

# Moving Strings

Out with her second studio album, solo violinist JOANNE YEOH sits down with DEMIE TAN and talks about her experiences in triumphing in the music industry

**T**HE IMPRESSIVE talent of Joanne Yeoh is apparent from the moment she glides her bow across the strings of her violin. She executes each note clear and sharp, fingers deftly running up and down the neck of her musical instrument. From the way she stands and how she moves to the beat of the melody with her eyes closed, Yeoh commands a sort of attention that not many performers can attain these days.

"There is something about the violin," she says. "There is a cool factor involved in being able to carry your own little black violin case much like a doctor would his suitcase."

The 36-year-old first picked up the violin at the tender age of eight. As the years passed, she kept on playing, eventually deciding to pursue it as a professional career after her parents brought up the idea. "I guess they had the foresight early on," says Yeoh, who in 1995 after leaving high school, did a twinning program with Middlesex University in the United Kingdom, and obtained her degree in music with first class honours.

Upon completing her degree, Yeoh was awarded a Luther and Ernest Gaunt Scholarship for Strings to study at the University of Leeds. And further proving her mettle, she completed her PhD from Heriot-Watt University with a focus on music and consumer behaviour. The charismatic musician recounts the days when she was a fresh graduate eager for a chance. Agreeing to mostly all sorts of

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opportunities, it wasn't long before the music industry noticed her and that was when the importance of maintaining good reputation became truly vital. "Word of mouth is the most powerful tool to one's longevity in the industry," says Yeoh.

The talented violinist has had a slew of successful performances to date, from her participation in the Aberystwyth Music Festival in Wales to the Edinburgh Summer Festival in Scotland as well as performing alongside Hong Kong superstar Jacky Cheung in his Music Odyssey Tour that covered 40 concerts around the world. All of this had largely influenced her career. "Sincerity in performance is what I strive for," she says.

At present, Yeoh heads the music department at the Universiti Putra Malaysia in addition to her occasional performances at prominent events. She has also released two studio albums. Her latest one titled *After a Dream*, is slowly gaining recognition in the music world.

"I believe talent is given, but if you take it for granted, you can't go far. I used to practise for several hours a day," she says. The most important advice the musician would like to relay to young aspiring talents out there, is to have the courage to dream big because they will never know what the future will have in store for them. "When I was young, my teacher asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I told her I wanted to become a

performer and she advised me to be realistic," she says. Taking a breath, she continues, "But, look where I am now?"

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