

**WHAT MADE YOU START SANCARE ASIA?**

SanCare Asia started out as a company which creates personalised music playlists for seniors with dementia. I started the company in December 2016, after doing extensive research on how the use of reminisce music has a positive effect on people with dementia.

The reason for the research was borne by the fact that my father was diagnosed with the illness during that same period and I was keen to find non-conventional methods to actively engage him. I tried putting together a playlist based on my father's life-story, and it worked wonderfully for him – which gave me the impetus and courage to start the programme for people who can benefit from it. The name of the programme is Strike A Note – which is a play on words for “recall” or “remember”.

**WHAT HAS YOUR PERSONAL ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY BEEN LIKE SO FAR?**

There have been plenty of ups and downs. The initial year was especially challenging as people would generally lean towards traditional medicinal or clinical approaches for ailments or illnesses. Using non-conventional methods like reminisce music as a form of therapy – though there has been plenty of scientific research and papers written about its efficacy – is not the first port of call.

But there are also many believers whom I have met along my path, and these like-minded folks have since seen the benefits and power of music first-hand. Over time, the programme and the company have garnered more awareness and traction within the sector.

But the best personal satisfaction for me is being able to see the smiles and joy I bring to my clients. When I talk about my job, I always tell everyone that the programme not only brings positive outcomes to my clients and their loved ones, it is also uplifting for me when I see the reactions each and every time.

**HOW UNIQUE IS YOUR BUSINESS?**

SanCare Asia is the first company in Singapore and Asia which curates personalised music playlists for seniors. We work with nursing homes, senior activity centres, public and community hospitals as well as individual private clientele.

Apart from Strike A Note, we have most recently piloted a new reminisce music and dance programme which is based on the silent disco concept. The new programme, which has been rolled out at several dementia daycare centres, is called Return To The Tea Dance. It has seen overwhelming positive cognitive, social, emotional and physical outcomes among the participants.

Depending on the programmes which are being rolled out at nursing homes, daycare centres or home-based clients, we have a mix of trained professionals, nursing home staff, fitness facilitators and volunteers who will be on hand to assist.

**WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?**

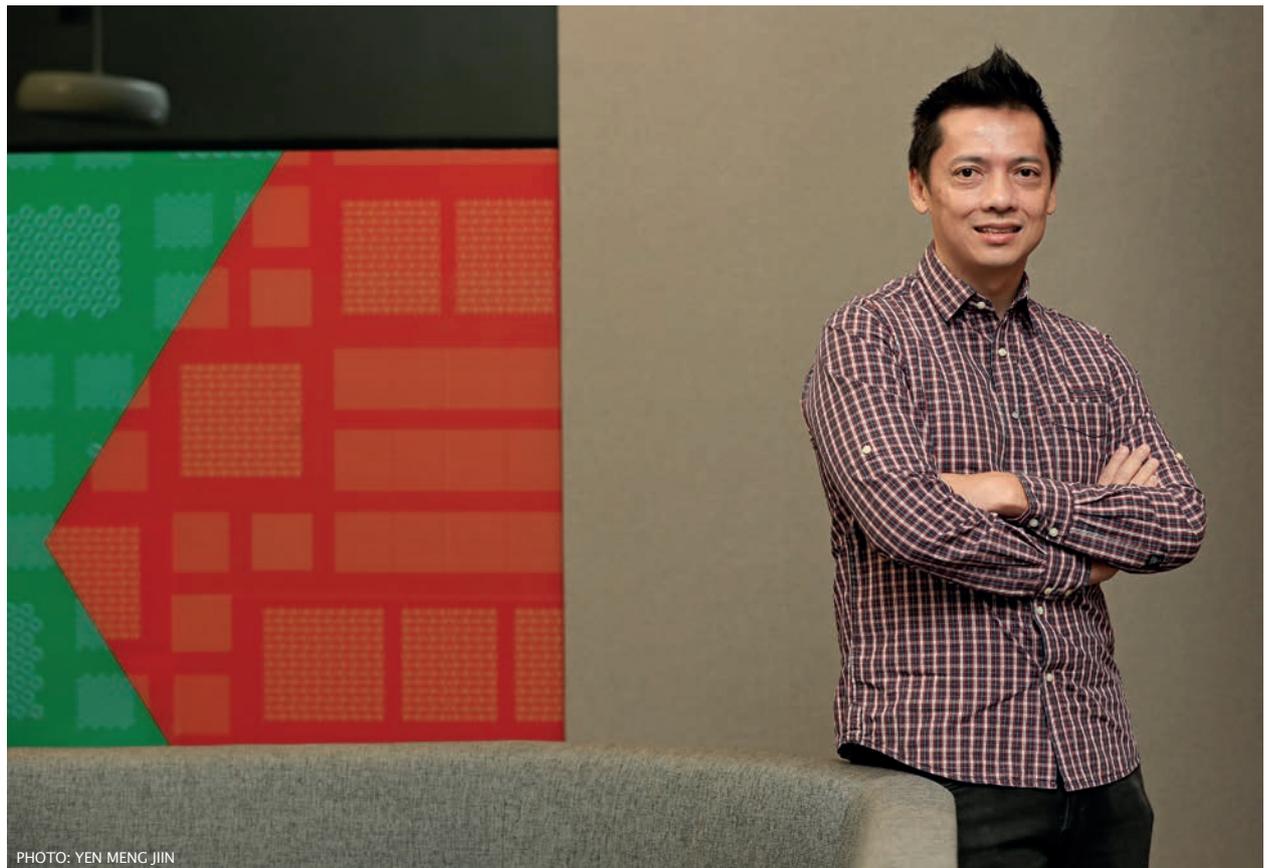
I am not medically trained nor am I from the social service sector. My entire career has been in the music and entertainment industry. The companies which I worked for were Warner Music, Universal Music and Gibson Brands.

So the biggest initial challenge was stepping into a brand new industry with no background or prior experience and attempting to convince policymakers and professors to trial a non-conventional medium for our pioneers. While there will always be naysayers to new methods in any industry, there will also be fellow trail-blazers who took the leap of faith with me and were impressed with the results thereafter.

# STRIKING A NOTE WITH SENIOR CITIZENS

AS TOLD TO DYLAN TAN

*Johnson Soh, founder of SanCare Asia, shares how his company is using music to get socially withdrawn and physically inactive seniors find their groove again*



The doors opened more readily from then on, and I am grateful to be able to help clients and loved ones reconnect with the programmes we run.

**HOW MUCH HAS SANCARE ASIA GROWN SINCE?**

What started out as an one-man operation has grown several times since. Though we currently still do not have any full-time staff on deck, we have a ready stream of part-timers and volunteers who assist with the execution of the programmes that we run.

Revenue-wise, there has also been year-on-year increase as the credibility of the programmes grow as more interest and awareness of who we are and what we do are passed on via word-of-mouth and referrals.

**WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR EXPANDING YOUR BUSINESS?**

We recently introduced the new programme, Return To The Tea Dance, which is a reminisce music and dance programme based on the silent disco concept. We have been very fortunate to partner with philanthropic organisation Lien Foundation on the project.

The pilot programme was rolled out at two dementia daycare centres, and the outcomes and reactions have been overwhelmingly positive. The programme has since generated plenty of interest from policymakers, care community administrators as well as the general public.

We hope to be able to scale this programme across the

country in the near term. In the mid to long term, we hope to be able to expand the company and bring our programmes across borders.

**HAVE YOU TAPPED INTO ANY OF THE AVAILABLE GOVERNMENT GRANTS AND PROGRAMMES FOR SMES?**

We have been self-sustaining since day one of our operations, so the short answer is no. However, we would definitely welcome any assistance from the government, either in terms of grants, programmes, mentorships or networking opportunities for companies like mine which offer programmes and services that may traditionally not conform to the current status quo.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AN ASPIRING SME OWNER?**

Always start with a plan, but be prepared that things will not always go according to plan!

Perseverance and determination are key traits for any new start-up owner, especially when the product or service you are providing are new and untested in the market.

You must also have passion and belief in what you do. Do not be disheartened with rejections because there will be plenty in this journey as a SME owner. You will learn from these rejections and grow both as a person. Fine-tune your business acumen. Keep the fire in your belly, be brave and see your company soar. ■