

Hitting the right notes

NUS' performing and visual arts scholar Beverly Goh is pursuing her love of music while fulfilling her dream of becoming a community lawyer

by aaron tan

MUSIC runs in the blood of Ms Beverly Goh, a National University of Singapore (NUS) freshman who has bagged several music awards over the past few years.

In 2012, the then-Dunman High School student clinched the top prize for her solo dizi — a Chinese transverse flute — performance in the youth category of the National Chinese Music Competition, improving on her third-place showing in the same competition two years earlier.

Chinese orchestra veteran

Ms Goh is also a regular in the local Chinese orchestra circuit, having performed at public concerts as a member of Chinese orchestra groups such as the Ding Yi Youth Ensemble and the City Chinese Orchestra.

The bubbly 20-year-old discovered her knack on the dizi by chance while she was in primary school.

Then, at her mother's suggestion, she joined the school's Chinese orchestra group, as did her brother, so the siblings could go home together after school.

Ms Goh eventually did well enough to qualify for the Music Elective Programme at Dunman High School, whose Chinese orchestra is regarded as one of the best in Singapore.

In 2011, she even scored a summer stint at China's prestigious Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Last June, she became the first recipient of the NUS Global Merit Scholarship (Performing and Visual Arts), thanks to her musical talent and strong academic credentials.

The scholarship, which includes a yearly allowance and covers housing and tuition fees, is awarded to talented and well-rounded individuals with outstanding academic and performing and

visual arts participation records.

She is currently a member of the NUS Chinese Orchestra, and is working with the university's Centre for the Arts to identify ways to contribute actively to the performing and visual arts scene on campus, as expected of NUS' performing and visual arts scholars.

Helping others help themselves

Despite her passion for music, Ms Goh is not eyeing a career as a professional musician.

She reached that decision after seeing friends who were pursuing a music career burn out while trying to improve their skills at the expense of other areas in life.

"I didn't want that to happen to me," she says. "I want to play music for my own pleasure and moreover, the job market for professional musicians in Singapore is limited."

Instead, the social work undergraduate at NUS' Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences aspires to become a community lawyer.

"In 2012, I took part in a week-long work experience programme by Dunman High and interned as a translator at a legal clinic in Bukit Batok," she recalls.

"Through that experience, I saw how community lawyers can help to change another person's life by providing legal advice," she adds.

She applied to study law at NUS but was not successful. While she was offered a place at an overseas law school, she did not take it up as she did not want to strain her parents' finances.

Through her social work degree, she hopes to have a better understanding of helping those in need before taking up a postgraduate law degree after graduation.

Ms Goh says her first semester was fruitful, as she was able to pick up prac-

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— Ms Beverly Goh (right), undergraduate, National University of Singapore

tical skills, such as learning how to help others help themselves.

"We often think of social work as solving problems for others," she says. "But that's not the case — it's about showing people how they can solve problems on their own."

In a way, her scholarship has made it possible for her to pursue her love for music even as she works towards becoming a community lawyer.

She says: "The scholarship also sends a message that there is value and recognition for those who pursue music and the arts."

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