

ASIAN INTERCULTURAL CONFERENCE

Theatre
Wars:
Return of
the Artist



2017
Nov 27–30

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Through the years, Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) has produced exceptional, professional actors, directors and teachers who are in high demand in the performing arts, film and new media sectors.

Based in Singapore, ITI trains artists who want to make original, impactful contemporary theatre.

Founded in 2000 by Singapore's acclaimed theatre practitioners and thought leaders Kuo Pao Kun (1939 – 2002) and T. Sasitharan, ITI is a unique enterprise in theatre training, and social and cultural interaction.

The school is shaped by Pao Kun's vision of intercultural learning that draws from a matrix of traditional theatre systems and modern theatre-making.

We offer a three-year, practice-based, professional actor training programme founded on a rigorous, intercultural learning methodology. The training encompasses exposure to a broad spectrum of cultures and languages, and immersion in traditional Asian theatre systems and contemporary theatre forms. Students are selected in competitive auditions held across Asia and beyond.

Through the years, ITI has produced exceptional, professional actors, directors and teachers who are in high demand in the performing arts, film and new media sectors.

As part of our research work, ITI organises the Asian Intercultural Conference, once every three years, to bring together leading theatre practitioners and academics from the world over to foster shared insights and conversations among peers.

A warm welcome
to the 2017
edition of the
Asian Intercultural
Conference (AIC).

WELCOME

AIC aims to bring together theatre professionals, scholars and academics. The inaugural AIC 2008 ("Theatre Today: Seeking New Paradigms") saw 80 participants from 16 countries engaged in a lively and critical review of contemporary theatre and intercultural work in Asia.

AIC 2014 was the first time we presented the conference in collaboration with Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay. The 2014 conference ("New Intercultural Theatre: Methods, Techniques and Strategies of Making Contemporary Theatre") attracted an even greater attendance, with 127 delegates, speakers, and participants from 22 countries over the four days.

AIC 2017 aims to engage even deeper and further with our presenters, delegates and partners.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Asian Intercultural Conference 2017. Since the inception of ITI, 17 years ago, review, research, documentation, debate and auto-critique of our work, training methods, pedagogies and approaches to theatre making has been a priority. Every three years, AIC affords us a unique opportunity to fulfil our commitment to Intercultural research and to share it with the wider theatre community.

ITI training is predicated on the principle of plurality. It is the *sine qua non* of the Intercultural. There can be no singularity; methods, techniques, cultural influences, disciplines and aesthetics are diverse and numberless; ranging from across the world. There is no dogma, canons can shift and no single script exists in our work. If there is a dominant script, it is being written and overwritten by the demands of contemporary theatre practices and the real-world needs of our students and collaborators.

World Theatre is undergoing rapid and radical change. The theme of this conference, Theatre Wars: Return of the Artist, is only half in jest. Behind the joke lie very real and serious concerns about the survival, agency and autonomy of the artist (the little person) working in an age of unprecedented change and instability.

The international structures of theatre making — in terms of funding (commissions), talent (training), audiences (market) and costs (economics) — are being determined and increasingly dominated by “capitalist interests” or “market forces”. Commercial potential, profitability, marketability and business objectives are the principal criteria driving the creation of new work, influencing every facet — from the commissioning of new work to the determination of duration and quality of rehearsal processes, modes of presentation and means of consumption. These are moving parts and they are moving all the time!

The “late-capitalist” stranglehold on theatre includes most means of production and platforms, from national and international arts festivals and trans-national production circuits to the programming directives of national theatres and major performing arts venues. The force and influence of popular, commercial interests on theatre making and the changes this has wrought on theatre practice are both pervasive

and pitiless, and quite possibly permanent. This may well turn out to be Theatre’s “Death Star”.

In the light of this reality, what can the individual artist do, tactically, strategically or ideologically? How should s/he respond? These are the main questions this four-day conference will try to answer.

Several ancillary questions also arise: How can the artist embrace the churn of change without compromising artistic or creative integrity? What are the best practices in negotiating agreements and opening dialogues with organizers, presenters, artistic directors and curators? Is “resistance” an option still?

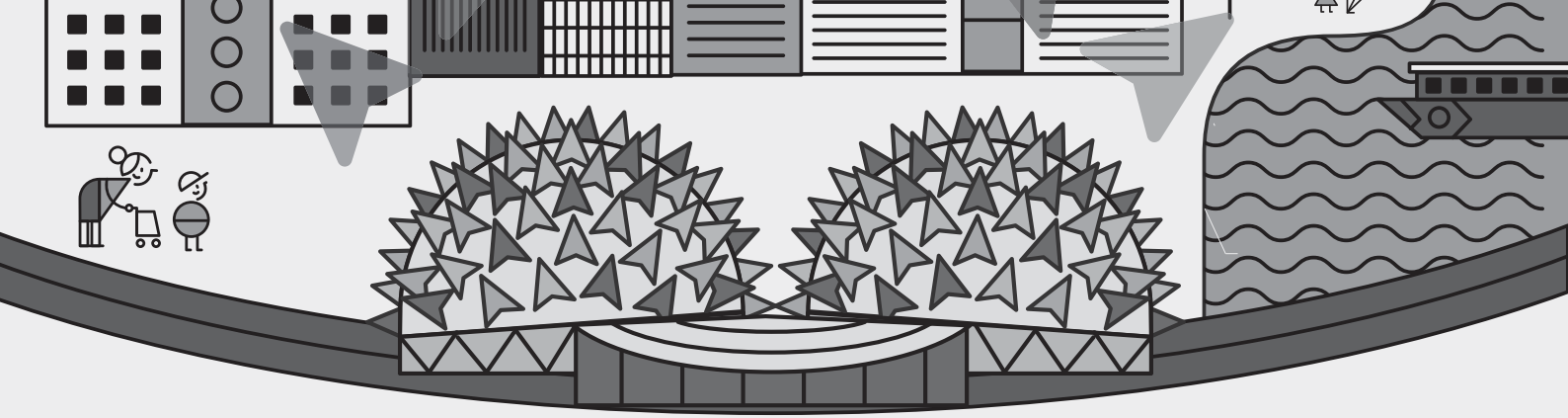
This much we know: There is no art without life. Life is primary and art must serve it. This is an underlying assumption of ITI. Good theatre, worthy theatre, reflects, engages and draws from life. It also gives back to life. Theatre is the collaborative art par excellence. It is impossible for it to be anything other than intercultural. Locally or globally.

Nothing can live and grow in isolation; life is possible only because of the connections we make, and are willing to make, as human beings; to each other, to things and to life itself. Art is possible because, ideologically, we believe in the connectedness, or at the very least in the connectivity, of all ideas, of all things and of all beings through the human imagination. This sensibility is epitomised in Kuo Pao Kun’s notion of the “open culture”:

[Open Culture] contemplates a transcendence of the individual from race and tradition-bound communities to embrace a diverse global community. [It] provides resources for and provokes dynamic interaction.

Open Culture begets open futures.^[1]

[1] Kuo, Pao Kun. (1998). *Contemplating an Open Culture: Transcending Multiracialism*. In Arun, Mahizhnan & Lee, Tsao Yuan (Eds.). Singapore: Re-engineering Success. Singapore: Oxford University Press."



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Dear participants,

Welcome back to the third edition of the Asian Intercultural Conference.

The role of intercultural practice in the arts has become increasingly urgent in today's divided world, where the ability to empathise, understand, communicate and work across cultures is so relevant yet seemingly challenged. The arts has always been that safe space for both differences and shared ideals to meet. This triennial platform is therefore a precious opportunity for the theatre community in Asia to gather, share and learn about each other's artistic practice.

Esplanade is pleased to come on board once again as a partner to co-present this series of talks, dialogues, workshops and presentations by esteemed artists and educators brought together by the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) for this conference.

Founded by Kuo Pao Kun and T. Sasitharan in 2000, ITI has been committed in challenging its students to deepen their practice through intercultural engagement. It has, over the years, taken on an active role to also support, influence and seed new dialogues within the theatre community. This conference is testament to the resource that ITI has become for the arts community, both locally and internationally. As Singapore's national performing arts centre, we share ITI's belief in nurturing our next generation of practitioners, and the importance of embracing the cultural diversity.

I hope that these four days will bring you conversations and exchanges that leave you inspired.

The role of intercultural practice in the arts has become increasingly urgent in today's divided world, where the ability to empathise, understand, communicate and work across cultures is so relevant yet seemingly challenged.

DAY 1

27 NOV

DAY 2

28 NOV

SCHEDULE

2:00PM	Registration
2:30PM	Welcome & Opening remarks T. Sasitharan
3:00PM	Keynote 1: C. J. W.-L. Wee (Singapore) Contemporary Art, the Modern and Historicity
4:00PM	Break
4:30PM	Keynote 2: Tadashi Uchino (Japan) “Mobilize” or Else: Revisiting and Updating Interculturalism
5:30PM	Closing Remarks T. Sasitharan
5:45PM	End

9:00AM	Work Demo 1: Alberto Ruiz Lopez (Mexico/ Singapore) Beyond “Actoral Calligraphy”
10:30AM	Break
11:00AM	Work Demo 2: Andy Ng (Hong Kong) From Form to Formless : Constructing a Conscious Mind
12:30PM	Break
2:30PM	Work Presentation 1: Abhilash Pillai (India) Revaluing Identities - National, Regional and the Global
4:00PM	Break
4:30PM	Panel Discussion 1: Keynotes, Demos & Presentation of the day + Q&A Moderator: Clarissa Oon (Singapore)
6:30PM	End

DAY 3

29 NOV

DAY 4

30 NOV

9:00AM	Work Demo 3: Themis Lin Pei-Ann / Chongtham Jayanta Meetei (Taiwan/India) Theatre of Essence
10:30AM	Break
11:00AM	Work Demo 4: Nelson Chia (Singapore) What Are You Working On?: The NYT Actors' Work
12:30PM	Break
2:30PM	Work Presentation 3: Seng Soo Ming (Malaysia) Deconstruct and Reimagine
4:00PM	Break
4:30PM	Panel Discussion 2: Keynotes, Demos & Presentation of the day + Q&A Moderator: Noorlinah Mohamed (Singapore)
6:30PM	End

9:00AM	Work Demo 5: Frances Barbe (Australia) The Difference Butoh Makes: Skills and Creativity Training for the Contemporary Actor-Creator
10:30AM	Break
11:00AM	Work Demo 6: Li Xie (Singapore) To Gather. Together.
12:30PM	Break
2:30PM	Work Presentation 2: Gopalan Nair Venu / Kapila Venu (India) Connecting the Five Senses in the Actor Training of Theatre
4:00PM	Break
4:30PM	Panel Discussion 3: Keynotes, Demos & Presentation of the day + Q&A Moderator: Natalie Hennedige (Singapore)
6:30PM	End



C. J. W.-L. Wee

SINGAPORE

School of Humanities,
Nanyang Technological University

C. J. W.-L. Wee is Professor of English in the School of Humanities in the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He gained his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, and has also been a Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (now the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute), Singapore.

He has held Visiting Fellowships at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, India; the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University; the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University; and at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Cambridge University. Wee has also held a Short-Term Residency at the Franklin Humanities Institute in Duke University, USA.

His current research examines the formation of and the relationship between contemporary visual art and art exhibitions, theatre, film, literature and urban culture in Singapore and in the larger region. He focusses particularly on the connection between rapid economic development in its "globalised" phase and the cultural-artistic sphere.

Wee's earlier work considered the relationship between national cultural identity in England and the colonial territories of its empire in the 19th and 20th centuries, and has worked on state culture in Singapore. He is the author of *Culture, Empire*, and the question of *Being Modern* (2003) and *The Asian Modern: Culture, Capitalist Development, Singapore* (2007). He is also the editor of *The Complete Works of Kuo Pao Kun, Vol.4: Plays in English* (2012), and the co-editor of *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research* (2010).

Tadashi Uchino

JAPAN

Performance Studies,
Intercultural Studies,
Gakushin Women's
College



Uchino received his MA in American Literature (1984) and Ph.D. in Performance Studies (2001), both from the University of Tokyo. He was a professor of Performance Studies at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (1992-2017) and is currently a professor of Performance Studies at the Department of Japanese Studies, Faculty of Intercultural Studies, Gakushuin Women's College.

Uchino is a leading performance studies scholar, whose border-crossing between Japan and the US, Japan and Europe, and Japan and other parts of Asia, including India, has been critically acclaimed in various interdisciplinary quarters of academics, artists and activists.

His publication includes *The Melodramatic Revenge: Theatre of the Private in the 1980s* (in Japanese, Tokyo: Keiso Publishing, 1996), *From Melodrama to Performance: The Twentieth Century American Theatre* (in Japanese, Tokyo: U. of Tokyo P, 2001), *Crucible Bodies: Postwar Japanese Performance from Brecht to the New Millennium* (2009, London: Seagull Books) and *The Location of J Theatre: Towards Transnational Mobilities* (in Japanese, 2016, U of Tokyo Press).

Twice a recipient of the Fulbright Grant (1986-7, 97-8), Uchino has served in many Japanese academic societies, and is currently a board member for the Society of Studies of Culture and Representation (06-). He was a contributing editor for *TDR* (1998-2013) and is currently an editor for *Dance Research Journal* of Korea. His expertise is widely recognised in performance communities and he is a member of the board of directors for Kanagawa Arts Foundation, the Saison Foundation and Arts Council Tokyo, and is a member of the selection committee for Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize and of ZUNI Icosahedron's Artistic Advisory Committee.



Alberto Ruiz Lopez

MEXICO/SINGAPORE

Head of Acting, ITI
(Singapore)

Alberto Ruiz Lopez has been a teacher of various modules such as Acting, Movement, Graham's Technique and Theatre Language for Dancers since 1990. He is also a certified Kundalini Yoga teacher.

A theatre practitioner who has directed and acted, he was also a former Director of the Company of Theatre from Jalisco. Beto has performed in productions such as *HamletMachine*, *Attempts On Her Life* and Kuo Pao Kun's *The Spirits Play*. In 2015, Beto performed in *R vs J*, a solo piece in Mexico.

As a director, he has helmed operas – Verdi's *La Traviata* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and led plays such as Dario Fo's *Un Dia Cualquiera* and Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu*. His work extends beyond his home country of Mexico to Poland, Texas, USA, Argentina, and Colombia.

A multiple award-winning recipient, Beto is a 2008 graduate of Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), then known as Theatre Training and Research Programme (TTRP). Beto also holds a Bachelor of Performing Arts from the University of Guadalajara, Mexico, as well as a Diploma in Pedagogy for Acting.

Andy Ng

HONG KONG

Actor, Director, and
Artistic Director &
Chief Researcher,
Acting Research Centre,
(Hong Kong)"

Andy is an acclaimed actor who was lauded for his role in Tang Shu-wing's *Titus Andronicus* (2012) that played in the Globe Theatre for the World Shakespeare Festival.

In 2009, he performed in the inaugural play, Kuo Pao Kun's *The Spirits Play*, of the Traditions & Editions Theatre Circus, a theatre collective established by ITI alumni, as well as facilitated Creative Lab, a presentation of eight solo works that were the responses by eight artists to the play. *The Spirits Play* went on to the 12th Bharat Rang Mahotsav, a major theatre festival in India, after opening in Singapore. He has created works such as *Whisper of Love* presented by Unlock Dancing Plaza in Hong Kong and *Ending the World* commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Festival 2006.



He has also spent time in Taipei for a cultural exchange project involving On & On Theatre (Hong Kong), Shakespeare's Wild Sisters (Taiwan) and a Japanese company, each creating a new work based on a different section of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

From 2010 to 2013, Andy was a lecturer at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts from 2010 to 2013.

Aside from his ITI qualifications, Andy also holds a Master of Arts in East/West Theatre Studies from Middlesex University, U.K.

He is currently Artistic Director & Chief Researcher of Acting Research Centre in Hong Kong and a freelance actor, director and acting teacher of "Psychophysical Acting Training".

Frances is a director, choreographer and performer who has worked all over the world. Her training combines western dance and theatre with contemporary Japanese approaches including butoh dance and Suzuki's actor-training. She is Senior Lecturer at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in Perth where she runs the Bachelor of Performing Arts course.

Her recent work includes *Exquisite*, a movement-based performance work created with Chinese dancer, Min Zhu and dancer-actor Brian Lucas. The work evolved from a close collaborative team of creatives including designer Rachel Konyi, dramaturge Kathryn Kelly and composer Mace Francis. In 2016 she directed *The Astronaut* at The Blue Room Theatre and created a site-specific work for a winery commissioned by Remnant.

From 1996 to 2011, she was based in the UK and Europe where she toured with Tadashi Endo's Butoh Mamu Dance Theatre and established her own company, Fran Barbe Dance Theatre. She was a research fellow, then lecturer, at University of Kent in the UK where she completed her PhD "*The Difference Butoh Makes*". She was artistic director of two international butoh festivals in London in 2005 and 2009. She ran Theatre Training Initiative in London from 2000 until 2010.

She runs a study tour for WAAPA students each year allowing a small group of selected students to visit ITI for 10 weeks of training and is cultivating a research hub at WAAPA, Edith Cowan University, around performer training and intercultural practice.

Frances Barbe

AUSTRALIA

Director, Choreographer
and Performer



Photo: Stephen Heath



Li Xie

SINGAPORE

Freelance Theatre
Practitioner

Li Xie performs, writes, directs and teaches Russian Director Vsevolod Meyerhold's Biomechanics in LASALLE College of the Arts and SOTA (School Of The Arts Singapore).

She has undergone training from Odin Teatret, Biomechanics by Gennadi Bogdanov (Russia), Alexander Technique by Niamh Dowling (UK), Commedia Dell'arte by Antonio Fava (Italy) and Theatre of the Oppressed workshops by Headlines Theatre (Canada), and mask making from Donato Sartori (Italy).

In 2012, Li Xie set up SOBX - School of Biomechanics for Theatre. After 11 years of research, teaching and revising the system by incorporating "Heart Sutra", she brought her unique actor training to Taiwan in 2013 for the first time.

Her works include *The VaginaLogue*, *Little White Sailing Boat*, *House of Sins* and mockumentary newspaper theatre *NewsBusters!*. In 2011, she collaborated with the renowned Hong Kong Experimental Theatre Zuni Icosahedron to stage *Hundred Years of Solitude* in Hong Kong and at the Singapore Arts Festival.

Formerly associate artistic director of Drama Box (Singapore) for community theatre, Li Xie has worked with youth, women, elderly, and prisoners from Singapore Selarang Drug Rehabilitation Centre. She has also directed, written and facilitated forum theatre pieces dealing with issues such as SARS, AIDS, domestic violence, discrimination, palliative care, immigrants and problem gambling.

She was the recipient of the Young Artist Award conferred by the National Arts Council of Singapore in 2005 and won the "Best Director" accolade in The Straits Times Life! Theatre Award 2009.

In 2014, she was invited to conceptualise a site-specific mystery theatre *BODY X* for the Singapore Writers Festival. Her immersive and participatory community performance *The Lesson* (Singapore International Festival of the Arts 2016) was nominated for "Best Director" and "Production of the Year" in The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. In 2016, *The Lesson* toured to Taiwan.

Nelson Chia

SINGAPORE

Artistic Director, Nine Years Theatre



Nelson is an actor, director and theatre educator. For more than two decades, he has been performing in English and Mandarin productions, taking on major and leading roles. He has directed 26 major productions and was the first local artist to be commissioned for three years consecutively by the Esplanade to present at the Huayi Chinese Festival of Arts. He is a two-time winner of both the “Best Actor” (2011 and 2013) and “Best Director” (2014 and 2015) categories at The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards.

In 2012, Nelson co-founded Nine Years Theatre (NYT) with his wife Mia Chee. Within a few years, NYT has grown to become one of the key players in the scene. Through his direction, the company has not only managed to revive an interest in production of classics within the Mandarin theatre audiences, but has also raised an awareness of training among the acting community.

In 2013, he created the NYT Ensemble with an aim to establish a company of ensemble actors who train regularly, in a systematic way, and create together over an extended period of time. To date, NYT Ensemble is the only actor ensemble of this nature in Singapore.

Themis Lin Pei-Ann & Chongtham Jayanta Meetei

TAIWAN/INDIA

Photo: Shao-Wei Chen



Co-founders, EX-Theatre Asia

Themis and Jayanta are co-founders of EX-Theatre Asia, based in Miaoli, Taiwan. The company aims to explore a multi-cultural dialogue in theatrical expression and to establish a neo-classical performance style.

A graduate of ITI, Themis has varied performance experience. In 2004, she performed in *Butterflies* at the Singapore Arts Festival, and in *Princess Cina* at Indonesian Dance Festival in Jakarta and Solo, Indonesia. She also performed *Day I Met the Prince* at Asia Contemporary Theatre Festival in Shanghai in 2006 and *Silk Road* at the 2007 International Ulker Puppet Festival, Istanbul.

She has worked with PARC (Japan Center, Pacific Basin Arts Communication) in a multi-language project, *Shichinin Misaki*, presented at the Poly-National Arts Carnival 2004 and 2006 in Yokohama, Kanazawa and Kyoto. In 2009, she acted in Kuo Pao Kun's *The Spirits Play*, for the Traditions & Editions Theatre Circus, a theatre company collectively established by ITI alumni.

The Spirits Play went on to the 12th Bharat Rang Mahotsav, a major theatre festival in India, after opening in Singapore. Having participated in numerous transnational and multilingual productions and communicational projects in various Asian countries, she senses the immediacy for creating a platform to bring artists from different cultural backgrounds together to exchange and explore a new theatrical language.

Born in Manipur, India, Chongtham Jayanta Meetei grew up surrounded by various physical cultures such as traditional dance, martial art, and yoga. Graduating from National School of Drama, New Delhi, with a major in acting, he later went on to Taiwan, to continue exploring a theatre style beyond the language barrier to touch the soul. Jayanta aims to utilise his training in both traditional and modern acting to transform Asian classics, Western realism, and post-modern physical theatre into his own unique contemporary theatrical aesthetics.



Gopalan Nair Venu & Kapila Venu INDIA

Kutiyattam master
teachers

Abhilash Pillai INDIA

Associate Professor,
National School
of Drama, New Delhi



Abhilash Pillai (Dr.), present associate professor at the National School of Drama (NSD) in New Delhi, has had a wide and varied career in theatre.

He has directed plays in different countries in various languages, contributed articles on theatre in leading publications, participated in seminars, and conducted workshops in India and abroad. Abhilash's productions draw on a wide array of materials but are presented in a contemporary aesthetic style.

Abhilash's productions draw on a wide array of materials but are presented in a contemporary aesthetic style. He has been involved in several collaborations both international and national as director and has initiated the first ever collaboration in India connecting NSD and the Grand Circus, Kerala, culminating in *Clowns & Clouds*, which he directed.

Abhilash has been chief technical coordinator of Bharat Rang Mahotsav (annual, premiere theatre festival of India) from 2008 to 2013 and curator/artistic director for theatre festivals in Kerala from 2009 onwards. He has authored the biography, *C.N. Sreekantan Nair — A Vision and Mission of a Theatre Activist* (2007) published by the Central Sahitya Akademi. A visiting faculty and board member in multiple universities, Abhilash initiated the inaugural student exchange programme between Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), London and NSD when he was dean at the latter institution (2008–2011).

Abhilash holds a Ph.D. from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; a diploma in theatre production and stage management from RADA, London; a postgraduate diploma in design and direction from NSD; and a graduate degree in theatre arts from Calicut University, Kerala. He is a recipient of various honour awards, including the Sanskriti Award (2002–03) and Kerala Sangeet Natak Award (2012) for his achievements in the field of theatre.

Gopalan Venu is a performer, teacher and scholar of Kutiyattam (Sanskrit theatre) and a senior disciple of Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar. He is also the founder of Natanakairali (Research and Performing Centre for Traditional Arts) and co-founder of Ammannur Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam (Training Centre for Kutiyattam).

His major contributions are his adaptations of Mahakavi Kalidasa's plays *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* and *Vikramorvaseeyam*, and Bhasa's plays *Uruhangam* and *Dutavakyam* for Kutiyattam. He has authored 16 books on the performing arts of Kerala, including *Production of a Play in Kutiyattam* (1989), *Into the World of Kutiyattam*, *Kathakali*, *Kutiyattam and other Performing Arts* (2005) and *Language of Kathakali* (2000).

At the Abhinayakalari (Acting Laboratory) established in 2000, he has developed a training methodology for "Navarasa Sadhana" which is the systematic and daily practice of the nine basic emotions by actors with the aim of strengthening their capacities for producing the aesthetic experience of Kutiyattam. Venu is also a visiting master teacher of Kutiyattam at the National School of Drama in Delhi, Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune as well as at ITI in Singapore. Venu has been selected for several honours and awards, which include Kerala Sahitya Academy Award, Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award, Kerala Kalamandalam Award, Painkulam Rama Chakyar Smaraka Puraskaram and the prestigious Nikkei Asia Prize for Culture (Japan).

Kapila Venu is a devoted practitioner of Kutiyattam from Kerala in India. A gifted performer honed by years of training under the doyen of Kutiyattam, the late Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar and her father, Kutiyattam exponent, G Venu; among other noted Gurus. Kapila approaches her practice by maintaining the purity of the technique and aesthetics of the art form, whilst constantly trying to transcend the limitations of the traditional practice by breathing contemporary relevance into it. She has been performing Kutiyattam and Nangiar Koothu, both as a solo performer and together with the ensembles at Natanakairali and Ammannur Gurukulam, across the world since 1997. Kapila has also been part of artistic collaborations with several renowned artistes from around the world including Min Tanaka (Japan), Wally Cardona (USA), Peter Oskarson (Sweden), Hanna Tuulikki (Scotland). She is a teacher of Kutiyattam at National School of Drama, New Delhi and at ITI, Singapore. She is also a staff artiste and teacher at the Ammannur Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam, and a director at Natanakairali – Research, Training and Performing Centre for Traditional Arts.



Seng Soo Ming MALAYSIA

Artistic Director,
PitAPat Theatre

Seng Soo Ming is an actor, director and theatre educator based in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. After graduating from the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), he collaborated with acclaimed Taiwanese director, Stan Lai in his play, *The Village* (2008), which toured the US, China, Singapore and Taiwan with over 200 performances. He was a member of Traditions and Edition Theatre Circus (an international theatre company formed by the graduates of ITI from different countries.) In 2012, Soo Ming founded PITaPAT Theatre in Kota Kinabalu, as a base to develop theatre arts in Sabah and discover methods of theatre creation that combine traditional theatre elements with contemporary theatre methods - an approach and response to the training gleaned from ITI.

Soo Ming's recent works includes *Die Die Tak Bayar*, *Merah*, *An Enemy Of The People*. *At the Moment* (2015 & 2016) and *KAKAK* (2016, 2017). *An Enemy Of The People*. *At the Moment* has been performed (in its third version) in Taipei in Tua-Tiu-Tian International Festival of Arts (TTTIFA); its second version won four awards in Kuala Lumpur's 14th ADA Drama Awards (2017) including those for "Best Director" and "Best Actress".



Photo: Line2015

Clarissa Oon SINGAPORE

Arts Writer and Editor

Clarissa Oon is an arts writer and editor from Singapore. She is currently head of communications and content at Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, where she is developing Esplanade Learn (www.esplanade.com/learn), a features and education site on the performing arts. Her columns and reviews have appeared in *The Straits Times*, *ArtReview Asia* and *s/pores*, and she is the author of *Theatre Life!* (2001), a book on the history of Singapore's English-language theatre. She was previously a journalist with *The Straits Times*, holding various positions from Beijing-based China correspondent to arts editor. Clarissa holds a Masters with Distinction in Media and Communications from Goldsmiths College, London, and a First Class Honours in English Literature from the National University of Singapore.

Natalie Hennedige SINGAPORE

Artistic Director,
Cake Theatrical Productions

Natalie Hennedige is the Artistic Director of Cake Theatrical Productions, a contemporary performance company based in Singapore. A recipient of the National Arts Council Young Artist Award in 2007 and the JCCI Singapore Foundation Culture Award in 2010, Natalie conceptualises, writes and directs works in theatre and other media. Constantly collaborating with artists from across disciplines such as visual arts, film and video, performance art and dance, Natalie engineers contemporary works that are artistically adventurous and that defy classification, playing at conventional performance venues, unusual spaces of creative experimentation and in public spaces to create performance-based experiences.



Photo: Cake Theatrical

Noorlinah Mohamed SINGAPORE

Actress and
Creative Producer



Photo: Jeannie Ho

Noorlinah Mohamed is an award-winning theatre actress who is also a teaching artist, and creative producer of community and public arts engagement projects in Singapore.

Since 1988, she has performed with various Singapore theatre companies. Internationally, she has performed in Asia, Europe and in the US. As a teaching artist, she undertakes artist residencies in schools, develops curriculum as well as professional development for teaching artists and teachers in arts pedagogy. Her other passion — community and public engagement — sees her collaborating with various artists and organisations.

Noorlinah is also a recipient of several awards, including the JCCI Cultural Award (2008) and the Women's Weekly Women of our Time Award (2005) for her work in the arts. Having completed her Ph.D. in Arts Education in 2013, Noorlinah now includes arts research as part of her work, focusing on theatre artists' teaching practices and professional development as well as arts policy and partnership for community development and education. From 2014–2017, Noorlinah helmed The O.P.E.N., the pre-festival of ideas and public engagement initiative of the Singapore International Festival of Arts.

Contemporary Art, the Modern and Historicity

by C.J. W.-L. Wee (Singapore)

What is the place of contemporary art forms from the 1980s within the present global dispensation? The cultural critic, Fredric Jameson, has commented that the 1980s “seem to mark the end of the modern in all kinds of ways, from communications technologies and industry all the way to forms of art”.

Do all forms of contemporary art inevitably embody this “end of temporality” that, Jameson argues, is endemic to a general condition of postmodernity? This presentation will suggest that the contemporary of contemporary art in our region is less a period style, and more differing artistic responses in various (though linked) contexts of desired economic growth to the end of temporality as a situation.

Examined through the theatre practices of acclaimed theatre-makers, Singapore’s Kuo Pao Kun (1939–2002) and Malaysia’s Krishen Jit (1939–2005), and concludes with consideration of the intercultural theatre of Ong Keng Sen (b.1964).

“Mobilize” or Else: Revisiting and Updating Interculturalism

by Tadashi Uchino (Japan)

Both information and capital move in a blink, paying no attention to national borders. To say so would understandably be taken as a cliché, but it is becoming clear that not only information and capital but also artists, like globalising postcolonial entrepreneurs before them, have started to move, paying no attention to national borders. Is this something positive? Or something we reluctantly accept after the fact? Uchino refers to intercultural performance projects, discussing some vital issues emerging around the notion of interculturalism that has to be revisited and updated in this age of enhanced sense of mobility.

**Beyond “Actoral
Calligraphy”**by Alberto Ruiz Lopez (Mexico/
Singapore)

In a world that presents an irregular, discontinuous and diverse reality, it becomes necessary for an artist to not only dominate the “acting calligraphy”, but to be interested in the content of what “writes on the scene.” It means not only conforming to the mastery of technique, but also generating an artistic process that faces reality; an artist who takes the spectator (audience) not only to the enjoyment of the beauty, but also stimulates the freedom of his imagination.

It is an artistic process that is not only focused on the individual skills of the artist but encourages “why not” - a collective process recognising the power of reception of the spectator (audience) in order for the theatrical phenomenon to occur, without trying to impose labels or hegemonic categories.

**From Form to Formless:
Constructing a
Conscious Mind**

by Andy Ng (Hong Kong)

What does physical form mean to an actor? It presents as a skill, yet it also imposes a physical limitation on the actor.

What does a theatrical idea mean to an actor? It presents as an aesthetic and skillful demand, yet it also easily demarcates him from experiencing alternative. Traditional theatrical forms have their own cultural reasons; modern acting training underlines the same meaning, only that it is shaped by the pursuance of a director or directors.

Is it possible for actor training to be done by an actor him/herself? If so, what does the training means to the actor?

Reflecting on his personal training at Theatre Training and Research Practice (ITI's former name), Andy seeks to explain what formal training means to a person and to show the relationship between the conscious mind, the doing, and the multi-self of an actor.

**Revaluing Identities -
National, Regional and
the Globalt**

by Abhilash Pillai (India)

Though working for a national institution and play-directing or theatre-making for different institutions and companies, Abhilash is also seen within a visuality of a regional Kerala locale. As he works to evolve a visual language with actors and designers through exercises and improvisations — trying to define a methodology for visual language — this process has also raised the question: if scenography has a process in place similar to acting ones. Are these processes also institutionalised? How much space do we give to the student's ideas or historical forces, which shape our own conception of spatiality? Through this presentation session, Abhilash will attempt to re-value his practice-research with a strong critical perspective and examine it as a representative example which captures anomalies and contradictions as well, raises questions of a visual language in a global context.

Theatre of Essence

by Themis Lin Pei-Ann and
Chongtham Jayanta Meetei
(Taiwan/India)

The nature of this work is to share the process in the making of a performer — in relation to his/her emotions and muscles within the human body. The methodology for this demonstration will be deeply inspired by Bharata's *Natya Shastra* and other common performance techniques of Asian traditions. Almost all the Asian performance traditions use repetition of movement of muscles as training to achieve a sense of belief, which essentially leads to a level of deep reflective thought and contemplation. This cogitation frees a performer to explore, improvise, and develop the form/style of performance.

In this session, a brief demo on how to control muscles and emotions in relation to breathing will be shared. We will be indicating a breathing technique inspired from yoga and emotions explored through the Rasa theory in *Natya Shastra*. Only when a performer realises and understands their breathing that s/he starts sensing her/his presence. The realisation of breathing makes the body muscles gain a deeper link of emotions. Through the repetition of breathing, we generate different emotions with the same intensities; we will show how to achieve control of mind, soul, and body on stage.

What Are You Working On? : The NYT Actors' Work

by Nelson Chia (Singapore)

"What are you working on?" This is a question that surfaces most frequently in Nine Years Theatre's long-term practice and research on actor training. It suggests the need to articulate precisely the work that is being done by the actor at a given moment. Through the years, this research has revealed to us various ideas and aspects of performance that an actor can practise in order to achieve clarity on stage. Since 2016, we have begun to consolidate and develop these findings into what we call the NYT Actors' Work. This session will be a brief introduction to some of these works, including a focus on the work on Fiction.

Deconstruct and Reimagine

by Seng Soo Ming (Malaysia)

Deconstruct the classics, reimagine the reality – this is the basic premise of the works of PITaPAT Theatre at this stage of practice. The meeting of classics and reality creates conflict, from the emergence of different times, cultures, and languages. Hence, it leads to the necessity of creating new forms of staging and acting to drive it. At the same time, it liberates the interpretation and creative approaches upon both classics and reality, and the actors regain the power of creating and responding to classic plays according to their own experience.

Insights and explanations will be drawn from PITaPAT's recent works, *An Enemy of the People*. *At the Moment* and *Kakak*.

The Difference Butoh Makes: Skills and Creativity Training for the Contemporary Actor-Creator

by Frances Barbe (Australia)

This work-demonstration explores butoh-inspired structures for improvisation intended to assist performers in skills training and creative processes. It presents exercises as opportunities for self-observation and the chance to expand range. It also considers butoh's potential for uncovering the complexity of the interaction at the heart of theatre and performance between a performer's inner-world, their chosen outer-form and their spectator's meaning-making mechanism.

What does it mean to be "convincing" or "authentic" in performance, particularly in heightened and non-naturalistic work?

What does butoh, which arose from dance-trained pioneers, have to offer the contemporary theatre actor in terms of psycho-physical skills and creativity?

To Gather. Together.

by Li Xie (Singapore)

In the face of rapid changes, individualism and uncertainties, how do we gather as a community? How do we create collectively and disagree respectfully?

How do we as artists, relinquish control and let the audience decide their theatre, as we stand with them?

This interactive work demo will illustrate the process and flexible adaptation of *The Lesson* — an immersive and participatory social performance (first presented by Drama Box at Singapore International Festival of the Arts 2016). Created by Li Xie and team, *The Lesson* has since toured Taiwan and Rotterdam.

Connecting the Five Senses in the Actor Training of Theatre

by Gopalan Nair Venu and
Kapila Venu (India)

"The objects of your 'inner attention' are scattered through the whole range of your five senses" — says Konstantin Stanislavsky in his treatise *An Actor Prepares*. The assimilation through the five senses in acting has been a unique aspect of the training methodology that was followed in Kerala, especially at the Kodungallur Kalari; that it had not been mentioned in *Natya Sastra* makes it more exceptional. However, *Balaramabharatham*, the treatise on dance composed by Maharaja Kartika Tirunal Balaramavarma contains references to the association between acting and the five senses.

We review an acting exercise connecting the five senses developed by us at Natanakairali based on all the available documents for the teaching method of Navarasa Sadhana.

For the last decade, the Abhinaya Kalari of Natanakairali at Irinjalakuda had been witnessing the efforts to introduce the Navarasa Sadhana as a mandatory part of the actors' daily practice/training. Many dancers and actors from various fields of performance working within both India and abroad have already been imparted the primary training in this system. Efforts are continuing on this work.

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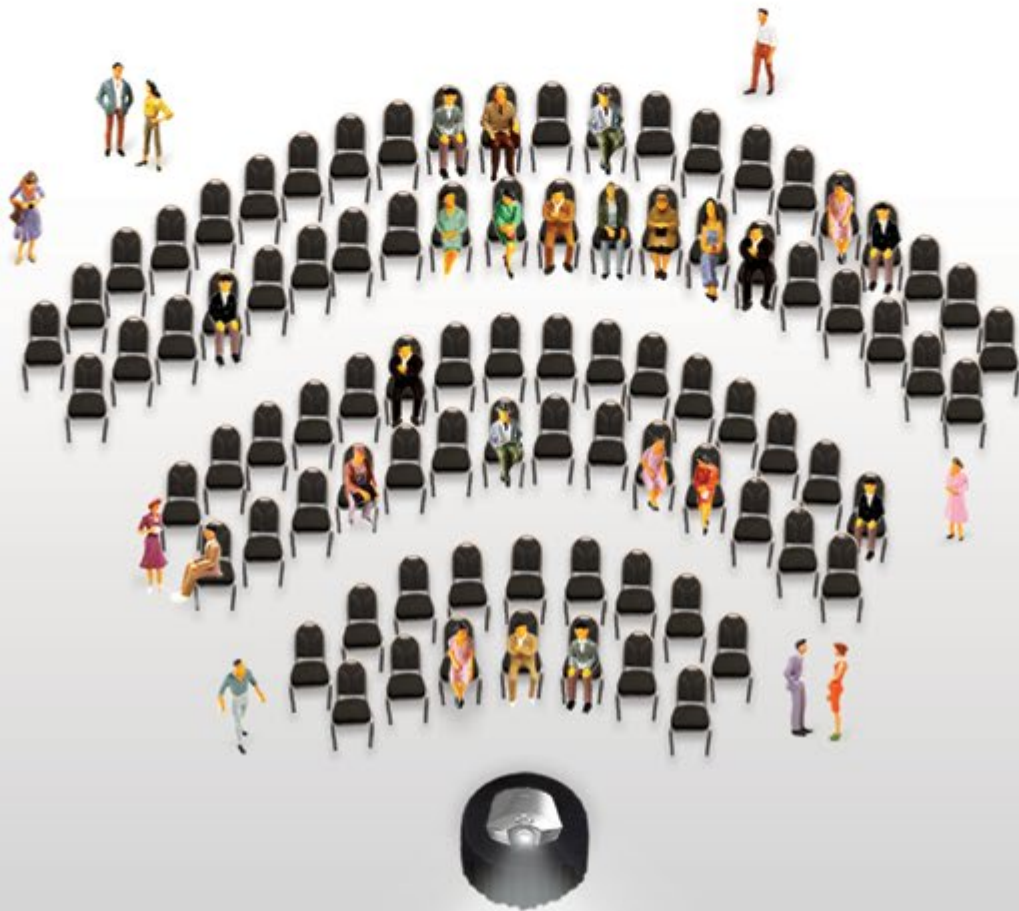
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