

# IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH: THE ARTS, HERITAGE, AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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Quarterly Research Newsletter



## Culture **BYTES**

Dear Readers,

In this issue of Culture Bytes, we explore the relationships between the arts, heritage, and public health. The use of the arts and heritage in supporting public health is rapidly growing around the world, a process in part accelerated by the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic. From displaying artwork created by patients in hospital corridors to art therapy and museum prescriptions, the arts, heritage and health is a diverse, multi-disciplinary field that could potentially transform health and the healthcare experience in a variety of healthcare and community settings.

In *Connecting the Dots: The State of Arts and Health in Singapore*, the authors of this paper examine the rapid development of the arts and health field in Singapore by charting its recent developments, mapping existing arts and health activities, and critically examining the drivers and obstacles to the field's growth. While the field in Singapore is rapidly growing, there remain several areas for further action, including developing arts and health research capacities amongst creative, health and social care practitioners. The development of further research is a concern echoed by the second article in this issue. *Linking public health and heritage work* reports a cross-disciplinary literature review focused on identifying if and how history and heritage have been linked with public health. While popular opinion suggests heritage is valuable in improving public health, evidence for how it does so remains mostly indirect or anecdotal. The author suggests some areas for future interdisciplinary research on heritage and public health and calls on heritage professionals to explore how their goals may align with other disciplines and practices to further research in this field.

Our third and fourth articles present research on two arts-based health interventions: rhythm-centred music making (RMM), and online singing groups for people with dementia. In *Rhythm-centred music making in community living elderly: a randomised pilot study*, the authors seek to quantitatively determine the effects RMM has on the physical, psychological, and social health of the elderly. Finally, the article *Online singing groups for people with dementia: scoping review*, explores a pertinent issue: the benefits, barriers and factors that facilitate moving an arts-based health intervention online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

*From all of us at Culture Academy Singapore*

## RESEARCH

### Study

## Connecting the Dots: The State of Arts and Health in Singapore

By Michael Koon Boon Tan, Chao Min Tan, Soon Guan Tan, Joanne Yoong and Brent Gibbons



Seniors at risk of dementia enjoying an arts and craft session as part of art therapy. Source: asiaone

The use of the arts to support health and well-being is rapidly growing in Singapore and around the world. The "arts and health" field integrates the domains of healthcare, social impact and cultural life through artistic practice and experience in many forms, ranging from creating and appreciating the arts as a form of therapy to the use of the arts for health communication and promotion. This article examines the rapid development of the arts and health field in Singapore by constructing a narrative of its recent developments, mapping existing arts and health activities, and exploring the top-down and bottom-up drivers that have encouraged its growth. It also delves into persistent problems and emerging issues confronting policymakers and practitioners in the field and concludes with several policy recommendations drawn from the authors' analysis as well as stakeholder perspectives. The growth of the arts and health field in Singapore has promoted exchanges between seemingly unrelated sectors and yielded new opportunities for collaboration, resulting in a wide range of new arts and health-related activities. However, there remains much work to be done to bring about a more integrated and sustainable arts and health ecology here.



Find out more

### Study

## Linking Public Health and Heritage Work

By Bryan D. Orthel



Van Gogh Meets: A programme organised by the Van Gogh museum for the vulnerable elderly with physical disabilities or a limited social network. Source: Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

This article reports a cross-disciplinary literature review focused on identifying if and how history and heritage have been linked with public health. Widely varied opinions suggest history, heritage, and historic places are valuable assets for improving the human condition. Yet, evidence for how history and heritage improve human lives remains mostly indirect or anecdotal. Additionally, the vast majority of heritage and preservation literature discuss topics reasonably recognisable as public health issues but do not connect the issues as health related. As such, there remain unexplored and under-explored areas in history, heritage and health. Do the choices that individuals make to protect tangible and intangible things benefit their health? How might heritage work strengthen individual and public health? Heritage professionals should support interdisciplinary efforts to understand how their goals may align with other disciplines and practices. Such efforts will in time lead to research that offers additional evidence supporting the interrelationships between history, heritage and public health.



Find out more

### Study

## Rhythm-centred Music Making in Community Living Elderly: A Randomised Pilot Study

By Angela Frances Yap, Yu Heng Kwan, Chuen Seng Tan, Syed Ibrahim and Seng Bin Ang

A research study supported by the National Arts Council Research and Development Grant



Seniors making music with percussive instruments as a form of musical therapy. Source: iStockphoto.com, kzenon

Rhythm-centred music making (RMM), also known as the active playing of drums and a variety of percussion instruments, has been shown to improve physical, psychological, and social health. This study seeks to quantitatively determine the effects RMM has on the quality of life, depressive symptoms, sleep quality, and the degree of social isolation that the elderly experience. Even though the data collected from this study does not show any significant statistical difference in the quality of life of the participants, the study's results are still indicative of various potentials of RMM. For instance, RMM can be used by professionals in the field of integrative medicine to improve the mental and physical health of the elderly. Further research is warranted and could include qualitative components to investigate the effects of RMM on a larger group of the elderly community.

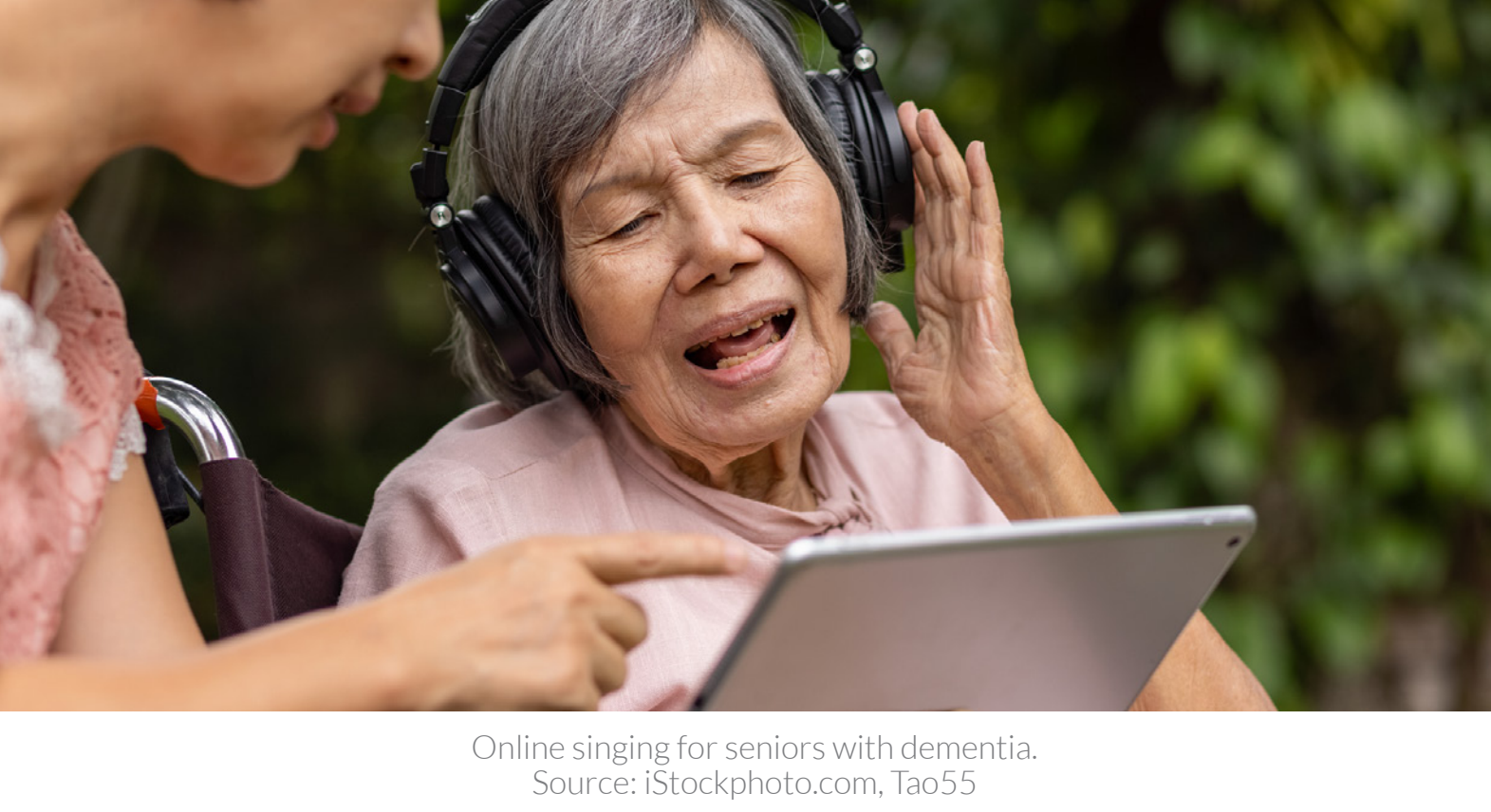


Find out more

### Study

## Online Singing Groups for People With Dementia: Scoping Review

By B. Dowson and J. Schneider



Online singing for seniors with dementia. Source: iStockphoto.com, Tao55

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, people with dementia and their caregivers are contending with serious challenges to their health and wellbeing, due to risk of severe illness, limiting of social contact and disruption to usual activities. Many forms of support for people with dementia and their caregivers, including singing groups, have since moved online using videoconferencing. While the possible benefits of music engagement for people with dementia and their caregivers are known, the translation of the singing group experience into an online videoconferencing format and its impacts constitute a new field with little existing research. This article reviews the literature pertinent to online singing interventions across different disciplines and yields useful insights into the possible benefits, barriers and factors that facilitate implementing online singing groups for people with dementia.



Find out more

## EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

**SINGAPORE WRITERS FESTIVAL**  
4 – 20 NOV 2022

ORGANISED BY ARTS HOUSE LIMITED  
CORRESPONDENT NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL  
SPONSORED BY MCCY

singaporewritersfestival.com  
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### ARTS HOUSE LIMITED *Singapore Writers Festival 2022*

Turn back time, ponder the present and imagine the endless possibilities that the future holds at the Singapore Writers Festival (SWF) 2022. The region's premier multi-lingual literary arts festival celebrates its 25th edition this year from the 4 to 20 November. SWF 2022 invites you to reflect on its legacy and imagine exciting new futures for the provocation of our Festival theme, 'IF'.

Join us at more than 200 programmes over three Festival weekends. There is something for everyone of all ages in this year's exciting line-up that spans immersive experiences, exhibitions, performances, film screenings, meet-the-author sessions and conversations. Gain access to over 280 programmes at SWF 2022 with the purchase of our Festival Pass or SWF Youth Pass.



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