in big & small ways, namely **Sr Christina Yeo**, **Miss Aileen Tan** and two very outstanding youth members, **Kristen Oliveiro** and **Tricia Chin**.

Happy reading & we hope to **CONNECT** with you again at the Canossian Connect 2017 in May.

Via Veritas Vita

Rebecca Chin



CANOSSIAN'S CONNECTION



Objectives of the Canossian Alumni Association

i) to strengthen the network of former students of the Canossian schools and to develop a true spirit of loyalty and love for the Alma Mater.

ii) to be a channel of collaboration between the former students, the Canossian schools and the society at large.

Executive Committee

President : Veronica Tan
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Martha Fernandez, Janelene Leong,
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 Rebecca Chin

Cover Story – A Tale of Two Teachers

The seeds sown by these two teachers had contributed greatly to the development and establishment of SACSS' niche in the Performing Arts, an aspect which has given our students a more holistic educational experience. Janelene Leong and Lee Mei Yee bring you the exclusive interviews with Mrs Christine Kanagarajah and Miss Monica Toh.

Music was omnipresent in St Anthony's Canossian, whether in the primary or secondary schools. Hymns were sung every day at assembly. We were taught proper singing techniques, theory and to play instruments like the harmonica, recorder, pianica, percussion and even learned simple dance steps. Those periods were never sacrificed for other subjects and these provided a welcome respite from the rigours of academics. Over time, they imbued in us a love for the beauty of sound and rhythm which would stay with us all our lives.

For this we must thank our passionate teachers, namely Mrs Christine Kanagarajah and Miss Monica Toh, who worked both separately and together for many years to build up the music culture in the SAC Primary and Secondary schools, one which has evolved and endured to the present day. Mei Yee and I were fortunate to have been taught by both and they were happy to share some of their stories from those good old days.



Mrs Kana (as she is fondly known) is a true blue Canossian; having been educated at Sacred Heart Canossian Convent in Malacca where she completed her Senior Cambridge (equivalent to A levels), after which she underwent teacher training.

She recalls, fondly that it was during her growing-up years in Malacca that she first realised how much she loved to teach. Being one of the more privileged who could attend school, she would gather the children of her neighbours after school, have them bathed and then taught them reading and singing.

She came to Singapore to get married in 1958 and embarked on her teaching career in St Anthony's Convent Secondary at Middle Road. However, as that was nearing the end of the year, her first role was to take charge of the school library, something for which she was none too prepared. Nevertheless, she settled into her duties and eventually, started teaching fulltime in 1959, subjects including English, Literature, Geography and History....and, of course Music!

Being an accomplished pianist, plus the fact that there had not been a designated music teacher in the school prior to her appointment, it was no surprise that Mrs Kana became the 'pioneer' music teacher of SAC Secondary.

As time went on, she worked together with renowned musician (and father of renown jazz singer Jacintha), Mr Alex Abisheganaden, who was then in the Ministry of Education, to create a music syllabus for SAC Secondary. At the same time, she formed the SAC Secondary School Band and took charge of Swimming CCA.

At SAC, Mrs Kana took pride in the fact that she introduced folk dancing and that she was able to use works like 'Peter and the Wolf' by Benjamin Britten, to teach her charges about the instruments in an orchestra. She also established the school choir but found that conducting and accompanying them on the piano by herself was no easy task.

Enter Miss Monica Toh, who joined SAC Primary in 1966 as a teacher and was also concurrently working on acquiring her certificates in Singing and Music Theory. She already had experience with conducting choirs prior to that, and it was a natural progression to also establish one in the school.

Like Mrs Kana, Miss Toh also completed her Senior Cambridge and went on to train as a teacher, after which she spent two and a half years in a convent in a small Roman town, with thoughts of becoming a missionary.

That, however, did not materialise and she subsequently worked in a kindergarten and school in Malaysia before returning to Singapore, whence she became a part of the Canossian family.

Miss Toh was a keen learner who took it upon herself to continuously upgrade and improve her musical skills. She attained her diplomas in singing and teaching; attended courses on Recorder Ensemble and Bugle/Fife Band; learnt to play the organ and even performed on numerous occasions as soloist and in choirs - all while being a fulltime teacher in SAC. Such achievements helped her to start new music activities in the school and one of the major performances in our memory was her production of an operetta, 'The Magic Rose' which was staged for three nights in the school hall.



would do the schools proud in Youth Festivals, National Day Parades and other events over the 14-year span of their collaboration up until 1980 after which Miss Toh was posted to another school. Mrs Kana continued teaching in the secondary school, right up till her retirement in 2000.

Perhaps even more inspirational for us is how these two ladies have been keeping active even after their retirements, with activities both musical and otherwise. When we visited them, it was evident that both are as lively and vivacious as ever, with their looks belying their ages. Mrs Kana plays the piano and organ for her church choir and travels as often as she can for leisure. Miss Toh keeps occupied with her extremely large family of siblings and cousins. Her voice is as powerful as we remember and although she needs a wheelchair, still manages to drive and get around.



As a fellow music lover and teacher, Mrs Kana soon got to know Miss Toh better after she joined the primary school and as she tells it: "I admired Miss Toh's style of conducting". And curiously enough, Miss Toh had the same sentiments about Mrs Kana's piano accompaniments and song choices!

It was thus not long before they were combining their efforts where Miss Toh would conduct the secondary school choir while Mrs Kana played the piano for the primary school choir. This benefited both the Primary and Secondary school choirs, with the girls turning in performances which

Words from our beloved music teachers...

"It had always been my dream to be a teacher and I am always grateful for the opportunities given to me in St Anthony's Canossian to fulfill them. I love all the students whom I have taught; and pray for them every day."

~ Mrs Christine Kanagarajah



"I truly enjoyed my time in SAC Primary and my collaboration with Mrs Kana. Tell all the girls I continue to pray for them daily."

~ Miss Monica Toh.

With reassurances like these, how can we girls not be thankful for teachers like them?

Want To Meet Them Again?

As it stands, both Mrs Kana and Miss Toh have been 'booked' to attend **Viva La MusiCAA, the Canossians Connect 2017 Tea Party on 27 May 2017!** Come back to relive the good ol' days with your teachers, the nuns and ex-students from way back then and rock the afternoon away! Do check out the notice in the back page for registration details.

OUR YOUTH ALUMNI Big Heart, Good Head

Every year, the Canossian Alumni Association sponsors the St Magdalene's Award – a pinnacle award for an outstanding student in each of our mainstream schools, CCPS, SACPS and SACSS. They would be students who have excelled academically and are exemplary in character. In 2016, CAA awarded two very deserving leaders at SACSS.

*Cecilia Nathen brings you an interview of **Kristen Oliveiro** SACSS Head Girl, currently with the School of the Arts and **Tricia Chin**, SACSS Vice-Head, now studying at Victoria Junior College.*



What were your experiences like as a Canossian student? What were some of your fondest memories in school?

K: The culture of a Canossian school is one that is extremely unique and I believe I am very privileged to have been able to experience it. For example, as a mission school, SACSS is very rooted in Catholic values. The School also emphasises that a big heart is equal to, if not more than, a good head. This, in turn, has led to a very holistic education for Canossian students.

Being a performing arts niche school, SAC also heightened my passion for the arts and taught me the importance of having the courage to express my creativity and individuality. Thus, most of my fondest school memories are from the weekly CCA sessions or drama elective classes. Despite the rigorous nature of these activities, the passion that my schoolmates and I shared for them served as our inspiration to work diligently despite the difficulties that came along. Of course, the satisfaction of achieving the goal that we had worked towards is very significant. The most profound memories would be those relating to the climb to the peak – or, in other words, the process of working towards and achieving the goals I had set.

T: The Canossian education places emphasis on values and character traits and this has made me observant and attentive to the needs of others. One of the greatest treasures in my Canossian education has been my peers. In Secondary One, they were extremely welcoming and accepting as I was the only one among my CCPS (Canossa Convent Primary School) friends who had gone into SACSS. Some of the best times of my life were also with my senior class (3.8 and 4.8) and one event I recall is Camp CORRI in Secondary 3. Despite the hardships during the Camp, we all worked extremely well together and put up a successful class performance during the Campfire, the last night at Camp.

In SACSS, opportunities were given for me to serve and grow. My CCA was the Concert Band. One of my achievements

included growing to become the Trombone Section Leader. Memorable moments included the opportunity to participate in the Winter Band Festival in Hong Kong, where we managed to clinch the Gold Award for the senior division. The Student Council had also provided a platform for me to hone skills such as communication and time-management.

Another group I am extremely grateful for are the teachers of SACSS. They never ceased to encourage and express their hopes in me when I was doubtful about my abilities. Without them, I wouldn't be able to accomplish half of the things I have done.

Describe an incident/story where you saw how the Canossian values came to life.

K: To me, one of the times when the Canossian values were most alive would be during the Arts Alive! Or SYF period. I vividly remember how there would always be an air of cheerfulness during these events – it was as if everyone, performer or not, was buzzing with passion and joy. Words of affirmation and encouragement would be passed around to help us all cope with the stress of schoolwork and preparations for the upcoming performance. The value of compassion was so evident amongst schoolmates, whether they knew each other personally or not. During my last Arts Alive! Performance, I remember feeling so grateful for being amongst such passionate, loving and compassionate individuals.

T: My fellow SACian and good friend Carole Lim has helped shape me into the Canossian I am. Her selfless personality is the embodiment of Canossian values. She has always been attuned to the needs of others, such as going out of her way to greet the bus captains and asking individuals during events if

they would like to have their group photo taken. She speaks her mind and is tenacious, showing her integrity and speaking up when people stray from the path of right to follow popular sentiments and beliefs. She faces life even though she has been through a great deal of hardship, showcasing her passion for life. I hold her in extremely high regard and she is a Canossian that I would aspire to be.

What were some of the challenges you encountered as a student or generally in your life, and how have the Canossian values helped you cope with or overcome these challenges?

K: It is rather difficult to find such a loving environment anywhere else. After leaving SACSS, I found myself experiencing a great culture shock because I was no longer under the nurturing environment of the school. Because I am now exposed to the harsh realities of the outside world, it is difficult at times to remain true to myself but the value of integrity has helped me cope with these challenges. The value of integrity not only encompasses honesty, but also reminds me to stay rooted to my values. In other words, this value comes to mind whenever I feel swayed and it triggers my memory of the other morals that I was nurtured to value and adopt.

T: Some of the toughest days have been the days leading up to the 'O' Levels. The qualities that SACSS had instilled in me, however, allowed me to pull through. The resilience I had built up acted as a rope that enabled me to climb towards my goals. Looking out for my fellow Secondary 4 peers was crucial as many appeared to be coping on the outside but, when pulled aside for a little chat, would divulge how uncertain they felt. These little chat sessions really helped all of us. The qualities of Responsible Individuality and an Inquiring Mind helped us ensure we were consistent in our work and persistent in ensuring we sought out the answers to all our doubts.

What are your aspirations and hopes as an alumna of the school? How do you think the Canossian Alumni Association (CAA) can support the members of your age group?

K: One of my hopes would be that the spirit of Canossa will continue to live in me and my fellow alumni, despite the adversities that we face. Perhaps we can even be an inspiration to others when we live out these Canossian values successfully. The CAA could be very beneficial by maintaining a safe, nurturing environment for the alumni to come back to, and perhaps even helping the alumni make a smoother transition between the protected environment of school and the realities of life.

T: Having graduated, it is my wish that SACSS continues to focus on character development alongside academics; and as current students become graduates themselves, that they will be equipped with the qualities needed to brave new frontiers. I hope that they will have a special place for SACSS in their hearts and be willing to come back to help. I hope that they will enjoy their experience in SACSS and as alumni members, remember the School with nostalgia. As an alumnus, we can come together to contribute to this experience for the current generation of Canossian students, to grow their Canossian roots and make them strong, stable women who can contribute to our society.

It is most heartening to know that our pioneering Youth Members hold an aligned vision for the CAA; and we would certainly be able to look further into the future, confident that these young hearts have what it takes to keep the Canossian spirit alive for many generations to come!



Footnote :

Some of the more notable awards that Kristen and Tricia had garnered during their education at SACSS:

Kristen Oliviero

St Magdalene's Award 2016 (SACSS)
Outstanding Leadership Award
Canossian Spirit Award

Tricia Chin

St Magdalene's Award 2016 (SACSS)
Canossian Affiliation Award (2012 – CCPS)
Edusave Scholarship Award

People & Faces – Sr Christina Yeo

When your President – Veronica, asked me to be featured; I was surprised that I was viewed as someone who was “musical”, and I was taken aback. I had little opportunity for formal music apart from one year of piano lessons from my paternal grandfather who was a music teacher and Choir Master of Sacred Heart Church. So I can read notes and play a songs on the piano and organ and strum a little on the guitar. However, love for music and singing did grow in me even though I could never boast of writing a song or performing at a concert. I can only say that I had a good memory for lyrics and am oftentimes humming a song in my head or in my heart because I believe music heals the spirit, don't ask me why!

My SAC roots began in 1957 when I started Primary 1 at St Anthony's Convent, 111 Middle Road and completed my Sec 4 in 1966. I returned to SAC Primary and Secondary School as a relief teacher in 1969.

What made me join the Canossian Sisters?

From the age of seven, I had wanted to be a teacher and I saw the Sisters as dedicated teachers who would spend all their time and efforts to help the students. I was especially touched by the joyful and untiring presence of the 10 or more Sisters. Every day, I saw them bustling around in the canteen, chatting with us kids, packing supplies of food for the rows of poor people who came on Saturday morning to collect the goodies. On weekends, the Sisters conducted Sunday School in the Church compound and we were invited to help the children from nearby shophouses to play games and watch some movies. I thought being a Sister was certainly meaningful life – a life worth living educating the children and helping the poor. I was also attracted by the songs and hymns that welcomed us each morning at school before Assembly. It was a great way of nurturing the “spirit of joyful prayer”. The songs and hymns were lively and catchy and really infused in us the joy of learning and loving. My favourite songs were “Christ is my Rock” and “Make me a channel of your peace”.

What were your most memorable moments as a teacher?

I thoroughly enjoyed teaching English and Literature to the Sec 3's and 4's, besides doing Civics and Moral Education to the Sec 1's and 2's. There was also

time in the afternoon for prayer and Gospel sharing with the YCS and Legion groups. Between 1977 to 1979, I felt most fulfilled since I had so much desired to teach.

It was even more exciting when I was asked to teach in CJC from 1980–1983, and I saw SAC girls going to CJC to do their A levels. I learnt so much teaching at CJC especially at the Catholic Camps It was a most enriching experience to teach GP and keep abreast with World Affairs.

What was your most meaningful experience as a Sister?

For some 20 years, I was engaged in Formation and training of girls discerning their calling to Married Life, Single Life or Religious Life. I also taught a couple of courses in the Seminary, (namely Personal Growth and Relationships and Christology). I was also engaged in the then Singapore Pastoral Institute for Adult Faith Formation Courses.

For me, the most meaningful experience as a Sister is the passion to make Jesus known and loved, by being like Jesus in my relationship with others. Discovering Mark Link's, Experiencing Jesus in His Story was life changing. It became clear to me, that what matters is being attracted and fascinated by the Person of Jesus. How can I know and follow Jesus? Who really is Jesus for me?

I was especially thrilled last month when I heard a Secondary 4 student share what the Canossian Charism was about.



Secondary 4 Student, Anna Lau said: *The statue of Jesus in front of our Secondary School which has a sign **JESUS WELCOMES YOU** is what Canossian charism is all about. Like Jesus we are called to welcome everyone with respect and dignity. She also said, being polite to people, like saying Thank you to the elderly Uncles and Aunties who helped clean the school was only politeness, but as Canossians we are called to desire to give joy to all.*

I shall end with the lyrics of a song written by Stephanie Kwok for the 200th Anniversary in 2008 entitled **"Big Hearts"**. Do check it out on YouTube.

My message is in the song. In our present day and our uncertain future, let the words of the song ring in our hearts and direct our steps.... **Let us "Have our eyes fixed on our Saviour Jesus Crucified" and let us "Have Big Hearts to Love and Forgive"**

People & Faces – Miss Aileen Tan

If you were from Brownies or Girl Guides back in SACPS/SACSS, you would have known Aileen Tan as the most passionate guider one could ever have. Former Girl Guide, Rebecca Chin caught up with her senior from Girl Guides whom she have learnt much from back in SACSS.



An introvert by nature and one who didn't quite like children at that time, Aileen Tan thought God was playing a prank on her when she gained admission to National Institute of Education

to pursue her *Diploma in Education* back in 1991. With her passion for guiding and commitment towards the path that God wants her to take, the SACSS grad of 1984 and sole breadwinner of her family went on to teach at SACPS in 1993 before leaving for Massey University in New Zealand to further her studies from 1999 to 2001 where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts as a Massey Scholar (Top 10% of cohort) and returned to SACSS to teach Geography and Social Studies in 2001.

During her teaching career, her love for the children under her charge grew and she began to see the purpose and direction in what she does as a dedicated Canossian teacher. Last year, she received her twenty years long service award from the Ministry of Education. "I never thought I'd last this long in teaching... all 20 years of it. The feeling is surreal yet there is a sense of achievement", she exclaimed.

"One of my cherished moments in teaching was with my first batch of students from Primary 5 & 6 Jasmine in 1993 and 1994. Being young and energetic then, I bonded really well with my students and we had many fun moments outside the academic confines of the classroom. I remember the Primary 6 class went on an outing during the Teachers' Day holiday in 1994 to Sentosa and we had loads of fun together. Those were the days we didn't have too many rules about teachers going for outings with students, and there were no Risk Assessment & Management (RAMS) Plan to do then. Many of the students in the class have become mothers now and I have been privileged to still be in touch with them and be able to carry their newborns in my arms when I visit the maternity ward after they deliver. One of them, Maria Loida Raju, is now my fellow colleague. It is the sharing of their lives with me that makes these moments very precious to me, to be remembered as their teacher", she shared fondly.



She feels inspired when she sees her students do well in life after they leave the comforts of the Canossian environment and chooses to believe that whatever she does in school and at

work is to glorify God's name. Besides, the ability to impact lives inspires her.

Seeing a purpose and believing in everything she does has been the driving force for her inner strength to continue her good work. Her passion in making a difference in the lives of the students shone through as she shared on how she was rewarded with the fruits when some of her students who were less academically inclined in school, who were now doing well, returned to thank her. She recalls advising them, ***“Don't judge yourselves by your PSLE scores, Discover your Strengths and Look towards your Future. Life is more than those grades you get and they do not define you. What's more important is that you learn important life lessons from them. It's OK to fail, but don't give up. Pick yourself up again and try again. And when you eventually do well, the feeling is even sweeter”***, Aileen advises.



During her education in SACSS, she was inspired by Ms Agnes Kew, her Geography teacher who was very knowledgeable and engaging, aspiring her to be a Geography teacher, which she is now. Another teacher, Mrs Alice Goh, her then Secondary 2 Form Teacher who found out that she was financially in need as her mother was a single mum. Without Mrs Goh who helped to apply for school bursaries and financial assistance schemes, she would not have completed her secondary school education.

Her favourite memories are the friendships formed through her involvement in the girl guides and being a latchkey kid, she would help teachers to buy lunch at the nearby Waterloo Street

coffee shop when she stayed in school to complete her homework before heading home.

When asked about her passion in guiding, she reminisces, “The fondest memories of my time in teaching are with the girl guides at SACSS. When I was teaching in SACPS, I was a guider for the Brownies in the primary school and also a volunteer guider with the guides at the secondary school. I feel especially happy when I am in camp with the guides every year and seeing them go through multiple challenges in camp, and emerge a stronger person after the camp. There are many valuable life



lessons that can be taught at a Guides camp that can never be found in the text books. I remember one camp when my fellow guider and I were out teaching the guides kayaking the whole day

and ended up badly sunburnt. We applied honey on our thighs and the honey melted so quickly and dripped.”

Currently, she's planning the girl guides' bi-annual service learning project. Every 2 years, the girl guides would embark on a huge service project that will challenge them to go beyond their comfort zone and show compassion to those in their community.

In her free time, Aileen indulges in photography, seeing it as a form of worship to God. “It's being able to see God's work in the photos I take, whether it is street photography or macro photography”, she shares. Looks like the Canossian Alumni knows who to look for when we need photographers for our events.

Her message to All Canossians:



“Be proud of your Canossian heritage and always be humble. Come back to your alma mater to serve in whatever way you can, and carry on the Canossian torch.”

Aileen Tan



Book Launch – If Doors Could Speak

Those of you who have walked through the corridors of *Canossa Convent* would remember seeing those tall mahogany doors. Well, now you can hear them!

"If Doors Could Speak" is an immensely readable and charmingly illustrated book that tells the history of the Canossian Daughters of Charity at 1, Sallim Road, through the eyes of a classroom door! It chronicles Canossa Convent's 75 years of existence and transforming lives in the Aljunied/Macpherson areas since 1939.

Supported by the National Heritage Board as part of the Canossian Heritage Gallery project, this book is a labour of love by our CAA President - Veronica



These books are available at Canossians Connect 2017.
***Proceeds from your generous contribution will go to
 Canossaville Children and Community Services.***

Upcoming Events

ANNUAL VISIT TO ST JOSEPH'S HOME

A yearly visit for CAA members and family to bring cheer and activities to the residents during the Labour Day holiday. This time, at St Joseph's Home's newly refurbished premises in Jurong West.

Date: 1 May 2017, Monday

Time: 9am to 1pm

Venue: 36 Jurong West Street 24 Singapore 648141

To join & contribute, please refer to the Event page on the Canossian Alumni Association website.

<http://www.canossianalumni.com/en/event-4806>



'Viva La MusiCAA'

- CANOSSIAN CONNECT 2017

We are celebrating our 40th anniversary with the theme 'Viva La MusiCAA'!

Date: 27 May 2017,
Saturday

Time: 2pm (Registration starts at 1pm with pre-event activities)

Venue: Concorde Hotel @ Orchard (former La Meridien Hotel)

Menu: Tea Buffet

Ticket Price: \$68/pax



Gather your friends, bring your family members and invite your teachers.

Book your tickets or tables now through the event page on the Canossian Alumni Association website with this link.
<http://www.canossianalumni.com/en/event->