

## Dr Uma Rajan



Dr Uma Rajan, also known as the doyenne of dance, has managed to balance her passion for the arts with her day job in public healthcare for more than 40 years.

Dr Rajan graduated from St. Margaret's in 1955. The beautiful, stately and homely school building and the care-free days that she spent there are etched in her memory. She particularly recalls the school tuckshop where she bought her favourite goodies for a mere 10 cents! She also fondly recalls her classmates and her teachers – Mrs Kon, Mrs McFarlene and Principal, Miss Inge, amongst the many others.

She served as Director of the School Health Service and later as Director of the Elder Care Department in the Ministry of Health, playing a key role in establishing school health programmes. Dr Rajan has been recognised as one of the pioneers of Singapore. In February 2014, she was acknowledged at the Istana for her work on school health. Dr Rajan and her team came up with the idea of using health booklets in the early 1980s to track students' health and keep parents updated about their children's medical conditions. Several of her other contributions included planning for health screenings and immunisations in school, and developing the health education curriculum for school children.

In the area of Indian arts and culture, she is a graduate in Indian Classical dance and had been an award-winning lead dancer in many Indian Dance performances. She is also an accomplished singer and has judged various music and dance competitions. She was also the Chairman of the Indian Activities Executive Committee of the Siglap South Community Centre. Dr Rajan has been very active in the local arts, cultural, educational and community sectors. She continues to sit on various national boards, including educational, social and cultural committees.

For her, the work of artists should be as much valued as a doctor's. *"...art is intense, a form of work that requires just as much technical skill as being a doctor or lawyer. For me, it's always been a treatment for health and an avenue to expand our thinking beyond the regular. Which is why I believe art should always be valued - because paying for talent will only make you richer."* (quote extracted from an interview with The Straits Times conducted on 2 November 2015, <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/entertainment/doyenne-of-dance>).