

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Esplanade celebrates Hari Raya with more treats for all at
*Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts***

SINGAPORE, 12 October 2007 - Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay revels in the beauty of Malay heritage and culture as it celebrates the Hari Raya festivities through the arts with its sixth edition of *Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts*. Running from 2 to 11 November, the festival showcases a varied range of programmes for the season from theatre to music and, for the first time ever at *Pesta Raya*, dance productions both local and foreign, will be presented in our indoor venues.

Norhayati Yusoff, Programming Officer, The Esplanade Co. Ltd commented: “After last year’s presentation of the popular *Puteri Gunung Ledang - The Musical*, we saw clearly the increase in the level of appreciation for Malay arts in Singapore and the strong audience base we’ve built. This year’s festival aims to meet the needs of this base with a larger number of productions over a wider variety of genres. We are especially excited to be working with even more local Malay talents this year, as we challenge them to grow through the festival.”

Theatre

This year’s programme line-up heralds several firsts for the festival. It marks the first time that a foreign theatrical production, which is non-musical in nature, is being presented as part of our ticketed line-up.

Directed by internationally acclaimed Malaysian director U-Wei Haji Saari, who was the first Malaysian director to show his film at Cannes and has been a member of the jury at the Sundance Film Festival, the gripping drama *Wangi Jadi Saksi* will have you at the edge of your seat. The play stars some of the best and brightest in Malaysia’s theatre scene with heavyweights like Datuk Rahim Razali, Khalid Salleh and will be helmed by Deanna Yussof in the lead role. Also starring in the production is Singapore’s very own Rafaat Hamzah.

The legendary hero Hang Tuah's story has often eclipsed that of his loyal companion Hang Jebat but U-Wei gives voice to the marginalised through this gripping story that explores the murder of Hang Jebat in an intense mystery piece that aims to find out who exactly did it?

Dance

Marking another first in the festival are two presentations of dance taking place in the Esplanade Theatre Studio. This is the first time that ticketed dance presentations are being showcased at *Pesta Raya*. Local choreographer Osman Hamid will examine what it means to be Malay today through dance in a presentation entitled *Akulturasī- Badai Semalam* with dancers from Singapore's Teater Tari Era. Combining the movements of modern dance with the traditions of Malay dance, this work will fuse the old and new in an attempt to forge a way forward.

Tackling yet another social issue through dance is Indonesian contemporary dancer and choreographer Besar Widodo who presents *Suwung*. *Suwung*, which literally means "empty" in Javanese, features the highly refined techniques of Javanese court dances and the mystical *topeng* or mask dance in an experimental, intimate work that examines the influence that women have over men.

Besar Widodo is known for his socially challenging works. He has collaborated with a number of international artists including Oh Body Theatre from Taiwan, Potalaka and Waguri Yukio (Butoh) from Japan.

Music

Nothing transcends boundaries quite like music. Four concerts are set to reach out to a wide range of audiences this *Pesta Raya*. Creating beautiful instrumental pieces that overcome all barriers is the GammaRays - Singapore's very own all male gamelan revue. This performance will be led by gamelan extraordinaire Ismet Rahardja from the group SambaSunda. The GammaRays brand of funky music will definitely have audiences thinking about traditional instruments in a whole new way.

Malaysia's popular singer Zainal Abidin will present his brand of world music at the Esplanade Concert Hall. His repertoire will include hit songs from his days as a member of the pop rock group Headwind, to numbers from his acclaimed solo album Hijau & Puteri.

In a bid to encourage the composition of new Hari Raya songs, a local song-writing competition has been organised to capture the spirit of Hari Raya in new compositions. The competition, which called for entries in July this year, drew to a close on 26 August with the final eight winning songs selected by a panel of prominent local entertainment personalities such as Rahima Rahim, Najip Ali and Hussin Syaban. The winning songs will be presented in a special concert entitled *The New Spirit of Hari Raya* hosted by Najib Ali and Era Faridah. Sharing the stage are popular local singers Taufik Batisah, Hady Mirza and upcoming talent Aliff Aziz. The songs will also be broadcast on local radio channels Warna 94.2FM, Ria 89.7FM and on the Esplanade website at www.esplanade.com. Audience members and radio listeners are encouraged to vote for their favorite song via sms to determine the winning entry.

Breathing new life into compositions from Singapore's classic black and white Malay films are Anugerah Planet Musik Award winner Imran Ajmain with popular local singers Norfasarie and Hyrul in *Hitam & Putih – A Malay Music Retrospective*. Tackling a range of music genres from Mambo to pop, Imran Ajmain will also present songs from his hit albums re-arranged with a contemporary twist.

Community & Visual Arts

As part of Esplanade's community outreach efforts, Esplanade worked with the young in our community to create a visual arts display piece that will be showcased at the centre for our *Pesta Raya* celebrations.

Over 200 children from voluntary welfare organisations like MENDAKI, SINDA, Pertapis Children's Children, Jamiyah Children's Home, Canosaville Children's Home and Salvation Army Gracehaven Children's Home attended a series of acrylic-painting workshops between September to October conducted by visual artist Junaidi Iskandar Wa'ee. Volunteers from our festival sponsor, City Gas were also present at the workshops. These acrylic pieces will subsequently be put together to form a visual arts display placed at the Esplanade waterfront from 2-25 November.

Pesta Raya would not be possible without the generous support from City Gas Pte Ltd, the preferred piped gas retailer for the last 146 years. A firm believer in engaging the community and giving back to the society, City Gas is proud to be a first time supporter of the Arts.

Tickets for shows are on sale now at Esplanade's Box Office at Mezzanine level (Tel: +65-6828-8377) and all SISTIC's Authorized Agents. (Tel: +65 6348 5555)

About Esplanade – Theatres On The Bay

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is one of the world's busiest arts centres, officially opened on 12 October 2002. This architectural icon with its distinctive twin shells, is sited within Singapore's civic district, just by Marina Bay at the mouth of the Singapore River.

Esplanade aims to be a performing arts centre for everyone, and its programmes cater to its diverse audiences. Its programme line-up spans all genres to encompass music, dance, theatre and visual arts, with a special focus on Asian culture.

Esplanade houses world-class performance spaces, supported by a comprehensive range of professional support facilities and services. Its two main venues are the 1,600-seat Concert Hall, with acoustics by Russell Johnson of ARTEC Consultants, and the 2,000-seat theatre, an adaptation of traditional European opera houses in horseshoe form.

In the past year, Esplanade has welcomed over seven million visitors and hosted over 2,000 performances.

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Calendar attached

TICKETED PROGRAMMES

Esplanade Presents:

Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts 2007

AKULTURASI - BADAI SEMALAM

The fluid *lenggang, inang, zapin, joget* of Malay dance...with hip-hop flava! *Akulturas* brings you a fresh approach to ethnic dance that explores the effects of globalisation on the Malay community today.

A leading Malay contemporary dance choreographer, Osman Hamid has won many awards for his choreography and creativity and is much sought after by local and overseas productions. In recognition of his talent and contribution to Malay dance in Singapore, he was conferred the prestigious Singapore Youth Award (Service) in 1983 and the Young Artist Award in 1994.

Teater Tari Era was formed by Osman in 1992 with the aim of attracting young dancers to Malay dance with a contemporary approach. The group has since expanded and developed a sizeable following among young Malays.

2 Nov (Fri)

Esplanade Theatre Studio

8pm (75mins)

\$25

Concessions for students, NSF and senior citizens at \$21.25

Esplanade Presents

Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts 2007

GammaRays (Singapore/Indonesia)

“Gamelan is comparable to only two things, moonlight and flowing water”, Dutch ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst once said, describing the musical form as “mysterious like moonlight and always changing like flowing water.” With its performances, GammaRays attempts to add to Jaap’s perception!

Join us as we bring you - for the first time - an all-male gamelan revue with GammaRays. Leading the group is gamelan extraordinaire Ismet Rahardja from the group SambaSunda. The group’s brand of funky gamelan music will definitely entertain you, or even make you feel like dancing!

2 & 3 Nov (Fri & Sat)

Esplanade Recital Studio

8pm (90mins, no intermission)

\$25

Concessions for students, NSF and senior citizens at \$21.25

Esplanade Presents

Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts 2007

Suwung

by Besar Widodo (Indonesia)

Suwung, literally, “empty” in Javanese, features the highly refined techniques of Javanese court dances and the mystical *topeng* or mask dance in an experimental, intimate work by Besar Widodo.

Experience the contrast between the dynamism of *Suwung's* warriors and the sensuousness of its love scene. Besar Widodo, a contemporary dancer and choreographer from Yogyakarta, is known for his socially challenging works.

3 & 4 Nov (Sat & Sun)

Esplanade Theatre Studio

8pm

\$30

Concessions for students, NSF and senior citizens at \$25.50

Esplanade Presents

Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts 2007

Hitam & Putih – A Malay Music Retrospective

by Imran Ajmain, Norfasarie and Hyrul (Singapore)

Imran, Norfasarie, and Hyrul Anuar performing songs from the classic black & white Malay film era with a modern twist. Accompanied with live music by Sri Mahligai.

7 Nov (Wed)

Esplanade Recital Studio

8pm (90mins, no intermission)

\$25

Concessions for students, NSF and senior citizens at \$21.25

Esplanade Presents

Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts 2007

SingaRaya - Winner's Concert

A Hari Raya song-writing competition and concert, *SingaRaya* brings you the winning songs selected from an array of songs written by local Malay songwriters. Besides being written in celebration of Hari Raya, the songs also reflect the lifestyles of Singaporean Malays today, in a new age where there are no more villages and greetings may be sent via email from around the world.

The winning songs will be presented in this special concert hosted by Najip Ali and Era Faridah. Staring popular artists such as Singapore Idols, Taufik Batisah and Hady Mirza.

This competition and concert is produced by 2M, with Najip Ali as the Artistic Producer.

8 Nov (Thu)

Esplanade Concert Hall

8pm (90mins, no intermission)

\$30*, \$50*, \$70

*Concessions for students, NSF and senior citizens at \$25.50, \$42.50

Esplanade Presents

Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts 2007

Wangi Jadi Saksi

Written and directed by U-Wei Haji Saari (Singapore and Malaysia)

The tale of the legendary hero Hang Tuah has long eclipsed the story of his loyal companion, Hang Jebat. Now, experience the drama and anguish of the story of Hang Jebat's betrayal and murder through the eyes of his young widow Dang Wangi as she confronts those accountable for her husband's death in *Wangi Jadi Saksi (Wangi the Witness)*.

In this provocative new interpretation of a legendary historical event, flashbacks and flash-forwards reveal Jebat's dramatic confrontations with his comrades and nemesis.

Directed and produced by Malaysia's award winning and internationally-acclaimed director, U-Wei Haji Saari, and featuring Malaysian theatre heavyweights such as, Datuk Rahim Razali, Khalid Salleh and Sabri Yunus as well as local stalwart Razaat Hamzah in the role of Jebat

8 - 10 Nov (Thu - Sat)
Esplanade Theatre Studio
8pm (85mins, no intermission)
\$35
Concessions for students, NSF and senior citizens at \$29.75

Esplanade Presents
Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts 2007
Zainal (Malaysia)

One of the original proponents of world music in Malaysia, the former lead singer of the popular pop-rock group Headwind is best known for his critically and commercially successful album *Hijau*, commands a strong following of world music lovers and fans who share his advocacy for environmental protection.

Don't miss this much-awaited concert by one of Malaysia's best musical talent!

10 Nov (Sat)
Esplanade Concert Hall
8pm (90mins, no intermission)
\$30*, \$50*, \$70, \$90
*Concessions for students, NSF and senior citizens at \$25.50, \$42.50

FREE PROGRAMMES

PESTA RAYA 2007
2-11 November
Outdoor Free Programme

Courtyard

Festival Opening by Azpirasi & Era Tari
Fri 2 Nov
6.15-6.30pm
Celebrate with us as we open the festival with 60 dancers in a line-dancing style with movements taken from Dikir Barat and Boria.

Stage@ Powerhouse

Warna Raya by Sri Warisan
Fri – Sun
2-4 Nov
Time:
6.30-7.15pm (Sun only)
7.30-8.15pm

8.45-9.30pm
10.00-10.45pm (Fri & Sat only)

Folk songs and dances intertwined with contemporary themes. Performed by youths and young adults from Sri Warisan Performing Arts Troupe led by Cultural Medallion recipient Mdm Som Said. It will include Malam Joget Lambak – Mass dancing for the public to pick up some Malay dance moves.

Semarak Muara by Azpirasi, Era Tari, I-Yan Pulse, Bontang Province Cultural Troupe from East Kalimantan and others

Wed– Sun
7-4 Nov

Time:

6.30-7.15pm (Sun only)
7.30-8.15pm
8.45-9.30pm
10.00-10.45pm (Fri & Sat & Public Holiday Eve only)

Folk and contemporary dances from the Malay archipelago including Indonesian traditional songs & dances. On Wed 7 November, we present Penglipur Lara. A night of comedy songs and skits by local artistes including I-Yan Pulse, Suhaimi Yusof & Zaleha Hamid.

On Thu 8 Nov, we present Malam Dangdut - Malay songs and dances with a touch of Bollywood and Kollywood to celebrate Deepavali with our Hindu friends.

On the final weekend of the festival, we have invited our neighbours from Bontang Province Cultural Troupe, East Kalimantan.

They will be accompanied by dancers from Azpirasi and Era Tari

Concourse

Raya Kita

Fri– Sun
2 -11 Nov

Time:

6.00-6.30pm (Sat & Sun only)
7.30-8.00pm
8.30-9.00pm

Featuring youth talents from our very own backyard. Catch folk dances by winning school teams from the Singapore Youth Festival, acoustic band Cradle and more!