

Lasalle College of the Arts, which marked its 30th convocation last month, continues to break new ground, from hiring prominent arts educators to nurturing gifted graduates. [Rahimah Rashith](#) and [Calvin Yang](#) spoke to some of them.



Dr Curiale, who has a PhD in music composition from the University of Minnesota, teaches modules such as music production and music business. ST PHOTO: MARCUS TAN

Acclaimed composer brings Hollywood to S'pore

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Calvin Yang

He is an Emmy-nominated music composer and arranger who has worked with more than 100 musicians, including Michael Jackson, Ray Charles and Frank Sinatra.

Now, Dr Joseph Curiale is hoping to use his experience to help students here reach the top of the music and entertainment business.

In August last year, the affable 61-year-old American, who has nearly three decades of experience working with Hollywood's creme de la creme, joined Lasalle College of the Arts as a full-time music lecturer.

"The talent pool in Singapore is amazing," he said. "Many times, students bring in their new songs, and I would listen to their work and then I sit there crying."

"There are a lot of talented students here. I just thought it would be really great to share all my experiences and help students to get the shortcuts towards their goals."

Dr Curiale, who has a PhD in music composition from the University of Minnesota in the United States, teaches modules such as music production and music business.

Five years ago, he was introduced to Dr Timothy O'Dwyer, the head of the School of Contemporary Music at Lasalle, and was impressed with the direction he has taken for the school's courses. Dr Curiale felt

then that Lasalle was one of those rare institutions that prepared students for a working career in music.

"I like that it is a performance-based school," he said.

"Because I realised that a lot of universities are kind of mass-producing music educators and musicians on an assembly line, and they are very good at talking about music, but not very good at performing and writing music."

During his years in show business, Dr Curiale composed and produced music for television shows and movies, such as the 1987 comedy film, *Roxanne*, starring Steve Martin. He also had a hand in the music arrangements for big television specials.

He once got a call at midnight from the music director of a television special, asking if he would like to work on the arrangement for the late King of Pop, Michael Jackson, who was going on the show the next day.

"I couldn't turn down the opportunity," said Dr Curiale, who worked through the night to get the arrangement ready. "This was for Michael Jackson, there can't be one mistake."

He went for the show's rehearsal later that day to check on things, but did not attend its recording.

"Once my work was done, I just wanted to go home," he said.

"And so I didn't go. I went to Little

LOCAL TALENT

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Tokyo and had dinner while they taped the show."

Even though he has worked in Hollywood, Dr Curiale described himself as "the most un-Hollywood person". "My peers used to laugh at me, because people would kill to go to these shows."

Dr Curiale, whose research interests include the history of rock 'n' roll and television music's golden age, said: "Many of my students probably have Hollywood dreams."

"But since most of them will not get there for one reason or another, it is pretty cool that Lasalle just hap-

pened to bring Hollywood here."

Dr O'Dwyer, who got Dr Curiale to join the school, said: "Here, it's all about exposure and giving our students access to the best in the field. With a decorated career spanning nearly 30 years in Hollywood as well as Asia and Singapore, (Dr Curiale) is the real deal."

"As an educator, not only does he share invaluable knowledge from a global perspective, but he also leverages his wealth of experience to help students launch their careers by connecting them with industry locally and internationally."

Beneath the glitz of all that song and dance, down-to-earth values like punctuality are important, noted Dr Curiale, who is strict about his students' attendance.

He said: "If you are late for a recording session in Los Angeles, they will not call you again. There are 20 guys and girls just as good as you who are hoping that you mess up."

Dr Curiale, who composed and arranged a number of songs on home-grown songbird and Lasalle alumna Kit Chan's albums, said the arts education scene in Singapore has grown over the years.

There are local artists students can learn from and relate to, he said. "Don't go running to America so quickly any more, because things are changing here."

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