



press release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Esplanade Goes Big on Accessibility

SINGAPORE, 8 Dec 2021 – At the heart of Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay’s vision to be an arts centre for everyone, is making sure that the arts is accessible for as many people as possible. We offer daily free performances presented at the centre’s public spaces, visual arts and various festivals throughout the year. This is further deepened by our year-long community engagement programmes for vulnerable individuals and communities that leverage on the social impact of the arts, and our ongoing exploration with artists on how the arts can engage those facing challenging circumstances in life.

Today, Esplanade is proud to take our accessibility and social inclusion efforts further, by becoming Singapore’s first Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue and a Dementia Go-To Point. In addition, a new ticket concession scheme for persons with disabilities (PWDs) will be implemented for all *Esplanade Presents* programmes launched from December 2021.

Said Ms Yvonne Tham, CEO, The Esplanade Co Ltd, “Being a centre for everyone has been Esplanade’s vision from day one, so making sure that the arts are accessible to diverse communities is always at the heart of Esplanade’s work. As the centre turns 20 in 2022, not only will we re-commit ourselves to this vision, but also take on a larger role in partnering the wider arts community and social service agencies to advocate greater accessibility and inclusion in the arts for people of different abilities, especially among our young and seniors. We also seek like-minded individuals, companies and foundations as volunteers and supporters to bring the creative and healing power of the arts to people who may otherwise not have the opportunity to.”

Said Ms Grace Low, Head, Customer and Community Engagement and Lead, Accessibility Taskforce, The Esplanade Co Ltd, “We believe that the arts can transform lives, and in these times, we have witnessed how the arts can heal and uplift broken spirits as well. Every year, we bring arts experiences beneficiaries from different social service agencies in Singapore and we know we can do even better. Together with a dedicated taskforce made up of members across departments at Esplanade, we will be launching initiatives and programmes that put

accessibility at the fore, so that we can continue to reach out, serve and involve for persons with disabilities or different abilities.”

Singapore’s First Dementia-Friendly Arts Centre

Since February 2021, Esplanade has been working closely with the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) to become the first dementia-friendly arts venue in Singapore. Esplanade is listed as the first such venue to become a Dementia Go-To Point. Dementia Go-To Points (GTPs) are touch points within the community that serve as resource centres to provide information and useful resources on dementia and link those who need help with the relevant dementia-related services. GTPs also serve as "safe return" points where members of the public can bring persons with dementia who may appear lost and are unable to identify themselves or their way home.

As part of its dementia-friendly effort, all full-time Esplanade staff went through e-learning to gain basic knowledge and awareness on dementia. AIC also conducted briefing sessions with Esplanade staff to highlight the centre’s role as a dementia-friendly arts venue and GTP, so that all staff are equipped to offer assistance if they encounter someone with signs of dementia at Esplanade. Esplanade is listed as a GTP since 1 Dec 2021.

Said Mr Tan Kwang Cheak, Chief Executive Officer, Agency for Integrated Care, “Dementia affects one in 10 people aged 60 and above, and as our population ages rapidly, the effort in making Singapore a dementia-friendly city is important. We are encouraged that Esplanade has come on board as our first dementia-friendly arts venue, to make our community more supportive and inclusive for those affected by dementia. Research has shown that art can improve the quality of life for persons living with dementia, and we hope that they can continue enjoying activities such as a performance at Esplanade with their loved ones.”

Esplanade is also listed as a Partner on Dementia Singapore’s CARA app—a pioneering community and lifestyle membership programme for the dementia community—where CARA members can sign up for the *Esplanade&Me Discover* membership to enjoy ticketing specials and other benefits.

Ticket Concession Scheme for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and Priority Lane

For all [Esplanade Presents](#) programmes launched from 1 Dec 2021, a ticket concession discount scheme for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) has been added to the arts centre’s existing ticket concessions for full-time students, senior citizens (aged 60 years and above), and NSF personnel. Wheelchair-accessible seating will also be available at the Concert Hall and Theatre. This concession scheme for PWDs extends to not just persons with physical

disabilities or would require a wheelchair, but also individuals with sensory disabilities (persons who are blind, deaf or hard of hearing) and neurological, cognitive or intellectual disabilities (persons on the autism spectrum, persons with cerebral palsy, etc.). This concession for PWDs can also be utilised by one accompanying companion. More details on this ticket concession scheme for PWDs can be found [here](#).

A priority queue for seniors and PWDs has also been created at the Esplanade Box Office and Information Counter located at the Mezzanine level of the centre. Besides offering priority access to those who require it, the wider lane provides more comfortable access for persons who require a wheelchair.

Said Ms Thea Ang, Customer Experience Manager and Member, Accessibility Taskforce, The Esplanade Co Ltd, “We are heartened that our suggestion to include a priority lane at the Box Office and Information Counter was adopted by the team. Our colleagues have noticed that when the centre gets crowded during peak periods, the long queues formed at the Box Office and Information Counter can be quite inconvenient for some of our patrons, especially seniors and persons with disabilities. We hope that our efforts to create a more welcoming environment for everyone can help increase the awareness and importance of accessibility in the arts and encourage kindness in society.”

Esplanade’s New and Ongoing Accessibility Initiatives in the Arts

Community Engagement Programmes

Esplanade’s [community engagement programmes](#) serve to address key challenges identified in today’s society: Accessibility & Social Inclusion, a Super-Aging Society and Youth & Mental Health. Pre-COVID, Esplanade organised some 600 activities each year, reaching out to over 14,000 beneficiaries that include vulnerable children and youth, the elderly, persons with diverse needs and disabilities, migrant workers, those marginalised as well as beneficiaries from low-income households.

Besides hosting beneficiaries from social service agencies to watch performances at the centre, the Esplanade works closely with artists to develop and bring customised programmes that include single session performing arts workshops for the community and off-site and virtual performances in hospitals, hospices, and nursing homes. Each year, Esplanade runs eight flagship projects based on a performing art form. These flagship projects, which run over the course of three to four months, aim to improve overall well-being for participants and provide safe, creative outlets for personal expression. Some examples include

intergenerational hip-hop dance projects for vulnerable youths and socially isolated seniors, songwriting projects for troubled youths, and [singing projects for persons with dementia](#).

Relaxed Performances

A relaxed performance provides a welcoming and relaxed environment for children who are on the autism spectrum or have sensory sensitivities. Special modifications are incorporated into the performance to make it relaxed. All programmes presented under Esplanade's [PLAYtime!](#) series are relaxed performances and calming spaces huts/corners inside the performance venue or a calming space set up right outside the foyer are available, for patrons who need to take a break. Audience members may also enter and exit the theatre space freely.

Guide-Dog Friendly Arts Centre

Esplanade is a Guide-dog friendly centre and welcomes patrons who are supported by guide dogs to enter the premises, including the establishments at Esplanade Mall and to attend our performances at all venues. Guide-dog friendly decals are displayed at all entrances around the premises to support the cause and inform the public that that guide dogs are welcomed and allowed. Persons with guide dog attending any performance or visiting our centre may contact Customer Experience hotline at 6828 8377 (available from 12pm – 6pm) or email foh@esplanade.com to make prior arrangements for their visit. Training will be conducted to all Customer Experience full time staff and casuals to ensure consistency in assisting persons with a guide dog at the centre.

Digital Signage

For the centre's monthly *Beautiful Sunday* performances which take place at the Concert Hall, besides announcements over the public address system to inform patrons that the show is about to begin, we also display this information on digital screens so persons who are deaf or hard of hearing are made aware that the performance is about to start. Esplanade will continue to roll out these digital signages for other *Esplanade Presents* performances that take place at the Concert Hall and Theatre, including our hirers' performances.

Website and Marketing Collaterals

The centre is working to improve the accessibility features on our website which will be launched in 2022. The improved accessible website will meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA conformance, an internationally recognised system that deems a website usable and understandable for the majority of people with or without disabilities. Some stipulated requirements include colour contrast, text size, accurate headings and labels, consistent navigation and more. We are also working closely with SG Enable to improve the accessibility and usability of our physical space and digital information and

content for persons with disabilities. Esplanade will further work with SG Enable on initiatives to make the centre disability-friendly and welcoming for everyone. In this vein, marketing collaterals for senior-centric programmes such as *A Date With Friends* and *Coffee Morning & Afternoon Tea* will feature increased font sizes to allow for more comfortable reading.

Infrared Assisted Listening System

In addition to the existing systems in the Concert Hall and Theatre, the Singtel Waterfront Theatre (SWT) which is slated to open in 2022 will also be fitted with an infrared assisted listening system. These systems improve listening clarity for person who have hearing loss, or those who experience difficulty when trying to understand speech because of distance, reverberation and background noise. Audio input or any electronic sound source feeds into an infrared transmitter and the signal is picked up by the patrons' infrared receiver. Infrared receivers and headsets are provided free of charge and can be obtained from the Esplanade Box Office prior to the performance. Esplanade is committed to expanding its assisted listening systems to all main venues including the Recital Studio, Theatre Studio and Annexe Studio by 2023.

Upcoming Accessibility Features for Singtel Waterfront Theatre at Esplanade

In its next phase of development, Esplanade is looking to creating more opportunities for seniors, disadvantaged youth, children and people with special needs to experience the arts; grow the next generation of artists and audiences; commission and produce more made-in-Singapore works. To enable this, Esplanade is developing the Singtel Waterfront Theatre (SWT), a multiformat venue that can host different types of performances and events, complementing the existing Esplanade performing arts facilities.

The SWT site is also part of a wider area, known as the Esplanade Annexe, comprising both indoor and outdoor food & beverage provisions, as well as Esplanade's Annexe Studio which opened in 2016. This location allows the Waterfront Theatre to leverage the street level access to the venue's Front-of-House; and also connect to the Esplanade Annexe's food & beverage provisions as part of its front-of-house experience.

The SWT is also designed in compliance with Building and Construction Authority (BCA) Code on Accessibility in the Built Environment 2013. The multiformat nature of the theatre has the ability for seats to be removed for wheelchair positions, many of which will be located at the main auditorium level that will have barrier-free access from street level.

Considerations have been made in the design of the theatre to support hosting of groups of patrons on wheelchairs within the theatre. The theatre is accessible for persons-with-

disabilities and elderly patrons and offers some protection from wet weather by way of a sheltered linkway from the main Esplanade building.

Accessibility Partner

Amid the ongoing pandemic, one of the centre's primary concerns is to ensure that Esplanade is able to continue carrying out its social mission, which includes uplifting the spirits of diverse communities by bringing the arts to different people through programmes and initiatives that facilitate access. Esplanade is grateful to donors who believe in the positive impact of the arts especially in a time like this, and continues to look for opportunities for partnering with individuals, corporations and foundations who believe in making the centre accessible for everyone. Do reach out to Esplanade's Relationship Management team at partners@esplanade.com if you would like to come on board to support the centre's accessibility initiatives.

Please visit www.esplanade.com/accessibility or scan the QR code for more information on the centre's services and accessibility efforts.



About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre. It hosts a year-round line-up of about 3,500 live performances and activities presented by Esplanade, its partners and hirers. Esplanade also brings the arts virtually to audiences in Singapore and beyond, through its diverse range of digital programmes on [Esplanade Offstage](#), an all-access backstage pass to the performing arts and guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture, with videos, podcasts, articles, quizzes and resources.

As an arts centre for everyone, Esplanade also creates opportunities for seniors, youth, children and underserved communities to experience the arts. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are free for all to enjoy.

The centre works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities and content, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. Esplanade supports the creation of artistic content by commissioning and producing new Singapore and Asian work for the international stage. It also develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

To bring even more of the arts to a wider audience and provide more platforms to support Singapore's next generation of artists, Esplanade is building a new theatre along its busy waterfront. Named Singtel Waterfront Theatre, the 550-seat venue will open in 2022.

Esplanade –Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. The Charity Council awarded TECL the Charity Governance Award –Special Commendation for Clarity of Strategy in 2016, and the Charity Transparency Award for four consecutive years since 2016.

TECL receives funding support from Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and its Community Programmes are supported by Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

Visit Esplanade.com for more information.

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Issued by *The Esplanade Co Ltd*.

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