

# THE NEW EURASIAN

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APRIL – JUNE 2013



## Speaking Up

Eurasians join in the  
Singapore Conversation

### PLUS

#### PROUD TO BE EURASIAN

Young professionals celebrate their heritage

#### A CLASS ACT

Sisters mix an artistic and academic education

#### YOUNG AT HEART

The key to active ageing

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## THE NEWEURASIAN

The magazine of The Eurasian Association, Singapore

*The NewEurasian* is published quarterly and read by more than 17,000 Eurasians in Singapore. It is also circulated to senior government offices, various ministries, statutory boards, community organisations and self-help groups.

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# President's Message

Dear Fellow Eurasians and Friends

In March, we celebrated a small yet special event to commemorate our dedicated volunteers. Our Volunteers Appreciation Tea was held to recognise and honour the numerous volunteers who have come forward to assist us in our various Education, Family Support Services and Community Development programmes and activities.

As I am sure most of you are aware, the EA is the smallest of the self-help groups, with a very limited operating budget, and as such we can only afford a small team of full-time staff in our Secretariat and depend heavily on volunteers to lead and run our various community programmes.

I am therefore grateful to the many volunteers who have come forward to help the Eurasian community, especially those who have continued to do so for many years, whether in being a befriender, delivering food rations to the needy, organising our education programmes or our Social Circle and active-ageing activities, in performing arts, youth or sports and various other activities. Despite the various other personal and professional obligations that compete for their time, these wonderful people work tirelessly to help the community because they care and want to help the less fortunate and to contribute to moving the Eurasian community forward.

In this issue, we also bring you a feature on our recent event – the Singapore Eurasian Conversation. This was a dialogue session organised under the umbrella of the on-going national Singapore Conversation programme. More than 60 members of the community

came together to discuss the various challenges we face and our aspirations for the Eurasian community and Singapore in the next 10 to 20 years.

A number of topics were discussed, including the challenges we face as a minority community and how more needs to be done to preserve our heritage and culture; how we need more young people to come forward to be active in the EA and how the seniors should play an active role to encourage this; concerns were raised on the stressful education system and how it detracts from developing strong moral fibre and social graces; concerns were also raised on the cost of living, especially in areas of housing and healthcare, which impact the elderly.

Many of the issues raised at the dialogue are those that EA is grappling with and trying to resolve with our various programmes and activities. Nevertheless, the feedback from this session has been useful in helping us to re-shape our focus, as will be the input and data that we will cull from the community survey we will be launching soon.

The many volunteers that help us run our programmes, as well as the participants in our Singapore Eurasian Conversation, are examples of members of the community playing an active role for the betterment of the Eurasian community. Needless to say, we are always in need of more volunteers and I ask all of you to please come forward to help us in whatever way you can. We need more Eurasians to play an active role in the community. Together we can ensure a vibrant future for the Eurasian community in Singapore.



In these pages, we also celebrate the achievements of Joseph Schooling and Bryan Neubronner, who have triumphed in the sporting arena. You may have seen in the previous editions of this magazine that we have highlighted the achievements of Eurasians who have excelled in wide-ranging fields – from the arts to sport, community work and academia. I firmly believe that for our own personal development and the development of our community, it is important that we look beyond just academic achievement to develop ourselves also on a broader basis, to be the best that we can be in whatever field that we can make a contribution to society. It is only by being well-rounded and committed individuals that we can ensure a successful career and life personally, as well as achieving a higher standing for the Eurasian community in Singapore.

In closing, as we conduct our annual general meeting in April, I would like to thank you for your support of the management committee in the past year and we hope to continue to enjoy your support in the year to come.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Benett Theseira'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large loop at the end.

**Benett Theseira**  
President



Danielle Pereira with her Certificate of Appreciation



Volunteer Gerard Danker receives his certificate from Benett Theseira



EA volunteers learn about the EA's work

## Thank You, Volunteers!

The Volunteer Appreciation Tea is held annually to honour the EA's dedicated volunteers, who contribute to the association's various departments, including Family Support Services, Performing Arts Chapter, Heritage, Education and Youth.

Held at the Platinum Lounge at the Eurasian Community House on 16 March, the ceremony opened with a speech by EA President Benett Theseira, who relayed the volunteers' past achievements and the association's future plans, and thanked the volunteers for their hard work over the year. He then presented Certificates of Appreciation to the 38 volunteers in attendance.

The heads of the association's various sub-committees then described the scope of activities and events that volunteers can take part in.

The ceremony closed with a buffet provided by Quentin's restaurant.



EA committee members and volunteers pose for a group shot

## Go for It!

Successful people are usually those who embrace every opportunity that comes their way. And it was on the subject 'Go For It' that EA toastmaster Adam Abdeali crafted his address for the International Speech section of the recent EA Toastmasters Club competition.

Proving that the strategy works, Adam's hard work in preparing and delivering his speech earned him first place, with Joachim Pereira second and Peter Rodrigues in third place.

For the Table Topics contest, in which the contestants are given a topic on the spot and required to speak on it for two minutes, Emilie Oehlers emerged as champion for the category, improvising creatively on 'The Heart of the Matter is It's a Matter of the Heart'. Adam Abdeali and Joachim Pereira were second and third respectively.

The event was attended by some 30 people and the chief judge was Kenneth Cheong.

Winners of each category will go on to represent the EA at the Area D2 contest at the Eurasian Community House in April.

If you are interested in joining the Toastmasters or attending first as a guest, please email: [guest@eurasian.com](mailto:guest@eurasian.com)



## In the Swim

Eurasian swimmer Joseph Schooling was named Singapore Swimming Association's Male Swimmer of the Year after his Olympics debut in London last year. The-17-year old was also named 2012's Sportsmen of the Year.

And, to complete a memorable year, the teenager rewrote three national short-course butterfly records during the 11th Fina World Swimming Championships, which were held in Istanbul last December.



Sportsman of the Year Joseph Schooling

## Lester Receives Long-Service Award

Lester Low, the EA's general manager, was presented with an award at a ceremony in April in recognition of six years' dedicated service to the association. The secretariat staff was treated to lunch at the Singapore Recreation Club's Padang Palace together with management committee members.

Presenting the award, EA President, Benett Theseira said: "Lester has spoken to, and assisted us during his six years with the association. He has been very helpful and dependable and his contribution to the association's success is an important part of the EA story and I thank him personally and also on behalf of our members for his support".

He added: "After all we are only volunteers and we tend to get too caught up with work. Without the secretariat team, we would not be here. They are the machinery for the association and we can never say thank you enough."



Lester Low receives his award from Benett Theseira

## News in Brief

### Visit our Facebook Group

Join the EA Facebook group by searching for 'Eurasian Association, Singapore' and clicking 'Join'. Meet up with fellow EA members and find out about what's going on at the Eurasian Community House!

### A New Look

The EA is completely revamping its website. Keep your eyes peeled for our new look - coming soon!

### Advertising in *The NewEurasian*

We are looking for advertisers who want to advertise their services or any other news in *The NewEurasian* magazine. For enquiries and rates, contact Irfa Tukiman, tel. 6447 1578 or e-mail [irfaizah@eurasians.org](mailto:irfaizah@eurasians.org)

### EA Multi-Purpose Hall for Rental

The EA's Multi-Purpose Hall is available to rent. The hall has space for 150 people and 12 tables. The rate for EA members is \$500, based on a four-hour block; \$550 for non-profit/government agency/institutions; \$600 for corporate bodies and guests. A deposit of \$300 is required upon booking which includes audio/visual and light/sound. A technician is not included. For enquiries and bookings, contact Bridget Basnayake, tel. 6447 1578 or e-mail: [bridget@eurasians.org](mailto:bridget@eurasians.org)





Sisters, Crystle (left) and Pearl Wee on a family holiday

Sisters Crystle and Pearl Wee are among the pioneer batch of students from the School of The Arts, which opened its doors in 2007. SOTA is Singapore's only specialised pre-tertiary institution for the artistically talented and it combines artistic pursuits in music, theatre, visual arts and dance with the traditional academic subjects.

Crystle, 19, has now graduated from SOTA, where she was in the top five per cent of her cohort. Pearl, 18, will be graduating this year.

*“I think it's important that we have an artistically aware population among everyday people”*

The sisters, who have a Chinese father and Eurasian mother, say that at SOTA, the days are long and hard. Students assemble at 8am and the school anthem is sung acapella. On some days, arts practice – part of the

curriculum – can last up to 7.30pm. There are no co-curricular activities here because so much time is already dedicated to students' individual arts specialisations.

Crystle says: “SOTA has a very rigorous academic programme. We take the International Baccalaureate, which means that we take six core subjects (such as Mathematics, Science, Literature, Humanities, Mother Tongue, Arts) and two additional components known as Theory of Knowledge and Extended Essay. We do everything everyone else does, on top of doing our arts subjects.

Perhaps surprisingly, Crystle is not planning a professional career in the arts. She is currently working as a marine guide at the S.E.A. Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa's Marine Life Park and is hoping to go to university to do a degree in environmental/marine studies.

But she says: “I will probably continue with the arts as a form of recreation. I feel that it's important that Singapore develops its artistic scene, but I also think it's important

## All-Singing, All-Dancing Education

Crystle and Pearl Wee have learned that while studying the arts at school is a lot of fun – it also requires discipline and hard work

*“Our family always sing together during celebrations like Christmas and birthdays”*

that we have an artistically aware population among everyday people.”

Pearl says that she and Crystle grew up in a music-loving family, where they were exposed to singing, dancing and acting. “Our family always sings together during celebrations like Christmas and birthdays. My grandpa plays the ukulele, and when my grandma sings, all our granduncles and aunts join in and sing in harmony.”

When they were young, their mother would sign them up for auditions and television commercials and the girls enrolled at SOTA to further their interest in theatre. “SOTA has a close-knit community and you'll meet friends who share the same interest as you. And the school helps you realise that academic subjects are just as important as your art form,” says Pearl.



Pearl (left) and Crystle perform at a family party



Sisters clowning around



A family get-together on New Year's Eve

# Opportunities for Educational Help

Since becoming a self-help group in 1994, the Eurasian Association has placed great emphasis on education, one of its key pillars. Each year, the EA offers various awards, bursaries and scholarships to students from primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Below is a table of education schemes for 2013 and the application period.

To apply, please contact Jacqueline Peeris at 6447 1578 or [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org). You can also obtain application forms from the Secretariat Office, Level 3, The Eurasian Association, 139 Ceylon Road, Singapore 429744.

S/N	Education Scheme	Level	Eligibility Criteria	Application Period	Notes	Quantum Cap
1.	ECF Education Awards	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	For Bursary Awards: PCI <\$700 For Merit, Excellence & Distinction Awards: solely based on academic grades (average 'B' and above)	Apply by 31 May 2013	This is a reward to students for their hard work in the previous final examination	\$100 - \$300
2.	Project Ray Of Hope	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	PCI <\$500	Apply by 31 May 2013	Popular & Bata store vouchers to purchase items for school	\$250 - \$350
3.	Temasek Cares Education Bursary (TCEB)	Primary	PCI <\$700	Apply by 28 February 2013	Covers: School fees, books, uniforms, transport and meals	\$1,200 per academic year
4.	Coral De Cruz Memorial Fund (CdCMF)	Secondary	PCI <\$700	Apply by 28 February 2013	Covers: School fees, books, uniforms & transport	\$1,200 per academic year
5.	Merit Bursary Award	ITE & Polytechnic  (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP)	- Academic merit (grades) - Family background / income - CCA involvement - Volunteer activities	March to April 2013	Covers the full cost of tuition and book stipend for the full duration of the course	ITE: \$3,500/yr for a 2-year course Polytechnic: \$5,500/yr for a 3-year course
6.	EA University Scholarship (for Poly graduate) / Oscar George Da Silva University Scholarship (for JC graduate)	University  (NUS, NTU, SMU, UniSIM, SIT, SUTD)	- Academic merit (grades) - Family background / income - CCA involvement, - Volunteer activities	March to April 2013	Covers the full cost of tuition and book stipend	\$10,000 per year for a 3-year course

Note: PCI = Per Capita Income (Total monthly household income divided by the number of people staying in the same household).



# Having Our Say

.....

The Eurasian Singapore Conversation was held in February to add the community's views to the national debate about the country's future





Edmund Rodrigues chats with another participant during the social networking lunch at Quentin's before the session begins



Participants play ice breaker games

What kind of Singapore do we want to live in – in 10 years, 20 years and beyond? What needs to be changed? What kind of people do we envisage the Eurasian community to be? How can our small community be meaningful and relevant in Singapore? And – what does it mean to be a Eurasian in the 21st century?

These were among the diverse questions that formed the basis of the EA's Eurasian Singapore Conversation, which was held on 23 February at the Eurasian Community House. Although not an official session under the Our Singapore Conversation umbrella, the participants saw the discussion as their individual and community contribution to the national debate.

EA President Benett Theseira opened the session and the meeting included guest-of-honour Minister S Iswaran, who represents the Eurasian community in Cabinet, and Eurasian MP Christopher de Souza.

Participants played a fun ice breaker to encourage greater interaction before the important business began.

### Who Are We?

During a discussion lasting more than three hours, the Eurasian community admitted to facing something of an identity crisis, not least of all with recent immigration adding to the country's diversity.

It was a subject that dominated discussions among the 60 Eurasian participants, who included students, professionals, businessmen and retirees.

Philip Xavier, 68, a retiree, worried about the dilution of Eurasian identity as intermarriage with other ethnic groups continues. "The names and looks of the community have changed... Even the Eurasian surnames are not being preserved," he said.

Rodney De Silva, 41, who works in finance, admitted: "Being a minority, there's the fear of losing our identity slowly but surely."

The group discussed the difference between 'new Eurasians' – first generation Eurasians born to Asian and European parents – and those known as 'heritage Eurasians', whose families have been Eurasian for generations. But even as they noted the differences, participants were open to being inclusive. Mr Xavier said: "We should be inviting the new Eurasians, giving them the sense of belonging as a Eurasian."

*“ School students don't know the term 'Eurasian', or that we are one of the pioneer races in Singapore ”*

Others felt, however, that most foreign residents in Singapore were here primarily to mainly to enjoy the republic's better economic opportunities and had little interest in assimilating into the culture and becoming part of the nation. If integration did occur, it would only happen over time.

A suggestion arising from the meeting was for the Government to come up with programmes for children of new immigrants – who attend the same schools as local children and would have more in common with them.

A further proposal was to have more social occasions such as street parties – held throughout the year and not merely during the festive seasons – to encourage inter-cultural bonding. Singaporeans should re-open their doors and offer a welcome to outsiders – which, it was pointed out, was exactly what they had done in times past, and was how Eurasians came to be in the first place.

### Culture Shock

Other participants lamented an apparent lack of awareness about the Eurasian culture. Teacher Rosemary Tessensohn, 67, said her secondary school students often asked where she was from – and did not understand her answer. "They don't know the term 'Eurasian', or that we are one of the pioneer races in Singapore," she said.

*“ We should be inviting the new Eurasians, giving them the sense of belonging as a Eurasian ”*

Many participants shared her concern about needing to raise the community's profile, whether through education, the media or the community's own efforts. Geoffrey Da Silva, 60, a lecturer, suggested producing television documentaries about the history and culture of Singapore Eurasians. Others hoped the community could provide more leaders in various fields, from politics to industry. Indeed, a large number of Singapore Eurasians already work as teachers and lawyers, while their artistic cousins are well represented in the entertainment industry.

Christopher de Souza emphasised this point, saying that the community had long been “part of the DNA” of institutions – from the teaching profession to the legal fraternity. So while the community hoped for more leaders, “let's take comfort and assurance that we have already contributed, institutionalising our own special personality of the community on each of these”.

### Speaking the Same Language

Despite Singapore being an English-speaking nation, it was felt that the general standard of the language still needed to improve nationally before we could speak to each other comfortably in one language. Although the Government had run campaigns to develop the nation's English language skills, there was still much to be done.

Some participants observed that Singaporean students were focussed on obtaining high marks in their mother tongue in order to progress to higher education but this was often achieved at the expense of learning good English. The meeting called for the Ministry of Education to increase its efforts to instill good English grammar in the nation in recognition that this is Singapore's common language.

### Universal Concerns

Some participants were less concerned with the more abstract concepts, such as identity, and expressed worries of a more practical nature: the universal bread-and-butter issues such as the cost of housing and education and the problems of job competition. One of the seven discussion groups – composed of mainly retirees – raised issues surrounding ageing, such as the rising cost of living and the sometimes unwelcome necessity of downgrading when they would rather stay put in their own home.

On the other hand, some participants suggested that the Government should consider speeding up the process that allowed seniors to move into a studio apartment – which would also help release bigger units back into the market, where there were young couples ready to buy them – particularly those in mature estates.

Edwin Tessensohn, 77, a retiree, raised the question of health as an additional expense in retirement: “What I find important is for the Government to look after the seniors, such as with medical costs,” he said.



Gurdev Singh and wife spend time with Minister S Iswaran



Minister Iswaran chats to facilitator Adrienne de Souza



EA President, Benett Theseira presents a gift to MP Christopher de Souza



EA Education Chairperson, Geoffrey da Silva presents his group's discussion to the meeting



Joachim Pereira delivers his group's conclusions



Young participants are engrossed in discussion

*“It’s important for the Government to look after the seniors, such as with medical costs”*

*Seniors could set up small businesses, which they could operate from home*

**Bridging the Gap**

It is today’s young people who are forcing the pace of change, with their greater willingness to cross cultural divides through technology. The meeting believed that the community’s younger members should organise events for their peers inside and outside of the Eurasian community. Yet at the same time, the EA should organise inter-generational programmes that would pass on the Eurasian heritage down the line. A further suggestion was to set up another Eurasian Singapore Conversation, specifically for younger members, for their views on how young Eurasians could contribute towards Singapore’s future.

**We Mean Business**

Some participants suggested that the Government do more to assist seniors in setting up small businesses, which they could operate from home, to make use of the marketable skills that many of them still had. This would provide them with an income and make their lives more purposeful. It was suggested that courses could be conducted on this, and examples of small business models could be provided, so that seniors could be encouraged to try their hand as entrepreneurs.

Questions that required action from the Government were directed to Mr Iswaran, who assured participants that the Government was looking at how to help Singapore’s ageing population.

Many younger participants saw foreign workers as a threat. For some, it was low-wage foreign employees, who were undercutting locals on price. But Joachim Pereira, 23, said: “Most of the complaints are aimed at foreign expats competing for high-income jobs.”

**Final Words**

Vincent Schoon, First Vice President of the Eurasian Association, said: “I don’t think we should have any concerns that the Eurasian identity will be completely and absolutely eroded. I think for the older Eurasians, they just want it to be there, to be maintained and remind Singaporeans who they are. We are Eurasians and part and parcel of nation-building here in Singapore.”

Mr Iswaran, said the discussion had raised views that were “very enlightening and vigorous, and many of the issues that were identified actually resonate for all communities in Singapore. In other words, they are national issues. For example, how do we provide for older Singaporeans as they age, as they retire?”

EA President, Benett Theseira, said: “The conversation does not end here, and it will continue to progress.” He encouraged Eurasians to share their views and thoughts on the EA Facebook page. “The EA Secretariat will be consolidating views from our various platforms and formats – from EA Facebook comments, e-mails and dialogue; this will form the basis for other deeper discussions,” he concluded.

## Get Active – and Stay Active



Paul Rodrigues welcome the guests to the event



EA Patron SR Nathan enters the meeting to applause



Guest speaker Lim Boon Heng delivers a speech

Family Support Service clients, friends and several members of the Chitty community met on a Sunday afternoon in February for the EA's Tea With Neighbours, where they learned of a new FSS initiative on active ageing.

FSS member Paul Rodrigues introduced the guests to programme, which aims to encourage healthy eating and regular exercise and to bridge the gap between the young and old.

The guest speaker, Deputy Chairman of Singapore Labour Foundation, NTUC Centre, Lim Boon Heng, shared his knowledge of active ageing

programmes organised by the Community Development Councils and suggested that the FSS collaborate with People's Association to expand the programme.

During a Q&A session, some guests expressed their concerns about various aspects of ageing and Mr Lim reassured them that the government was looking into the problems of an ageing community.

The social side of the occasion included entertainment by singer Trevor Nerva, who performed old-time favourites on his guitar.

## A Fresh Start

Life as a single parent can be tough. But getting the right help can make all the difference

Since her divorce, single mum Francis Petronella has had to struggle to support her three sons and she describes single parenthood as tough and relentless.

As with many single parents, a major difficulty has been a shortage of money to keep up with the bills, together with the pressure of acting as both mother and father to her kids. In 2009, Francis, 49, was near breaking point when she decided to seek help from the Eurasian Association Family Support Services. She received emergency cash relief and grants as well as food vouchers. The FSS has also helped with her children's school fees.

The FSS also offered advice and practical support and a much happier Francis is now working full-time selling health-related products. "My life is so different now. If it weren't for the FSS, I would still be living on benefits and assistance," she says. "I feel

very thankful. Their assistance has really helped to ease my financial burdens."

How is she coping now? "I manage my budget OK and have the essentials covered but it would be nice to go out for a meal or perhaps to the theatre occasionally. Now my eldest son is working and the second one is in the army. They also take turns to help with the bills. It is a family effort. I'm contented now", she says.

At times, she still feels the financial pinch but these days she tells herself to remain positive. "Things do get hard here and obviously there are issues that I and my kids are still working through, but you just carry on, don't you?"

And Francis is optimistic that her life will improve. "It's a just a matter of time. We are taking it really slowly, just taking really small steps at a time. There's no need to rush. It's just about fresh starts for us now," she says.



## Multiple Opportunities for Single Parents

Single parents and their children may now seek help from the EA's Family Support Services. If you are an unemployed single parent or have a household income of less than \$1,500, you may qualify for assistance.

This FSS assistance programme provides employment help which can include: basic IT skills, a career readiness workshop, transport allowance, grooming voucher, skills training to enter the workforce, financial literacy workshops and food vouchers. Terms and conditions apply.

Children of single parents will be referred to tuition centres run by the self-help groups, which offer them continuous assistance for their education. They will also receive childcare administrative fees and school bus fees for the first month.

For more information, contact our Family Support Services Executive, J. Ramakrishnan, tel: 6447 1578 or e-mail [ram@eurasians.org](mailto:ram@eurasians.org)



Bryan Neubronner showing off his skills

## Bryan's Career Goals

Teenager Bryan Neubronner's football career has already kicked off with a professional contract

Midfielder Bryan Neubronner is on target for a promising professional football career in Europe – but hopes that a place in Singapore's national squad will also form part of the plan.

The teenager, who is of German-Chinese heritage, has played for Singapore's under-15 team and in the U-17 Prime League, and he won a bronze medal in the inaugural Youth Olympics Games here in 2010. He was also a runner-up in the 23rd Canon Lion City Cup in 2011.

On 27 February this year – his 18th birthday – he signed a contract to play full-time professional contract with the under-19 side of Ulm, a team in Germany's third division, which is also his family's home town.

He now trains at least five times a week with the first team while also undertaking academic studies for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma at the international school of Ulm.

Bryan admits that juggling football and his studies is hard. "I try my best to give both an equal share of my attention. I try to finish my homework on the day it is given, so that it doesn't accumulate," he says.

And the standard of German football is also keeping him on his toes. He says that compared with Singapore, "there is a higher standard of competition in Germany both physically and technically".

However, he is confident he can make it into the starting line-up for next season. "Right now, my focus is on physical strength and learning as much as I can. I'm here to learn from the senior players, who have played professional football for a long time. I also plan to do well in my IB," he says. He also hopes to play for the Singapore Under-23s at the 2015 SEA Games, which the republic will host, and eventually to play for the national team.



This picture and above: young Eurasians network at their gathering

## Putting Eurasians Back on the Map

A group of young professionals is on a mission to raise awareness of our ethnic group

Despite the long and illustrious history of Eurasians in Singapore, there are still many people in the country who are unaware of who Eurasians are and what they represent.

At a recent meeting of Young Professional Eurasians at the Singapore Recreation Club, members were canvassed for their support for a number of current projects to be undertaken to raise the profile of Eurasians.

Photographer Emma Chiau Ong-Webb spoke about her current project taking portrait photos of fellow Eurasians and called for volunteers to be models.

Actress Emilie Oehlers talked about her plan to produce a documentary on Eurasians. In March, she also presented a short experimental theatre piece at the Arts House called *Open Call: Serani*, which explored the Eurasian identity through the lens of family history.

Michelle Tessensohn and Daryl Pereira are conducting a survey on Singapore Eurasians, both citizens and permanent residents. The pair are seeking volunteers to conduct interviews with selected households.

Graham Ong-Webb, who chairs the Young Professional Eurasians group, says: "The EA Youth Sub-Committee will be organising a team-building activity sometime in May or June and will also be holding a youth forum in November to give the young generation a platform to voice their thoughts, differing views and fears about the community."

Over the last eight months, the Young Professionals Eurasians group on Facebook has gained some 200 youth members. A recent posting on from one of them said: "I had a fantastic night at the YPE event. Some very good ideas were thrown up and made some new friends. Come one, come all to the next one!"

The sub-committee updates YPE members about future events and gathering through its Facebook group, [www.facebook.com/groups/187671244693266](http://www.facebook.com/groups/187671244693266)

## Grappling with Life's Challenges



Wrestling coach Timothy Lim



Kids grapple for supremacy

Wrestling isn't one of Singapore's more popular sports, but Timothy Lim would be happy to change that. Having practiced judo and Brazilian jiu-jitsu, he was first introduced to wrestling in 2008 – and is now a coach at the Wrestling Federation of Singapore.

Five years ago, he was among the first batch of freestyle wrestlers in Singapore to be given the chance to learn from renowned wrestlers Paul Velekei, an all American NCAA wrestler, and Jimmy Taenaka, who is now the vice president of the Wrestling Federation of Singapore, who were both teaching the sport part-time in Singapore.

During that time, Timothy, a Chinese-British Eurasian, was also given the chance to be trained by the renowned Sergei Beloglazov, a two-times Olympic Gold medallist and six-times World Champion, and then Singapore's national coach.

Timothy says: "Sergei had a deep impact on me and wrestling; he would treat all the wrestlers like his children – a great coach indeed. He is also considered one of the greatest freestyle wrestlers of all time. It was a true honour to be taught by an Olympian and a champion."

These days, Timothy, who works in brand marketing and also as a freelance photographer,

coaches every Saturday, training youngsters from six to 14. He also teaches freestyle wrestling fundamentals to adult beginners.

His favourite aspect of coaching is seeing how students who start with little or no sporting background grow into stronger and more confident people. "It's great to see them grow physically and mentally as they progress with the lessons," he says.

Wrestling is not as rough as it sounds, he adds. "Anyone can do this sport and it is extremely safe, contrary to what some might believe. Everyone should try it."

Freestyle wrestling is not to be confused with fake wrestling, such as WWE [World Wrestling Entertainment], says Timothy. "It is a fun sport that helps develop strength, coordination, determination and a great fighting spirit. It is a grappling-based combative sport, which revolves around takedowns, control, throws and pins – but punching and kicking is strictly not allowed."

There are several competitions throughout the year and Timothy is busy coaching and grooming his students for the upcoming Takedown Challenge. The Singapore wrestling team will also be competing in Southeast Asian Games in Myanmar in December.



EA Dragons get fit with chin ups



Getting a rhythm on the Kallang River



Paddle power: the new participants are all geared up and ready

## Entering the (Friendly) Dragons' Den

Members of the EA's various committees plus other friends joined forces to get some hands-on paddling experience during an 'Open House' organised by the EA Dragons. The event, held on Sunday 24 March at the People's Association's Water-Venture in Kallang, saw the participants going through a warm-up regime before hitting the waters for an hour's scenic paddle around Kallang Basin against the backdrop of the city skyline.

After their exercise, participants were treated to light refreshments by the beach and a surprise birthday celebration for 'March babies' – those with birthdays that month.

This was the EA Dragon's first Open House and they hope to hold more in the future for fun get-togethers and recruitment opportunities.



## Island Identities

New research contrasts how two different societies view their mixed-race citizens

A post-graduate student is planning to publish a book which examines the contrast in approaches to Eurasian identity between Singapore and New Zealand.

Zarine Rocha, a 30-year-old New Zealander currently living in Singapore where she is completing her PhD thesis in the Department of Sociology at NUS, studies mixed heritage and government classifications in the two countries.

But she has given her research a human face. Some 40 faces in fact, belonging to people with one Chinese and one European parent in Singapore and New Zealand, whom she interviewed. And it is her findings, based on their stories, which she wants to turn into a book.

Zarine herself has an Indian father from Kenya and a New Zealand European mother; her parents met in New Zealand and she and her sister were brought up there.

She says of her research: "I am looking at how people of mixed heritage see their identities in New Zealand and in Singapore. This comparison is important because the two countries approach race in very

different ways: race is much more present in Singapore, and there is an established Eurasian community. In New Zealand, the government focuses on ethnicity rather than race, and it is seen as based on culture, rather than on descent.

"So people in either context have grown up around different ideas about their heritage and the idea of 'mixed race'. Being mixed, then, means different things, and I found that people related to being Chinese, European, both or neither in a number of ways."

For her PhD thesis, she spoke to 20 people in Singapore and 20 in New Zealand, ranging from 19 to 64 years old. "They all had very interesting stories to tell, and I felt privileged to hear about their lives," she says.

So what did her research reveal? "I've found that people of mixed heritage can see themselves in very different ways," she says. "The Eurasian community in Singapore is particularly diverse, and people who see themselves as Eurasian can come from many backgrounds.

"Not everyone who has European and Asian heritage sees themselves as Eurasian



Zarine Rocha

in Singapore, and in New Zealand the term is almost never used. But regardless of how people described themselves, they often talked about how having parents from different cultures was something unusual, but also treasured. Many people felt that they could take things from the cultures of both parents, creating something new for themselves.

It is a view which resonates with Zarine herself: "I love the fact that my sister and I grew up with a mix of cultures, and for us that was normal. We have our own family culture: we ate Indian food as my dad was the cook, dahl was our comfort food, and we had beautiful Indian clothes for special occasions. But we also grew up playing outside and running on the beach, having barbeques for the Christmas holidays, eating marmite sandwiches and enjoying roast lamb."

## Donation Drive for Items for the EURASIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

The Eurasian Association will be enhancing two of its three galleries in its Eurasian Heritage Centre between January and April. The three galleries will be:

- (1) Showcasing Our Roots [an introduction to our origins, culture and lifestyle]
- (2) World War Two – The Eurasian Story [experiences and real-life accounts of those who went through WWII]
- (3) Remembering Our Prominent Eurasians [focusing on the contributions of the EA since its inception in 1919, and the prominent Eurasians who contributed to our community and the wider society]

We are grateful to the Eurasian community for your support over the years and to the dedicated volunteers who help us in our key pillars of Education Advancement, Welfare and Community Engagement. As the EA approaches its 100 years anniversary in 2019, it is important that the younger generation know their roots, and that we crystallise our unique culture in our Eurasian Heritage Centre.



We would like to involve the community in this meaningful heritage project, by inviting you to donate or loan artifacts or items pertaining to the Eurasian culture, lifestyle and prominent Eurasians, whose contributions, whether big or small, helped to shape our small but vibrant community.

**If you would like to donate or loan items for our Eurasian Heritage Centre, kindly contact Jacqueline Peeris at 6447-1578 or [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org) Thank you and we appreciate your support!**

## A Call for Volunteers



The EA, in conjunction with NUS, is conducting a survey of Singapore Eurasians and is seeking volunteers to interview them – or be interviewed.

The survey will take 50 Singapore Eurasian households of various income levels, age groups and geographical locations – comprising both citizens and permanent residents – and focus primarily on socio-economic issues.

The project has been initiated to understand better how the EA can serve the needs of the Eurasian community. The survey will take the form of a face-to-face interview and aims to start in May.

Are you a Singapore Eurasian or Eurasian with permanent residency in Singapore? Would you like to participate in a study about social issues? We need 25 volunteers to interview two households each, and to submit a written report. Every volunteer will receive \$100.00 per household interviewed. We are also in need of 50 households from a wide sample of the community to be interviewed.

If you are interested in being either an interviewer or an interviewee, we look forward to hearing from you. Please contact Michelle, tel. 9159 2386 or michelleayn@gmail.com

## Help to share our Eurasian Heritage. Be an EA Heritage Volunteer.

The Eurasian Association Heritage Committee is looking for heritage volunteers to give tours of the Eurasian Heritage Centre, which houses three galleries:

- The Eurasian Showcase (focusing on Eurasian culture and prominent Eurasians in Singapore)
- Roots of Our Community (showing the history and influence of the Portuguese, Dutch and British on the Eurasian community)
- World War II – The Eurasian Story (encapsulating stories and real-life accounts of Eurasians who survived WWII)

For more information, please contact

**Jacqueline Peeris**  
Assistant Manager, Education & Heritage  
Tel: 6447 1578  
Email: jacqueline@eurasians.org





## Spirit of Summer

### Singapore band The Summer State is earning wide acclaim

Local rock-pop band The Summer State has opened for renowned American bands Mayday Parade, Yellowcard and The Wonder Years and has played its first overseas gig in Jakarta. Not bad for a band that has only been together for a couple of years.

The five piece pop-rock band comprises Eurasian vocalist Ryan Lopez, drummer Bryan Sta Mari, bassist Edwin Waliman and guitarists, Victoria Chew and Muhammad Shaykh Akbar, all aged between 20 to 23 years old. Some were classmates and they knew each other from a previous band.



The Summer State band: (left to right): Muhammad Shaykh Akbar, Ryan Lopez, Bryan Sta Maria, Victoria Chew and Edwin Waliman

Their music has a fresh take on the pop-rock genre and is catchy and radio-friendly. The band was also selected for The Apprenticeship Programme (TAP) under Noise Singapore in 2011 and was mentored by Dave Tan of local rock band Electrico.

Their first single *Hush, We're Taking Over* followed by *Hope, From the Gallows* were both released in 2011. The music video of the band's recently released single *I Do I Don't* has generated thousands hits on YouTube and

has also been aired on 98.7 FM.

However, the band members are refusing to get carried away with the hype. "It's still early days to think about our second record," they say, although Ryan admits that they do dream of sharing a stage one day with their musical inspirations, rock bands Go Radio, Paramore and Blink 182.

Check them out on Facebook: <http://facebook.com/thesummerstate>

## All the World's a Stage

### Actress Rebecca Spykerman's Eurasian roots allow her to be a cultural chameleon as she performs around the world

Rebecca Spykerman can remember as a child repeatedly acting out her favourite childhood story, *Sleeping Beauty*, in front of her family.

"Acting was always something I wanted to do," she says, but she didn't pursue the art until she decided to enrol at Lasalle at the age of 21. She was rejected for lack of experience, so applied instead for its foundation course. There, she discovered a love of musicals and training for her career began in earnest. In 2009, she graduated from Lasalle with a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre.

*“I like that people aren't able to tell where I'm from because it busts the stereotype of what a Singaporean is supposed to look or sound like”*

Owing to her father's work, Rebecca had a nomadic childhood and has lived in Amsterdam, Paris Beijing, Hong Kong and Sydney. Her international upbringing sparked a strong interest in foreign cultures and languages. "I got used to a life where I had to be in a new space every three years on average," she says. "I feel the need to keep exploring and I can't stay in the same environment for too long."



Rebecca Spykerman

Her Eurasian roots include Portuguese, Dutch and Indian ancestry: "I like that I am of mixed ethnicities; I like that people aren't able to tell where I'm from because it busts the stereotype of what a Singaporean is supposed to look or sound like," she says.

She adds that being a Eurasian in the performing industry allows her the flexibility to merge into the international market and tackle interesting roles. "In America, I pass off as Puerto Rican in New York, or Brazilian, Spanish or Mexican-American in Los Angeles. My hair is naturally curly and I am able to pass off as part African-American and Caucasian too... The possibilities are endless out there."

The 28-year-old actress already has a string of high-profile plays and musicals to her name, from the lead role of Viola in Singapore Repertory Theatre's *Twelfth Night* to roles in Pangdemonium's *Spring Awakening* and *The Kitchen Musical* on AXN.



Rebecca and a colleague are ready for the stage

Her biggest challenge so far has been *Twelfth Night*, she says. "I am very grateful that Gaurav Kripalani [SRT's artistic director] provided me with the opportunity to experience my first working lead role. [Director] Bruce Guthrie never stopped demanding the best. It was never easy but I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. SRT has provided so many opportunities for me since I've been in The Young Company; I even had the opportunity of having Kevin Spacey work me on a classical monologue."

Rebecca is currently busy juggling a number of tasks – heading a leadership programme, modelling, practising for her driving test and shaping up for the US in the summer. "I'm moving on to focus on commercial work and pursue TV and film overseas," she says. "It is time to expand and I am very excited about this new chapter in my life!"



## The Good Life

Author and screenwriter Leslie Charteris died 20 years ago on 15 April, yet his books – some 100 of which famously chronicle the adventures of Simon Templar, alias The Saint – continue to delight readers the world over. We take a look at his glamorous, maverick life

Leslie Charteris was born Leslie Charles Bowyer-Yin on 12 May 1907 in Singapore. His father was a Chinese doctor and his mother was English.

Ian Dickerson, a long-time personal friend says that in those days being a mixed-race child was not easy. “Leslie suffered from racism at a very young age – his brother Roy told me of times in Singapore as kids when they were effectively outcast for being Eurasian – as Chinese kids couldn’t play with Europeans.”

After World War I, Leslie’s parents divorced and in 1919, he and his brother accompanied their mother to England. There, he attended school in Lancashire in the north of the country, where again he struggled to cope with his mixed heritage and felt he was destined to be something of a perpetual outsider.

“I think this was one attitude that undoubtedly inspired his creation of The Saint, for Simon Templar always worked outside the law and while Leslie never went quite that far, he was always outside the mainstream”, says Ian.

Leslie went on to study art in Paris but under parental pressure returned to England to read law at Cambridge University. In his first year, his debut novel was accepted by publisher Ward Lock & Co, which offered him a three-book deal. So he left university to embark on his new writing career.

Over the years, his adventurous spirit saw him juggling writing with a variety of diverse jobs that took his fancy – from barman to work on a rubber plantation.

*“The books are wonderfully well-written stories”*

He changed his name legally to Charteris, a name that he reportedly selected from a telephone directory.

In 1932, he relocated to the US, where he continued to write and publish short stories. In 1946, he became an American citizen. “It wasn’t that he wanted to forget his heritage; it

was just that America was where he wanted to live”, says Ian. He wrote novels about The Saint throughout his life, and was one of the 20th century’s most prolific and popular authors.

The Saint appeared not only in books and movies, but in a newspaper strip, a comic book series and on radio and even had its own magazine. In 1992, Leslie was presented with a Lifetime Achievement award by The Crime Writers’ Association of Great Britain.

He had four marriages, three of which ended in divorce. His last marriage, in 1952, was to Hollywood film actress Audrey Long. Leslie and Audrey eventually returned to England where he spent his last years. He died at the age of 85.

Ian wants people to remember Leslie’s ability as a writer. “In recent decades his work has been overshadowed by the TV series or the movies. But that’s not fair; the books themselves are wonderfully well-written stories and that’s why I’m delighted to be overseeing reprints of the books in both the UK and coming soon in the US.”

## All Loved Up

‘Celebration of Love’ was the theme for lunch at Quentin’s restaurant on the Sunday following Valentine’s Day in February.

Friends and families worked together on love-themed games and quizzes and relaxed to the sounds of Wonderboys and Yuresh.



Guests enjoying lunch and celebrating post-Valentines day



Guests all smiles for the camera

## Eurasian Food and All That Jazz



More than 100 Eurasians and friends headed down to the Eurasian Community House for Quentin’s Showtime – a night of great food, music and companionship. The cocktail reception included a serious spread of Eurasian cuisine, including devil curry, feng, seiybak and more.

Cool sounds were provided by The Jeremy Monteiro Trio (with Brian Benson and Shawn

Kelley) featuring guest jazz vocalist, Claressa Monteiro.

Among the guests were EA Patron Mr SR Nathan and his wife, Urmila.

Quentin’s next themed event will be a jazz brunch on Saturday 20 April. For more details, please contact Quentin’s restaurant, tel: 6348 0327.



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# Hot Moves

Dancers representing the Eurasian Association took part in this year's Chingay parade at the F1 Pit Building, sashaying down a dazzling 360-metre route festooned with firepots and strobe lights that resembled an ocean of fire.

Attired in fiery-hued costumes in keeping with its 'Dancing Flames' performance, the troupe included 60 pupils aged between 12 and 20 from the Singapore School of Dance, together with a number of other youngsters.

Dancing alongside France's Galactic Stilt Walkers, who were visiting Singapore for the first time, the EA troupe performed an energetic and upbeat routine to the sound of *I Wanna Dance with Somebody*, choreographed by June Lee.

The School of Dance has been actively involved in various national performances and a number of charity events.

