



# Preparing to Act

History and Heritage  
as Resource

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27–29 Nov 2023

Esplanade Annexe Studio

Presented by  
**Intercultural Theatre Institute**

In collaboration with  
**Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay**

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## About AIC

Every three years, Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) organises the Asian Intercultural Conference (AIC) — an international gathering of theatre professionals, scholars and academics.

After a brief hiatus due to Covid-19, we are delighted that this year the 2023 Conference returns with the theme **Preparing to Act: History and Heritage as Resource**, presented once again in collaboration with Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

The theme opens up a range of discourses and initiates dialogue among actors, performers, theatre-makers, transdisciplinary artists, academics, and festival organisers. The aim is to explore specific methods, techniques, knowledge systems and technologies drawn from the diverse histories and heritages of world theatre. What can we learn from these practices, traditions and lineages that can be repurposed for the here and now? What needs to be unlearned, re-formed or re-presented for the contemporary stages of the world?

## About ITI

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 education.

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.

# LINKS TO AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

CLICK or SCAN the QR codes to access Slido interaction pages for:

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**Keynote 1 by Dr Frances Barbe**  
– Q&A:

<http://tiny.cc/aicslidokeynote1>



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**Keynote 2 by Sankar Venkateswaran**  
– Q&A:

<http://tiny.cc/aicslidokeynote2>



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**Special Talk by Dr Giorgia Ciampi Tsolaki**  
– Q&A:

<http://tiny.cc/aicslidotalk>



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**Panel Discussion**  
**Day 1, Monday, 27 Nov:**

<http://tiny.cc/aicslidopanel1>



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**Panel Discussion**  
**Day 2, Tuesday, 28 Nov:**

<http://tiny.cc/aicslidopanel2>



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**Panel Discussion**  
**Day 3, Wednesday, 29 Nov:**

<http://tiny.cc/aicslidopanel3>



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**DAY 1 / MONDAY, 27 NOV**

8:30 AM

**Registration**

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM

**Opening Performance by ITI Year 2 Students**

9:30 AM – 9:45 AM

**Welcome Address** by T. Sasitharan, ITI Director

9:45 AM – 11:15 AM

**Keynote 1:**  
**Steppingstones: Retracing the Journey to Now**  
by Dr Frances Barbe (Australia)  
*(followed by Q&A session)*

11:15 AM – 12:45 PM

**Keynote 2:**  
**Choreography's Unconscious: Body's Dance with Power**  
by Sankar Venkateswaran (India)  
*(followed by Q&A session)*

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*— Lunch break —*

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

**Work Demo 1:**  
**An Etude in Silence & After the Silence**  
by Sankar Venkateswaran (India)

3:45 PM – 5:15 PM

**Work Presentation 1:**  
**A Puppeteer Prepares: Contemporizing Traditional Practices in Puppetry**  
The Finger Players (Singapore)  
Presented by Oliver Chong, Artistic Director

5:30 PM – 6:45 PM

**Panel Discussion 1:**  
Moderator: Sonia Kwek (Singapore)

6:45 PM

**Reception**

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**DAY 2 / TUESDAY, 28 NOV**

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8:30 AM**Registration**

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9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

**Work Demo 2:**  
**The Vibrated Self**  
by Andy Ng Wai-shek (Singapore/Hong Kong)

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10:45 AM – 12:15 PM

**Work Demo 3:**  
**Alam as Inspirasi (Nature as Inspiration)**  
by Dr Noramin Farid (Singapore)

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— Lunch break —

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1:45 PM – 3:15 PM

**Work Presentation 2:**  
**Soulful Synthesis: Weaving Language, Literature  
and Technology**  
AGAM Theatre Lab (Singapore)  
Presented by Subramanian Ganesh, Founder

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3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

**Panel Discussion 2**  
Moderator: Sonia Kwek (Singapore)

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5:15 PM – 6:45 PM

**Special Talk**  
**“Mixing the Ingredients” and “Creating the Moon”:**  
**The Actor’s Affective Practice in Kutiyattam and**  
**Noh Theatre**  
by Dr Giorgia Ciampi Tsolaki (UK/France)  
(followed by Q&A session)

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**DAY 3 / WEDNESDAY, 29 NOV**

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8:30 AM	<b>Registration</b>
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9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	<b>Work Demo 4:</b> <b>The Contained Body, The Conflict Body</b> by Seng Soo Ming (Malaysia)
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10:45 AM – 12:15 PM	<b>Work Demo 5:</b> <b>Encounters in Tradition</b> by Raka Maitra (Singapore)
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— Lunch break —

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1:45 PM – 3:15 PM	<b>Work Presentation 3:</b> <b>A Southern Odyssey</b> Siong Leng Musical Association (Singapore) Presented by Lim Ming Yi, Education & Outreach Manager / Principal Artist
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3:30 PM – 5:00 PM	<b>Panel Discussion 3</b> Moderator: Sonia Kwek (Singapore)
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5:00 PM – 5:30 PM	<b>Closing Remarks</b> by T. Sasitharan, ITI Director
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KEYNOTE 1

# Steppingstones: Retracing the Journey to Now

by Dr Frances Barbe (Australia)

*The keynote will be  
followed by a Q&A session.*

**DAY 1  
MON, 27 NOV  
9:45 AM – 11:15 AM**

CLICK or SCAN the QR code to  
access Slido interaction page  
for Q&A session



<http://tiny.cc/aicslidokeynote1>

Frances Barbe shares her intercultural approach to preparing performers in her work as director, movement-director and actor-trainer. First training in classical ballet she later encountered Japanese butoh dance and has spent more than two decades training in butoh all over the world and applying insights gained from butoh not only to movement-based dance work but to training and directing actors. Her work also draws on her experience of the Suzuki Method of Actor Training (SMAT) and Nobbs Suzuki Praxis (NSP) – a unique Australian variant of Suzuki’s approach. Frances retraces the steppingstones of her journey from ballet to butoh, from dance to theatre, from Australia to Japan, London and Germany. Her keynote is organised around some key moments of insight from her journey that now inform her unique intercultural approach to training performers that she applies to preparing performers at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA).

Her keynote will foreground the evolving nature of the student-teacher relationship, and how she cultivates the agency of each individual in training both craft and creativity. She examines how and why she weaves together codified and uncoded movement training for the actor, to release creativity and develop a nuanced command of craft so that they can meet the demands of a wide range of performance approaches. She will articulate how her psychophysical approach, informed by butoh and Suzuki, works alongside established psychological approaches to acting as a complement and not a challenge those paradigms. She will explore how intercultural training broadens a performer’s awareness, encouraging them to look beyond a singular notion of what acting is to learn the value of remaining open to multiple paradigms as they navigate complexity in their art-making.

KEYNOTE 2

**Choreography's  
Unconscious:  
Body's Dance  
with Power**

by Sankar Venkateswaran (India)

*The keynote will be  
followed by a Q&A session.*

**DAY 1  
MON, 27 NOV  
11:15 AM – 12:45 PM**

CLICK or SCAN the QR code to  
access Slido interaction page  
for Q&A session



<http://tiny.cc/aicslidokeynote2>

In theatre, the language of movement, or choreography is a silent storyteller, communicating emotions, narratives, and histories. Through his presentation, he hopes to hypothesize the intricate relationship between the body and power, through unveiling the unconscious imprints inscribed within the choreographies across traditional theatre forms of Kutiyattam, Noh and Beijing Opera. He hopes to trace through the choreographies the expressions of the specific socio-political contexts and the power structures that surrounded the theatre form.

At its core, this exploration seeks to pose questions about the contemporary relevance of these understandings, inviting the listeners to appreciate and scrutinize the hidden values they hold. Furthermore, he will examine how traditional theatres conceptualise and address the primal objectives of theatre as an art form and how these objectives continue to hold relevance and influence his theatre practice. To exemplify, he will highlight the rationale of his upcoming project Hagaromo in 2025 as a case of harnessing traditional repertoire to inspire new creations.

He will also draw attention to the theatre space that he operates in Attappadi, hoping to offer insights into the unique dynamics of 'intercultural' spectatorship in this context. Moreover, he hopes to offer a critical perspective while approaching history, tradition and heritage, proposing that they are not mere relics to be revered but resources to be actively engaged within contemporary works.

Finally, he will explain how history and heritage have served as sources for creation in his recent works, *My Name is Tamizh – Three Lives and Criminal Tribes Act*. This will also outline an approach to generating text for contemporary theatre.

## WORK DEMO 1

### **An Etude in Silence & After the Silence**

by Sankar Venkateswaran (India)

**DAY 1  
MON, 27 NOV  
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM**

Sankar Venkateswaran's work demonstration will exemplify practical applications of his keynote speech on the language of movement and the body's unconscious 'Dance with Power'. The demonstration will encompass a comparative analysis of choreographic histories seen through four traditional theatre forms, in addition to a discussion on the primal form and function of theatre, and the relevance of these values in contemporary practice.

Audiences will hear about the creation process behind his upcoming project *Hagoromo* (2025), and past works such as *My Name is Tamizh* and *Criminal Tribes Act* which travelled to Basel, Munich, Tokyo and Beirut.

## WORK DEMO 2

### **The Vibrated Self**

by Andy Ng Wai-shek  
(Singapore/Hong Kong)

**DAY 2  
TUE, 28 NOV  
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM**

Andy will present findings from his ongoing cross-cultural research into "objectivity" in Acting, imagination and the essential meaning and value of being an actor. His research focuses on "the cultural body", with the core idea that differences in perspectives of imagination may be used to generate different physical expressions. Through his work demonstration, Andy will present indicative methods of drawing on traditional Chinese corporeal practices and their applications in contemporary theatre training, in order for performers to connect with and cultivate "flow of energy".

### WORK DEMO 3

## **Alam as Inspirasi (Nature as Inspiration)**

by Dr Noramin Farid (Singapore)

**DAY 2  
TUE, 28 NOV  
10:45 AM – 12:15 PM**

In this work demonstration, students will be introduced to his personal methodology of "alam as inspirasi". Alam means nature/environment and inspirasi means inspiration. The methodology of creating movement is drawn from understanding the foundational elements and traits of Malay dance/music. This is further explored with a nuanced connection of the body with nature.

### WORK DEMO 4

## **The Contained Body, The Conflict Body**

by Seng Soo Ming (Malaysia)

**DAY 3  
WED, 29 NOV  
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM**

Acting is the expression of energy – the characterisation of emotions that actors present on stage. While structuring and composing the *action* on stage, actors have to also structure the *energy* in their bodies — where it comes from, where it is heading, where it ebbs and flows. The sum composition of these “flows” amounts to how well an actor can stimulate and direct their energy in precise ways.

Actors often get paralyzed in the “thinking brain”, over-analysing the depth or intensity of emotion and thereby closing themselves off to their work. Through this demonstration, Soo Ming proposes for the actor to begin anew, refocusing on the relationship between physical movement and internal flow, and allowing their innate and instinctive energy to feed the demands of an emotional state.

## WORK DEMO 5

### Encounters in Tradition

by Raka Maitra (Singapore)

**DAY 3**  
**WED, 29 NOV**  
**10:45 AM – 12:15 PM**

This workshop will attempt to focus on methods of application required when drawing on specific Indian Classical and Folk performance traditions to reinterpret a particular modern text for contemporary presentation. It will start with the transmission of a combination of movements and gestures from the basics of Odissi and Seraikella Chhau that enhance expressions centred in the pelvic core, the awareness of balance and the consciousness of presence of the performer. These basic techniques will serve as tools to improvise, interpret and “read” the text given to the performer. The work demonstration will show the effectiveness of the training in allowing the performer to own the technique and to represent in performance excerpts from *The Plague* by Albert Camus.

## WORK PRESENTATION 1

### A Puppeteer Prepares: Contemporizing Traditional Practices in Puppetry

The Finger Players (Singapore)

Presented by  
Oliver Chong, Artistic Director

**DAY 1**  
**MON, 27 NOV**  
**3:45 PM – 5:15 PM**

This work presentation will be an introduction to The Finger Players’ repertoire of works, the types of puppetry they specialize in, as well as how they employ and contemporize and use traditional puppetry practices in their training and performances as puppeteers.

## WORK PRESENTATION 2

### **Soulful Synthesis: Weaving Language, Literature and Technology**

AGAM Theatre Lab (Singapore)

Presented by  
Subramanian Ganesh, Founder

**DAY 2**  
**TUE, 28 NOV**  
**1:45 PM – 3:15 PM**

This presentation navigates the crossroads of tradition and innovation, unveiling the unique challenges and triumphs that shape the landscape of Tamil language theatre in Singapore. AGAM Theatre Lab will demonstrate how technology breathes life into the ancient art of narrative, fostering an experience that resonates far beyond the stage.

## WORK PRESENTATION 3

### **A Southern Odyssey**

Siong Leng Musical  
Association (Singapore)

Presented by  
Lim Ming Yi,  
Education & Outreach Manager  
/ Principal Artist

**DAY 3**  
**WED, 29 NOV**  
**1:45 PM – 3:15 PM**

Over the years, Siong Leng has distinguished itself for the use of the traditional musical form Nanyin in contemporary, intercultural performances. Nanyin is a traditional form of music marked by lyrics and instrumentalization originating from Song and Tang Dynasties. Siong Leng's practice involves the melding of this musical tradition with the contemporary tastes, heritages and cultures of Singapore through deep study. This work presentation will discuss the company's creative processes and strategies since its foundation and an examination of Nanyin's history, form and identity in the Singapore context.

SPECIAL TALK

**“Mixing the Ingredients”  
and “Creating the Moon”:  
The Actor’s Affective  
Practice in Kutiyattam  
And Noh Theatre**

by Dr Giorgia Ciampi Tsolaki  
(United Kingdom/France)

**DAY 2  
TUE, 28 NOV  
5:15 PM – 6:45 PM**

CLICK or SCAN the QR code to  
access Slido interaction page  
for Q&A session



<http://tiny.cc/aicslidotalk>

What does it mean to embody “vira” – courage as cultivation of energy and bodily expansion – in Kutiyattam theatre (India)?

How does it feel to work on “yugen” – subtlety, nuance and grace grounded in powerful inner depth – in Noh theatre (Japan)?

What does it mean to embody and express emotions across cultures and contexts?

Dr Giorgia Ciampi’s immersion in the traditional forms at ITI led her to challenge prevalent western assumptions regarding the universality of certain ‘basic’ emotions. She began to question the limiting nature of the concept of emotion when describing the forms of feeling experienced during her time at Intercultural Theatre Institute. She will share more about the philosophical idea of “affectivity” (Colombetti, 2014) in connection to the philosophies and concepts that underlie the Kutiyattam and Noh training systems. Further exploration is made into how actors practise affectivity; by “blending the elements” of their body and mind to present an appealing experience to the audience in Kutiyattam, and by conjuring the moon to enable the audience to perceive its radiance in Noh. Immersion in these culturally specific approaches to affectivity equips actors with an intercultural affective competence that can be applied in their contemporary work. This proficiency improves communication surrounding affectivity across various performance cultures and contexts.



**Dr Frances  
Barbe**  
(AUSTRALIA)

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Dr Frances Barbe is the Associate Dean of Performance at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). She teaches the Bachelor of Performing Arts and Bachelor of Arts (Acting) courses and is a postgraduate research supervisor. She has also been a member of the Academic Board of the Intercultural Theatre Institute since 2017.

She is a performance-maker with more than twenty years of experience. She has worked internationally as a performer, director, choreographer and teacher. Before commencing at WAAPA, ECU, Frances was based in the United Kingdom working at the University of Kent from 2001 – 2010 and as a special guest teacher at the Central School of Speech and Drama, Exeter University, Birkbeck University, Rose Bruford College, East 15 and Plymouth University.

She also worked freelance as a practising artist in London, throughout the UK and internationally. She was a member of Tadashi Endo's Butoh Mamu Dance Theatre (Germany 1997 - 2008), established Fran Barbe Dance Theatre (London, 2000 - 2010) and founded Theatre Training Initiative (London 1999 - 2010) for whom she curated two international Butoh festivals (2005 and 2009).



Photo by Gabriela Neeb

## Sankar Venkateswaran (INDIA)

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
WORK DEMO PRESENTER**

Sankar Venkateswaran is a theatre director from Kerala, India. He studied directing at School of Drama and Fine Arts, University of Calicut, and pursued his post-graduate training at Theatre Training and Research Programme (now Intercultural Theatre Institute), Singapore. In 2007 Sankar founded Theatre Roots & Wings and created works such as *Sahyande Makan: The Elephant Project* (2008), Shogo Ohta's *Water Station* (2011) and Henrik Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* (2012). In 2013 Sankar received the Ibsen Scholarship from Teater Ibsen, Norway, for *Tribal Ibsen Project* which furthered his work with the indigenous communities in the mountain valley of Attappadi, Kerala. His following works, *Criminal Tribes Act* (2017) and *Indian Rope Trick* (2020) reflect the shift in his working context. As a guest director, Sankar directed works such as Anton Chekhov's *Seagull* (2011), Maurice Maeterlinck's *Interior* (2020) for Ninasam Theatre Institute, India, *Urubhangam* (2011) for Shinshu University, Japan, *Tage der Dunkelheit* (2016) and *INDIKA* (2017) for Munich Volkstheater, and *When We Dead Awaken* (2018) for Intercultural Theatre Institute. Among his recent works are *My Name is Tamizh* (2022) in co-production with Theaterfestival Basel and Theater Festival Spielart, *IM TOD—In My Time of Dying* (2022) with Theaterhaus Jena, and *Goodbye and best wishes for your success—a response to Annihilation of Caste* (2022) for Kyoto Performing Arts Center.

Alongside his work as a theatre director, Sankar served as the artistic director for the International Theatre Festival of Kerala in 2015 and 2016, the jury member for Zurich Theater Spektakel 2016, and most recently he was the international curation committee member for Theaterfestival Basel 2022.

He lives and works from Sahyande Theatre, a theatre-dwelling he built in Attappadi.

**WORK DEMO  
PRESENTER****Andy Ng  
Wai-shek**  
(SINGAPORE/  
HONG KONG)*Photo by Bernie Ng*

Andy Ng Wai-shek is an acclaimed actor, director, critic, playwright and educator. Before joining the faculty of ITI, Andy was the Programme Deviser & Acting Teacher at the Acting Research Centre in Hong Kong from 2013 to 2021. He also taught at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Tang Shu-wing Drama Workshop, HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity and the Psycho-physical Acting Training Programme by Blank Space Studio.

As a performer, Andy was lauded for his role in Tang Shu-wing's productions of *Titus Andronicus* (World Shakespeare Festival 2012) and *Macbeth* that premiered at Shakespeare's Globe before touring around Europe and East Asia. He was awarded Director of the Year at the 2019 International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC) (Hong Kong) Critics Awards.

His critiques have been published in *City Magazine*, *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, *Ming Pao* and *Sing Tao Daily*. He also served as Chairperson for IATC (Hong Kong) from 2007 to 2008.

Andy is a graduate of the pioneer cohort of ITI (then known as TTRP) and also holds a Master of Arts in East/West Theatre Studies from Middlesex University.

**WORK DEMO  
PRESENTER****Dr Noramin  
Farid**  
(SINGAPORE)

Dr. Muhd Noramin Mohd Farid – or Soultari Amin Farid, as he's better known – trained in Malay dance with Perkumpulan Seni. He is a choreographer, arts educator and researcher. He is currently an adjunct lecturer in Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Lasalle College of the Arts.

A recipient of the ASEAN-India Youth Award (2018), Singapore Youth Award (2017), National Arts Council Scholarship (2017) and Goh Chok Tong Mendaki Youth Promise Award (2016), Amin holds a PhD in Theatre, Drama and Dance Studies from Royal Holloway, University of London, UK.

He is the curator of an online portal, ARKITARI, which documents maritime Southeast Asian dances. He is also the current president of a dance organisation, DIAN Dancers, and the founding member of Arki-Gen, a group focused on promoting discourse and research about Southeast Asian performing arts.

A leader in his Malay dance community of practice, Amin has been invited to sit as a member of the Malay Language Council of Singapore and the Chingay Creative Panel. He was appointed Malay language ambassador in 2021.

As an arts practitioner-researcher, his works interrogate the normative notions of class, ethnicity, identity and gender.

**WORK DEMO  
PRESENTER****Seng  
Soo Ming**  
(MALAYSIA)

Seng Soo Ming is a Malaysian theatre actor, director and theatre educator who graduated from Intercultural Theatre Institute (Singapore). He is the founder and artistic director of Pitapat Theatre, which founded in 2012.

Soo Ming has been collaborating with international theatre artists from different countries, including renowned Taiwanese director's, Stan Lai's *Village*, which toured in various countries for more than 250 shows.

Recent works: *Wanted!*, *Die Die Tak Bayar*, *Merah*, *An Enemy Of the People*. *At the Moment*, *Kakak* and *No Time for Poetry: Quarantimed*

Soo Ming has won Best Director in 2017 ADA drama awards and Best Actor awards in 2018 ADA drama awards.

**WORK DEMO  
PRESENTER****Raka  
Maitra**  
(SINGAPORE)

Raka Maitra is a dancer and choreographer who defies the conventional dichotomy of 'classical' and 'contemporary'. She is a dancer simpliciter; exploring through her work the notion of 'Asian Culture' through her own language of contemporary dance. The basis of her movement is both the martial arts and classical Indian dance. Trained in both classical Odissi and Chhau. Raka was an associate artist with The Substation, from 2007-2011 and co-artistic director from 2020-2021.

Maitra founded Chowk Productions in 2014 after being awarded the Seed Grant by the National Arts Council. Her noteworthy productions include: *The Hungry Stones* (2011), *Circular Ruins* (2012), *Khayyams Rubaiyat* (2013), *The Blind Age* (2014), *The Second Sunrise* (2016), *from: The Platform* (2017), *The Pallavi Series* (2016-2021), *Variations on a Theme* (2021), *These Brief Encounters* (2021), *Yahi* (2022).

Her works have been regularly commissioned by The Esplanade, Singapore and have travelled extensively abroad, including- The centenary celebration of Visva Bharati university Santiniketan, Melkweg in Amsterdam, Les Hivernales in Avignon, 10 days in the island at Tasmania and the Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C.

## WORK PRESENTATION SPEAKER

### Oliver Chong (SINGAPORE)

Artistic Director  
The Finger Players



Oliver Chong is a multi-award-winning and published playwright, director, actor, and designer. Some of his memorable works include *Every Brilliant Thing*, *A Fiend's Diary*, *Roots*, *I'm Just A Piano Teacher*, *Cat*, *Lost & Found*, *The Book of Living and Dying*, *Citizen Pig* and *Citizen Dog*. His numerous nominations at *The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards* include Production of the Year and Best Director for *I'm Just A Piano Teacher*, Production of the Year for *Off Centre*, Best Director and Best Script for *Citizen Pig*, Best Director and Best Actor for *Every Brilliant Thing*, Best Actor for *Roots*, *Invisibility/Breathing and Art*, Best Supporting Actor for *Itsy, the musical*, *Flare*, Best Ensemble for *Senang, Shit Hole*, *First Family*, *Rashomon*, and *A Cage Goes in Search of a Bird* respectively, and Best Set Design for *Twisted*, *Citizen Dog* and *A Fiend's Diary*.

Oliver was the Resident Director of The Finger Players (2004 – 2018), currently the Artistic Director of the company. He is also the founding member of A Group of People (2008 – 2012) and the founder of ODDCROP Productions (2019 – present). His published works include *Roots*, *The Book of Living and Dying*, *I'm Just A Piano Teacher* and *Cat*, *Lost & Found*.

The Finger Players is one of Singapore's leading theatre companies, best known for inventively fusing puppetry elements into its visually-arresting productions, and its strong advocacy of puppetry.

Founded in 1999, The Finger Players strives to be a centre of research and development for the creation and performance of puppetry in Singapore.

In 2019, The Finger Players became the first arts collective in Singapore to operate on a rotating artistic director model, with each Artistic Director helming the fort for a stipulated tenure.

The company currently operates three branches:

- (1) Main Season: Offering edgy and original works, that adopts an interdisciplinary approach, pushing the envelope of Puppetry in Singapore.
- (2) International Season: Promoting Singapore's brand of Puppetry internationally, the company is one of Singapore's most prolific international touring companies, and has actively been touring its productions since 2000.
- (3) Outreach Season: Using puppetry, the company reaches out to an average of 25,000 students and members of the public annually, through performances and workshops with schools, communities and institutions.



## WORK PRESENTATION SPEAKER

# Subramanian Ganesh

(SINGAPORE)

Founder  
AGAM Theatre Lab



Subramanian Ganesh's body of work spans in the field of performing arts embracing a wide range of roles such as directing, acting and lighting design.

A committed practitioner with a desire to push artistic boundaries amongst his generation in Singapore, Ganesh is considered a promising figure at the forefront of Tamil theatre scene in Singapore. He started his theatre journey as an actor 15 years ago. He has since built an impressive portfolio, working with almost all Tamil theatre companies in Singapore.

By working with a multitude of professional groups, he has displayed a ceaseless zest to hone his craft as a director and a collaborator of theatre works.

AGAM Ltd. or AGAM Theatre Lab as it is more commonly known was started on 30th January 2019 by Subramanian Ganesh, a passionate theatre maker in collaboration of a collective of enthusiasts, AGAM, as an institution of public character, intends to create professional plays with highest quality for our audience here and now.



Being the newest theatre company of 4G Singapore, it's mission is to stage entertaining, innovative and relevant theatre experiences that stimulate and inspire our community to think critically about the world around them, and to engage in constructive and Creative self-expression.

Even though the company is new, we are not new to the theatre scene in Singapore, having previously worked with several other theatre companies in previous productions - including commissioned works by the Esplanade Theatres by the Bay. Each and every one of the artists have contributed to the arts in form or another and their experience spans from 5 to 20 years. With the vast experience of the veterans of intercultural theatre together with the creative and vibrant young theatre enthusiast, this is unification of creative minds in Singapore theatre scene.

Our artistes come from all sorts of different backgrounds, we have full time practitioners, teachers, accountants, scientists, army men, film producers and everything in between. We also get a large number of 'resting' professional actors who enjoy working with a high quality theatre company that allows them to experiment and try out new things in a less pressured environment than the professional world.

We don't only play the classics. AGAM Theatre Lab actively supports new writing and aiming to stage many plays by relatively unknown writers and bring them to light. We also provide a showcase for our own members' writing to be regularly performed and intend to publish it in both hard and soft forms.

We envision providing a platform for youth and adults to curate, market and stage unique intercultural theatre content.

## WORK PRESENTATION SPEAKER

### Lim Ming Yi (SINGAPORE)

Education & Outreach  
Manager  
/ Principal Artist  
Siong Leng  
Musical Association



As the recipient of the National Arts Council's Arts Professional Development Grant in 2009, Ming Yi was trained in Nanyin Pipa, Sanxian and vocals under the guidance of master Cai Wei Biao. Ming Yi has been involved in several international performances, ASEAN Cultural Heritage Festival (Vietnam), MAU: J-ASEAN Dance Collaboration, Moving Horizons: Huayi Festival by Esplanade, Singapore En France Festival (France), International Youth Nanyin Symposium I and II, Musicians of the Imperial Court, Third Maritime Silk Road International Arts Festival (China) and Soul Journey which has toured eight cities around the world.

As the Education and Outreach Manager, Ming Yi develops Nanyin syllabus for the youths and now manages the company's young apprentice artists.

Established in 1941, Siong Leng owes its success to its late chairman, Mr. Teng Mah Seng. Under his guidance, Siong Leng became an arts company that preserves and promotes Nanyin. Mr. Teng received the Cultural Medallion in 1987 in recognition of his passionate contributions to Nanyin. As Siong Leng's chairman, he continuously worked to reform and revive Nanyin, revitalising Nanyin by writing new lyrics and music that were livelier and more relatable. With his dedication and perseverance, Nanyin was given a new life.



SIONG LENG  
EST 1941

In 1983, Siong Leng participated in the 37th Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod and won third place in the folk solo category with Mr. Teng's work *Reminiscence*, as well as fourth place in the folk ensemble category with the traditional Nanyin piece *Trotting Horses*. In 2010, Siong Leng took part in the same competition and won the first prize in the folk solo category with Mr. Teng's work *Facets of Life*.

Siong Leng organised the inaugural Southeast Asia Nanyin Conference in 1977, the International Nanyin Concert & Symposium in 2000, the International Youth Nanyin Concert and Symposium in 2015, as well as the International Youth Nanyin Festival in 2018. To foster and maintain close relations with other Nanyin musicians worldwide and to stay updated on the development of Nanyin, the company actively participates in international Nanyin symposiums across Asia, contributing to the efforts of promoting and developing this ancient art form. Siong Leng has also toured and performed in major cities and countries in Europe, Asia, and the United States of America.

In 2017, Siong Leng was the recipient of the inaugural 'Singapore Chinese Cultural Contribution Award', awarded by the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre. In 2021, Siong Leng was awarded 'The Stewards of Intangible Cultural Heritage Award' by the National Heritage Board. Siong Leng is also a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Grant (2022 – 2025).

## SPECIAL TALK SPEAKER

## Dr Giorgia Ciampi Tsolaki

(UK/FRANCE)



Dr. Giorgia Ciampi Tsolaki is a theatre practitioner and researcher, based in the UK and France. She is co-founder, dramaturg and actor of the Intercultural Performing Arts Company (IPAC) as well as actor of Compagnie Canopée (Paris, 2015-). She holds an AHRC funded post-doc (2023) and PhD (2022) from the University of Exeter, where she currently teaches. Her doctoral thesis explores alternative approaches to the actor's affective embodiment in cross-/inter-cultural theatre training and performance. This research is partly presented in her forthcoming article, co-written with Prof. Colombetti: *Enacting affectivity: the psychophysical training of śrīgāra in Gopal Venu's Navarasa Sādhana*. Her post-doc focused on actor training and wellbeing both through the regular psychophysical training classes she holds and through her forthcoming book chapter *Care-full embodiment in Zarrilli's psychophysical training*. Prior to this she trained as an actor at the Intercultural Theatre Institute of Singapore (2012-2014) and trained with Phillip Zarrilli at the University of Exeter (2009-2011), where she obtained her MA in directing and actor training.

## Recent accomplishments:

- AHRC Post-doctoral fellowship at Exeter (March-September 2023)
- *Wasteland?* by IPAC (May 2023): an ecocritical performance/event in collaboration with the primary schools of Grand Est in France.
- AHRC funded PhD (Drama and Philosophy) at Exeter and Bath Spa (November 2022): *Towards enactive affectivity in theatre training and performance: a phenomenological study of the actor's affective embodiment in selected Indian, Japanese and intercultural performance practices*.
- Above and Beyond Award for excellent and inspiring teaching, and careful support for postgraduate students on the MA (June 2022).

**PANEL DISCUSSION  
MODERATOR**

## Sonia Kwek

(SINGAPORE)



*Photo by Aaditya Sundar*

Sonia Kwek is a performer and artist from Singapore whose practice focuses on performance, movement and the body as material. She often adopts an inter/trans-disciplinary approach to making, informed by her background in theatre and Butoh, to centre the expression and experience of the personal, unseen, intimate, visceral and erotic. Her works explore corporeal sensualities, the potency of kinesics and latent tensions within archetypes and metaphors, dealing with questions about embodiment, gender, perception and representation. Sonia creates and collaborates in projects which traverse spaces and mediums, including stage productions, museum/gallery activations, durational site-specific responses, experimental short films, nightlife gigs, immersive installations, participatory experiments, etc.

Prior to her studies at ITI, Sonia graduated with a Bachelor of Creative Industries with Distinction from Queensland University of Technology (Australia). Currently, she is an associate artist with dance performance company P7:1SMA, a coordinator-member of experimental arts group Emergency Stairs' Emergency Academy and creative producer of the Singapore edition of Club Chrome, a pole dance/creative collective platforming queer/SW/BIPOC pole dancers. Sonia is an experienced drama educator and facilitator for varying arts programs/workshops. She also works regularly as a life model for various educational institutions and artist circles.

### Recent Works:

- Movement Artist/ Co-Creator, *\*?!%\$&\*#@\${}!@#|%>? (dance film)*: selected for screening at Aesthetica Short Film Festival 2023 (UK), Objectifs Women in Film and Photography 2023, Bridge Chicago Film & Video Festival 2023 (US), enCore: Dance on Film 2023 (US), West Virginia Mountaineer Short Film Festival 2023 (US) where it won for 'Best Indeterminate Self Theme', and first premiered at \*SCAPE comma festival as part of Singapore Art Week 2023
- Movement Artist, *Gallery Mix Presents Syndicate Sessions: Anise x Sonia Kwek* (movement x music live performance): Light to Night Festival 2023, National Gallery Singapore
- Creator and Performer, *mise en femme* (work-in-progress live performance): Off Stage program, con.tact Contemporary Dance Festival 2022

### Residencies:

- 2022: Selected artist collective YOUNG BODIES at 136 Goethe Lab by Goethe-Institut Singapore (Singapore)
- 2020-2021: Associate Member at Dance Nucleus (Singapore)
- 2019: Invited Artist for *How do you do? #4: Representation & Appropriation* artist lab by Auawirleben Theaterfestival Bern (Switzerland)
- 2018: Selected Artist for *Time Place Space: Nomad* mobile art laboratory by Arts House Melbourne (Australia)

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Lakshmana KP ('18, India) is a theatre and performance-maker whose work centres around events, people, and stories from the Dalit community, who are marginalised and stigmatised on the basis of caste in Karnataka, India. In March 2023, his play *Daklakatha Devikavya*, an original script written and performed in the Kannada language, was nominated for several categories including Best Original Script, Best Director and Best Production in the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) in New Delhi, India. He is a recipient of the Shankar Nag Theatre Award 2023.



Regina Foo ('17, Singapore) is a Singaporean artist-educator and associate artist at Access Path, an organisation that produces theatrical and cultural experiences that centre the narratives and talents of the marginalised. Her practice focuses on young children and adults with disabilities. She is also currently exploring projected play through puppetry. Regina leads the Participatory Drama programme under Access Path's education and outreach platform, creating and conducting weekly workshops with the disabled community.



Aaron Kaiser Garcia ('21, Philippines) is a performance-maker from the Philippines with a background in folk, contemporary dance, and theatre. His work explores the potentiality of the body to process and reveal the layered landscapes of the Filipino socio-political psyche, or actively counter political revisionism via choreography. Aaron is a member of the Executive Council of the National Committee on Dramatic Arts representing Eastern Visayas, and a contributing member of InTIlate PH - a collective of ITI alumni offering theatre training, access to resources and knowledge to underserved communities in Mindanao, Cagayan de Oro and other areas.

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
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