

bTW

ON BEING A PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN

Singer? I'm an entrepreneur

BEVLYN KHOO

I HAVE been doing music full-time for about five years now. Since quitting my job as a youth counsellor at the end of 2002, I have been singing at pubs and events, and I also compose my own songs.

Given the response I get when I tell some people what I do for a living, I gather it must seem like a bizarre feat to clock this number of years.

The most popular reaction is a raised eyebrow (or two) accompanying a monosyllabic "Oh...", followed by a few nods.

Then, an uneasy silence be-

fore they realise the need to continue the conversation.

I used to feel awkward in new social circles whenever the question of what I do came up in the conversation. Such situations left me wondering what it was that made my musician job such a hard thing to react to.

After some time, I evolved to feel sorry for the person asking the question because he would fumble due to the lack of a ready and appropriate response.

Then, there are others who would become concerned about the state of my finances.

Responses include: "Oh, so are you doing okay?", "Huh? Can survive meh?", and "Do you mind telling me roughly, err, how much you make a month?"

I can understand that most people do not know how to react to me since I'm not in a typical white-collar job, but it's downright rude to be so bare-faced about the size of my rice bowl.

Musicians are usually paid on an hourly basis, do not enjoy health benefits or CPF contributions from their employers.

Perhaps that is why some people place us musicians somewhere at the bottom rung of the social status ladder (if we are not famous).

But I'd like to think that we are exchanging all these monetary benefits for the opportunities to indulge in our passion while we "work".

Going back to the point of inappropriate reactions, not all are so hard to bear.

Interesting ones include: "Oh, so do you have an album?", "When are you coming up with an album?", and "Wow, it's so good to be able to follow your passion!"

Responses like these make me persist on in times of self-doubt and financial insecurity.

My struggle with my identity as a singer has diminished over the years. I believe I share the same sentiments with other professionals in "exotic" occupations like photographers, videographers, make-up artists and dancers.

I used to struggle over the choice of words I use to introduce myself and my job - the descriptions I used include "I'm a singer", "I sing", "I'm a musician", "I do music full-time" and "I'm a wedding-singer".

In fact, just so that I might get the initial sunny-side up response from other people, I may even now say, "I'm an entrepreneur".

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The writer is a full-time singer, songwriter and wedding singer. She has just released an album called Lonely Afternoon. For more information, please go to www.bevlynkhoo.com.

Treat your maid like you would your best friend

Well-known surgeon organises free medical check-ups for domestic workers to press home this message

DEBBIE YONG

THEY live with you and are privy to your family's most intimate secrets. Why not care for your domestic helper as you would a sister or a best friend?

This was the message Dr Susan Lim wished to convey to Singaporeans in conjunction with International Women's Day on Saturday.

To walk the talk, the renowned surgeon has tied up with Parkway Health Group and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem) Singapore to offer free health check-ups and breast examinations for all domestic workers this Sunday (9pm to 3am) at Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre.

More than 200 domestic workers have already signed up.

"It'll be an all-girls day," said Dr Lim, who has roped in nurses from

her two clinics at Mount Elizabeth and Gleneagles hospitals, as well as volunteers from the Singapore American School and Unifem.

Besides getting their blood pressure and body mass index (BMI) checked, domestic workers can undergo breast examinations and attend talks by gynaecologist Dr Ann Tan and dermatologist Dr Cheong Lai Leng on female health issues.

"Behind every working mum is a domestic helper. Many have made huge sacrifices to be here.

"As a mother and a doctor, I thought this would be the best way to give back," said Dr Lim, whose Filipino maid of 15 years helped her raise her three teenage children.

International Women's Day is a perennial highlight on her calendar. Last year, she gave a keynote speech at the International Women's Day conference in Singapore.

In 2006, a division of her clinic took part in the US-Middle East

Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness & Research to conduct breast examinations for women in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Dr Lim added that the aim of the event is to educate and empower domestic workers with health awareness and knowledge that they can take with them anywhere.

Miss Jenette Baguinang, 26, from the Philippines, agreed.

Though her employer sends her for regular six-monthly health checks, she encouraged her two sisters and five friends to sign up.

She said: "I am hoping to learn about how to prevent breast cancer and skin problems."

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HELPDESK 我的字典

➤ **Convey:** 传达 chuán dá

➤ **Health check-up:**
体格检查 tǐ gé jiǎn chá

➤ **Neglect:** 忽略 hū lüè

Diploma requirement for pre-school teachers

ONE in four pre-school teachers will be required to have a diploma in pre-school teaching by this year.

By next year, the minimum qualifications of pre-school teachers will be raised from three O levels to five, with a pass in English and a diploma in pre-school teaching.

From 2013, teachers of K1 and K2 classes must have at least a pass in O-level English or an English proficiency test and a diploma.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education Masagos Zulkifli announced in Parliament yesterday that the bar would be raised further

to improve the quality of pre-school teachers here, the Straits Times reported.

To level up opportunities for children from poor families, the Government will raise minimum standards as well as provide more money to pre-schools, said Mr Masagos.

WIN!
SKY OF LOVE
MOVIE PASSES AND
COLLECTIBLES

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Sky Of Love opens in cinemas on March 6

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