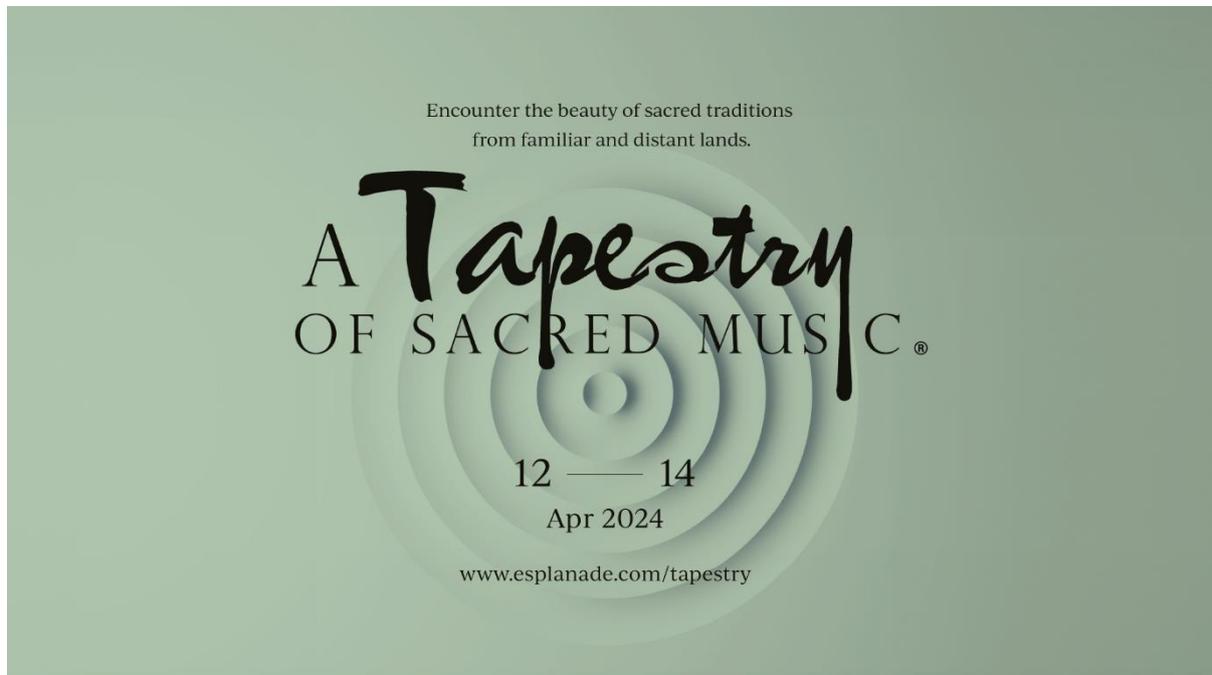


Esplanade Presents  
**A Tapestry of Sacred Music 2024**  
12 – 14 Apr 2024  
[www.esplanade.com/tapestry](http://www.esplanade.com/tapestry)



Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay celebrates the 15th edition of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music* this year from 12 – 14 Apr 2024. Looking back from this milestone, it is heartening how we navigated its growth. In the early days, there was naturally some apprehension of a festival that showcased religious music in a public space. After all, religion was something that was somewhat of a taboo subject in public discourse. Would it be too sensitive, would people question why there were prayers chanted on our secular stages? Would people be offended about it, one way or another?

Years on, it became evident that a festival like this was more relevant and necessary than ever. In a world in which sectarian conflicts and animosity threaten to upend societies, it is important that we understand one another better, and see the common humanity beneath our differences. The role of this festival is to do this through art and encourage appreciation of the beauty in one another's art. Specifically, art of a most revered nature. These are songs that are sung in ones' darkest hours, and the dances that are danced in celebration of a greater truth. Over the years, we have presented the sacred art forms of over 50 different communities, building a strong following of not just devotees, but those who have come to enjoy the rich tapestry of some of humanity's most affecting and powerful musical expressions.

For the festival's 15th edition, we hope to transport audiences to another realm, transforming our performance venues into the vibrant landscapes of grasslands, the serenity of temples, or the awe-inspiring ambience of churches, allowing them to experience performances as if they're truly there. These include *Throat Singers of Tuva*—Huun-Huur-Tu—known for their uncanny vocal ability of singing more than one note at a time, recreating sounds of nature. UNESCO Artist for Peace Kudsi Erguner returns, leading a Sufi music ensemble comprising two of the most prominent Turkish Islamic vocalists, Imams Bekir Büyükbaş and Yunus Balcıoğlu. In a special feature of Quran recitation, the two imams will also make the evening call to prayer at the upper foyer spaces of the Concert Hall, where audiences can witness the transition of the sky during sunset through the centre's iconic glass domes.

Our Forecourt Garden will be transformed into a Balinese temple stage, where more than 30 traditional Balinese performers will showcase the heritage artforms that are associated with their villages, such as the elaborately costumed ritual drama of *wayang wong*, the otherworldly night ceremony to ward off epidemics of *Calon Arang*, and the iconic *kecak* chants with performers seated in concentric circles. The temple stage setting allows for audiences to experience the dances and *gamelan* music in closer proximity, similar to how they would be authentically experienced in a village.

Over at the Concert Hall, Singapore's only Gregorian chant ensemble Schola Cantorum Sancti Gregorii Magni presents *Gregorian Chants: Easter Vespers*, with acoustics adjusted to replicate that of a cathedral. Patrons for this performance are invited to contemplate and experience the songs in a different way, where they can sit, stand, or wander around silently at different locations of the Concert Hall much like how the music would be experienced in a chapel. We also welcome vocalist and internet phenomenon Callie Day for a gospel music performance at the Concert Hall. She is one of the most dynamic and compelling talents of the genre and her vocal rendition of Moses Hogan's *Hear My Prayer* has received close to seven million views on Youtube.

In spite of how these art forms may seem so disparate, some solemn and entrancing, others melismatic, robust or even otherworldly, we urge you to look beyond these, to the universal motivations and emotions behind each performance. These songs carry the hopes, dreams, and anxieties that we all share, expressed in different ways, to a higher power in different names, simply because we grew up in different communities and different families.

It is in this spirit that we invite you to come experience the festival. Experience silence in our Concert Hall, melismatic recitations under our glass domes, mythical guardians with painted faces, and a temple village in our garden. Most of all, through the sights, sounds, and tastes, savour humanity expressed in a myriad of ways.

Welcome to *A Tapestry of Sacred Music 2024*.

**Tan XiangHui**  
Producer, The Esplanade Co Ltd

*Last updated: 2 Apr 2024*

## 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. 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.

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.

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.

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 2022, and the Charity Transparency Award from 2016 – 2023. Esplanade is Singapore's first Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue and a certified Dementia Go-To Point, as well as a guide/assistance dog friendly centre.

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](https://www.esplanade.com) for more information.

~ End ~

Issued by *The Esplanade Co Ltd*.

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## **Annexe**

Esplanade Presents

### **A Tapestry of Sacred Music 2024**

12 – 14 Apr 2024

[www.esplanade.com/tapestry](http://www.esplanade.com/tapestry)

*A Tapestry of Sacred Music* was launched by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay in 2009. The festival offers the rare opportunity for everyone to encounter the beauty of these varied cultural expressions practised by communities all over the world, in a secular setting. Over the years, we have presented more than 36 religious denominations, as well as the sacred art forms of 56 different communities, creating a rich tapestry of some of humanity's most affecting and powerful musical expressions.

Since 2017, we have gone a step further and made this festival a completely free one for all to enjoy, so that there are no barriers to this aural and visual celebration. Esplanade is a charity and not-for-profit organisation. Help keep this festival free by making a contribution at donation boxes placed around Esplanade, or donate online through Giving.sg.

**Free, registration is required for selected programmes.**

### **Festival Opening: Blessings of the Barong**

Eka Suwara Santhi, Gamelan Pinda Sari and Sanggar Langlang Jagat (Singapore/Indonesia)  
12 Apr 2024, Fri, 7pm – 7.30pm  
Esplanade Forecourt Garden



Two mythical figures are ever-present in Bali: the Barong, protector against evil forces and portrayed playfully as a creature with big eyes, clacking jaws and layers of fur; and Rangda, the much-feared though respected witch-widow queen of black magic, with aggressive bulging eyes, large tusks, matted hair, a long tongue and entrails dangling out.

Both Barong and Rangda are imbued with a strong aura of magic: old and authentic masks that bear holy inscriptions are consecrated through a set of rituals, and kept in village temples where they are revered as patron spirits.

The relationship and mythology of Barong and Rangda are complex: one destroys and the other protects; and neither one triumphs over the other permanently, but out of the chaos, balance and order is restored.

#### **The Barong**

Weighing up to 40kg, the Barong has bulging eyes, large ears, and a headdress of gilt leather and shining pieces of mirror. Its hairy body is ornamented with long leaves and colourful feathers up to its upright tail, and glimmers when the Barong moves. Two male dancers control the Barong: the forward dancer supports and moves the head and jaws, while the dancer behind supports and moves in coordination. Their movements have to be completely in sync in order to perform its fast turns and leaps.

As the protector against evil and host of all good forces, the Barong's presence has always been seen as auspicious. Come experience the blessing of the Barong at the festival opening of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music 2024*.

#### About Eka Suwara Santhi

Eka Suwara Santhi was established in 2014 and is Singapore's only Balinese dance group. It performs a variety of Balinese dances ranging from traditional and ancient pieces to modern choreographies. Eka Suwara Santhi also conducts dance and movement workshops from basic to advanced levels. They also conduct lectures and talks on Balinese dance and its cultural and historical associations.

#### About Gamelan Pinda Sari

Led by maestro drummer I Nyoman Kariasa from the Indonesian Institute of Fine Arts (ISI) in Denpasar, Bali, Gamelan Pinda Sari is well-known in Bali for its exuberant playing style. The musicians are all villagers from Pinda in Bali and have performed in Singapore on several occasions.

#### About Sanggar Langlang Jagat

Sanggar Langlang Jagat was set up by I Made Suteja, a well-known dancer in Batuan, Bali. Also known as the Kaki Bebek House group after Suteja's home studio, Sanggar Langlang Jagat performs traditional Balinese dances in the classic *Batuan* style. The group also conducts classes and workshops for adult learners and children.

## Gongkar Great Drum Dance

Gongkar Choede Monastery (India)

12 Apr 2024, Fri, 7.30pm – 8pm

DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 6.45pm & 8.15pm

30mins per session

Esplanade Courtyard



For the first time outside of Tibet and India, witness the grandeur of the Gongkar Choede Great Drum Dance, performed as part of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*.

With giant barrel drums strapped on their backs, Tibetan Buddhist monks skip and dance with sprightly steps, moving in a circle, whipping the drums behind them. Thunderous booms punctuate their footwork, amidst the clanking of ritual cymbals and blasts of giant horns. This dance is a rare sight to behold, as it is only performed once a year at the Great Prayer Gathering held at Gongkar Choede Monastery in Northern India. The only other time this dance is performed is at the Dalai Lama's procession.

Created by Dorjedenpa Kunga Namgyal (1432–1496), the Gongkar Choede Great Drum Dance (or *nga cham*) was one of the many ritual dances associated with the Gongkar Choede Monastery, known as a major tantric study centre in Central Tibet. Following the total cultural transformation that took place with the exile of the Tibetan government in the mid-20th century, the monks eventually settled themselves in Uttarakhand, North India. There, the senior monks continued the ritual traditions that were in danger of fading away, passing them on to a new generation of Gongkar Choede monks.

Today, this ritual dance remains an iconic display of Tibetan Buddhist culture, performed as an act of devotion to the Buddha. It carries the tantric intent of relieving the suffering of all beings, and grants spiritual protection. The practice was revived in the 1990s, thanks to oral

instruction from a former practitioner. Physically fit monks are selected from the community to train for it, and it takes several years to master both the movements and music.

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### **Tēvaram: Garlands of Praise**

Othuvar Vaidyanathan, Viknash Balakrishnan and Shreya Gopi

12 Apr 2024, Fri, 7.30pm – 8pm

14 Apr 2024, Sat, 2.15pm – 2.45pm

Esplanade Concourse



Listen to millennia-old poetry devoted to Shiva, written by wandering saint-poets, which shaped the socio-religious and cultural landscape of South India centuries ago.

In the early seventh and eighth centuries, the Pallava and Chola kingdoms of Southern India were at the height of their power and influence. A movement that cut across the prevalent trends of established Hindu practices emerged, developed by the Tamil-literate poets of the South. This movement, which eventually entered the literature of other languages of the region and the languages of non-literate people, was called *bhakti* (devotion). It stemmed from Tamil saint-poets' rejection of hegemonic ritualistic worship, and was developed to provide a more personal encounter with the divine, one that focused on the physical, visual, and thereby visceral presence of a deity.

The *bhakti* movement was more of a religious lifestyle than a specific sect of Hinduism, and a major force of inclusiveness, especially towards members of lower castes and women. Attitudes towards the gods were more ambiguous here: the gods were not only on the side of devout worshippers, but also on the side of sinners, some of whom did not worship them through mainstream ritual practice. Another central tenement to the idea of *bhakti* is the worshipper's often bold threats to abandon or reject a god if his love was not returned.

It was also during this time that the Nyanmars, a group of wandering saint-poets devoted to Shiva, wrote the Tēvaram, a collection of poems that exalted Shiva as the supreme god. These devotional compositions resonated with the common people of the time, further catalysing the *bhakti* movement throughout South India. The language of these poems departed from the more classical style of earlier Tamil poetry, and were meant to be performed

orally. They have been performed in temples and homes ever since, preserving the Tamil language and cultural heritage.

Many of these poems borrowed themes from the secular Tamil poetry of the time— unrequited and mismatched love in particular—and reworked them to express the anguish of a devotee who is separated from his god. Very often, the saint-poets revealed details of their own lives, writing in first person.

#### About Odhuvaar Sri Vaidhyanathan

Odhuvaar Sri Vaidhyanathan is one of the foremost practitioners of Tēvaram in Singapore and has extensive experience in both teaching and performing. Over the past two decades, he has performed extensively around the region and in India.

#### About Viknash Balakirshnan

Viknash Balakirshnan is a talented mridangam player who received his training at the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society under the guidance of Sri. Chennai K. Deenadayalan and Sri Tiruvarur Vaidyanathan. He began performing at the age of 17 and has since participated in numerous concerts and ensembles, collaborating with local and international artists from various genres. Balakirshnan won first prize in the Mridangam Solo Open Category of the National Indian Music Competition 2004. He is a freelance mridangam accompanist and is dedicated to promoting the versatility of the instrument in the performing arts scene.

#### About Shreya Gopi

Shreya Gopi is a graduate of the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society, where she completed her diploma under the guidance of Guru K. Sivaraman. She has performed in several programmes by SIFAS, the SIFAS Alumni, and the Singapore Indian Orchestra and Choir.

## **Gregorian Chants: Easter Vespers**

Schola Cantorum Sancti Gregorii Magni and Kevin Ardianto

12 Apr 2024, Fri, 7.45pm & 9.15pm

45mins per session

Esplanade Concert Hall (Meet at Concert Hall entrance, 15mins before start time.)

*Patrons who wish to move around to experience the performance from different locations may do so only at Circle 2.*



On Easter evening, the cathedral is lit by candles, shadows dance on the walls as the congregation gazes towards the altar and the intricate, illuminated stained glass above it. An atmosphere of joy fills the sanctuary: it is the feast of Easter, the highest point of the church calendar. Up in the choir gallery, the choir sings in the ancient plainchant—*Alleluia, Alleluia!*, words of praise deemed too joyful to be heard during the season of Lent.

Lent commemorates the 40 days that Jesus Christ spent fasting in the desert in preparation for his ministry. The Eastern Orthodox Church describes Lent as a period of “bright sadness”, where the church community fasts and contemplates Christ’s death on the cross. Lent ends with Easter Sunday, a joyful celebration of Christ’s triumph over death. Easter vespers (evening prayers) are sung: texts describing the miraculous resurrection of Christ interspersed with Psalms 109–113, each ending with *Alleluia*.

These vespers follow the liturgical calendar of the Church, where Gregorian chants of different texts are sung depending on the time of year. The Gregorian chant, a form of plainchant that originated in Rome in the seventh century, marginalised the other indigenous plainchant traditions of the Christian West in the eighth and ninth centuries to become the official music of the Roman Catholic liturgy. Saint Gregory was the patron saint of choirboys and singers, and the name ‘Gregorian Chant’ stemmed from paintings made to honour Gregory. These paintings depicted him with the dove of the Holy Spirit perched on his shoulder, singing God’s authentic form of chant into his ear.

Set in the cavernous Concert Hall with the acoustics adjusted to replicate that of a cathedral’s, experience Easter vespers sung by the Schola Cantorum Sancti Gregorii Magni in a novel way: feel free to sit, stand, or wander around silently, and let the music stir the soul.

## Wayang Wong

Eka Suwara Santhi, Gamelan Pinda Sari and Sanggar Langlang Jagat (Singapore/Indonesia)  
12 Apr 2024, Fri, 8pm & 9.30pm  
1hr each session

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 8.15pm – 9.15pm  
Esplanade Forecourt Garden



*Wayang Wong* (*wayang*: shadow/puppet; *wong*: man) is an ornate court dance-drama, whose origins can be traced back to the East Javanese Majapahit kingdom. The fall of the Majapahit Empire in 1478 AD saw a migration of its population to Bali, bringing along its culture and arts, one of which was *wayang wong*.

The aesthetic and music of *wayang wong* is similar to that of *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry): it is usually accompanied by a large-scale court *gamelan* orchestra, with narrative material taken from the Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Instead of shadow puppets on a screen, human dancers act out the story through 'two-dimensional' movements that imitate the left-right movement of shadow puppets.

The performance of *wayang wong* is a sacred heritage in Tejakula, Northern Bali: original masks from the 16th century are kept in the Pemaksan Temple, and taken out only for the sacred performance, which takes place on a particular day of the calendar (those performing in commercial performances use duplicate masks).

In sacred performances, performers are chosen based on their lineage, their ancestors having made a pact to serve the temple and holy spirits through dance. The performers have to be multi-talented, and are required to learn the dance routines of their specific character, the dialogue and singing, all of which are in the ancient Javanese language of Kawi.

Contrary to the seriousness that one might expect from ritual theatre, the element of comedy is integral to the performance. Performances begin with a preface by two comedic characters, usually stock characters such as a prime minister, a clown, or an old man, before the actual *wayang wong*.

Catch these *Wayang Wong* performances at *A Tapestry of Sacred Music 2024*.

**12 Apr 2024, Fri**

8pm: The Abduction of Sita

9.30pm: The Fight between Subali and Sugriwa

**14 Apr 2024, Sun**

8.15pm: Hanuman the Messenger

About Eka Suwara Santhi

Eka Suwara Santhi was established in 2014 and is Singapore's only Balinese dance group. It performs a variety of Balinese dances ranging from traditional and ancient pieces to modern choreographies. Eka Suwara Santhi also conducts dance and movement workshops from basic to advanced levels. They also conduct lectures and talks on Balinese dance and its cultural and historical associations.

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## Sword Dance of Iwate

Iwasaki Onikenbai

12 Apr 2024, Fri, 8.15pm & 9.45pm

30mins each session

Esplanade Courtyard

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 7.15pm – 8pm

DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade



In the snowy northern prefecture of Iwate, the art of Oni Ken Bai brings graceful movements and flashing swords, to the sounds of Japanese drums and flutes.

Legend has it that it evolved from a prayer dance of En no Gyōja, who is the founder of *Shugendo*, a body of ascetic practices that fuses Japan's indigenous mountain worship, Shintoism, and esoteric Buddhism. At first created to dispel evil spirits, this prayer dance later persisted in Iwate as a tradition that appeases the ancestral spirits of the once powerful clans in the region.

The word “*oni*” roughly translates to ogre, referring to the fierce-looking masks of the dancers. However, far from being malevolent beings, the masks are meant to depict Buddhist guardian deities known as *myō-ō* or Wisdom Kings. Depending on the troupe, a ceremony can consist of up to 18 segments, each with its own flavour.

Some segments involve a strong element of prayer, while others exude a strong martial aspect, with a frenzy of drawn swords. While dancing, Buddhist chants are intoned and the practitioners move in a set of ritual dance steps, which is a vestige of the *onmyōdō* tradition of magic and metaphysics. With each trampling movement, negativity in the land is quelled, alongside prayers for peace, happiness and abundance.

To this end, the dancers must perform continuously and in a state of deep concentration, undistracted by stray thoughts and ego. They enter a heightened spiritual state, much like that witnessed in so many devotional dance forms around the world, a state sometimes described as being at one with the gods.

Today, the tradition of Oni Ken Bai endures in the city of Kitakami, and is practiced with pride by the townsfolk. It is performed at official ceremonies and festivals, and children are taught it in elementary and junior high school ensuring that the torch is carried on by the next generation.

## Thai Buddhist Chants

Wat Ananda Metyarama

12 Apr 2024, Fri, 9pm – 9.30pm

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 8.15pm – 8.45pm

Esplanade Concourse



Clear your mind with the calming and tranquil parittas recited by the ordained chanters of the Thai Monastic Community in Singapore.

Chanting is a part of the daily life of Thai Buddhist monks—the day begins with morning prayers at dawn, and ends with evening prayers at dusk. Chanting is also done during special occasions, such as marking annual celebrations, bestowing blessings on believers, and granting peace to the departed. Experienced monks are expected to recite various chants from memory—some are known to do so with discipline and speed, while others are known for reciting beautifully.

Part of the chant repertoire includes a set of protective texts called *parittas*. Written in the ancient language of Pali, *parittas* are believed to grant listeners protection from harm, be it physical or spiritual, and bestow good fortune.

## **Qasidah: Praise and Remembrance**

Al Khidmah Singapura

12 Apr 2024, Fri, 9.15pm & 10.15pm

30mins each session

DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade



Join Al Khidmah Singapura for an evening of poetic expression aimed at evoking deep feelings of devotion through its rhapsodic nature and calming melodies. The songs feature a range of rhythms, from slow and contemplative to catchy and uplifting.

Not much is known about the origin of *qasidah*, but it is believed to be one of the oldest, most formal and esteemed forms of poetry in the Islamic world. With roots in pre-Islamic tribal and court poetry, *qasidah*, derived from the verb *qasada*, means “to intend” or “aim at”. A poem can run up to more than 100 verses, and is arranged to a single rhythm metre and rhyme scheme. From Arabia, it spread through religion, trade and conquests to Persia, North and East Africa, Central and Southeast Asia.

Historically, *qasidah* was written to be delivered in song. The oldest examples contemplate the poets’ circumstances, praises their tribe or patron, and carries a moral message. Over the centuries, *qasidah* evolved to express social ideals, political commentary and sometimes satire. Poems of religious praise also took prominence, with the most well-known of them being *Qasidah Al-Burdah (Qasidah of the Mantle)*, written in the 11th century by Egyptian poet Imam Al-Busri.

### **The story of Imam Al-Busri**

The story goes that Imam Al-Busri was stricken by semi-paralysis after a stroke. In his despair, he composed the *Qasidah Al-Burdah* in honour of the Prophet Muhammad. While reciting the

poem in sincerity and concentration, sleep came over him, during which he dreamt of the Prophet, who covered the poet gently with his mantle. Imam Al-Busri woke up from the dream, completely cured of his affliction. Ever since, the poem has been venerated by many Sunni Muslims, and has been recited as well as used to decorate the walls of public buildings and mosques. Some believe that reciting the poem confers blessings in life—removing difficulties, curing illnesses and aiding success in different endeavours.

### **From Arabia to Southeast Asia**

In 1200CE, Islam and *qasidah* poetry spread across Southeast Asia with the immigration of Arab traders. The poems were sung in Arabic, with more popular ones, such as the *Qasidah Al-Burdah*, translated into the Malay language as early as before the 1600s. Texts were sung in commemoration of Prophet Muhammad's birthday, in rites of passage as well as weekly religious congregations. Shorter songs with verses taken from the original long-form *qasidahs* were also popularised in performance. The sung poetry is usually accompanied with frame drums such as the Malay *rebana* (equivalent of the Arabic *daff*) and the pear-shape lute, *gambus*.

### About Al Khidmah Singapura

Al Khidmah Singapura consists of individuals from diverse backgrounds, not limited to Madrasah institutes, united by a shared enthusiasm for Islamic music. The ensemble was formed when these young enthusiasts, who gathered for weekly congregational *dzikr* sessions, recognised that their melodious recitations resonated with audiences beyond the faith. Inspired by music of the Hadhrami people of Yemen, their recitations incorporate melody and harmony, as well as Javanese and Banjari influences.

## Hymns from the Land of the Kings

Dada Khan (India)

12 Apr 2024, Fri, 10.30pm – 11.30pm

Esplanade Concourse

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 9.15pm – 10.15pm

DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade



From the desert of western Rajasthan to the world's most coveted music stages, the Manganiyars are folk artists whose unusual origins have brought them beyond the sand dunes. Hailing from obscure villages in western Rajasthan, the Manganiyars are a community of generational musicians who are custodians of an oral heritage dating back centuries. For the Manganiyars, music is more than a means of livelihood—it is their very identity. Their practice stems from a deep-lived understanding of the history and culture of their ancestors and is steeped in epics, stories and myths of the region. The Manganiyars, through their songs, are chroniclers of time.

Embark on a journey through time with the hymns, poetry, stories and songs of the Manganiyars, featuring rare traditional instruments of the community. Let the eminent vocalist Dada Khan, with *tandura* (plucked lute) in hand, transport you to the sand dunes of Rajasthan with music from across *bhakti* and Sufi traditions, from composer-saints and poets such as Kabir, Mirabai, Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif.

### About Dada Khan

Dada Khan and his company of friends come from the Barmer region. Born into a family of incredibly gifted generational musicians, Khan started out as a vocalist, and picked up some instruments in his music journey, but he finally found his calling in the world of *Bhakti* and Sufi poetry. With a *tandura* (plucked lute) in hand, Khan sings powerfully, evocatively and with a meditative quality that has come to be characteristic of his style. He sings *bhajans* (devotional songs) of Kabir and Meera, as well as *qalams* of Sufi mystics like Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif, across languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Rajasthani among others. Khan has also performed at various venues all over the world, in Australia, Europe, Russia and USA.

**Medicine Buddha Sand Mandala**  
Gongkar Choede Monastery (India)

12 – 14 Apr 2024, Fri – Sun  
All day  
Esplanade Concourse



Access your inner sacred space as you follow Tibetan monks in the crafting and destruction of intricate sand mandalas, which are believed to dispel afflictions, and bring healing.

Mandala is a Sanskrit word that roughly translates to “sacred circle”. This image of concentric circles and geometric figures carries great spiritual and ritual significance in Buddhism and Hinduism. Far from being a construct only of Asian philosophies, forms evocative of mandalas have been found in the ruins of the ancient Aztecs and the Navajo Indians.

Used as a tool to help focus the attention and aid in meditation, the mandala can be described as a sacred space, and is believed to help one access deeper levels of consciousness that lead to a sense of unity with the cosmos.

In Tibetan Buddhism, mandalas often depict the abodes of Buddhas and deities, with every object in it representing an aspect of wisdom or a guiding principle. These can be created using different media including paint, thread or sand, with their shapes and colours determined by sacred texts, and each contains different lessons and blessings.

One such mandala is the Medicine Buddha Sand Mandala, attributed to the Medicine Buddha; a figure of enlightenment believed to bring healing and dispel afflictions of all natures. The creation of the Medicine Buddha Sand Mandala typically takes several days. It begins with a team of monks drawing the outline of a mandala with chalk on a wooden platform. Then, starting from the lotus in the centre and working concentrically outwards, the monks use metal funnels to guide grains of dyed sand into the mandala’s elaborate patterns. The coloured sand

is made from ground marble, powdered flowers and herbs or grains. In ancient times, powdered precious and semi-precious gems were also used.

Once the mandala is complete, blessings are sought in a special ceremony. Then, as the monks chant, one begins the mandala's destruction by methodically sweeping the sand -from the perimeter to the centre. The coloured sand is transferred into an urn, then released into flowing water, as a gift to re-energise the earth and the universe. The creation and destruction of the mandala echoes the impermanence of life, providing a reminder of the transient nature of all things in this world.

The ceremonial destruction of the Medicine Buddha Sand Mandala will take place on **14 Apr, Sun, 6pm.**

#### About Gongkar Choede Monastery

For 15 years, our lively drum dance group, made up of 8 performers, has been entertaining crowds at important events in Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. Three talented artists play Tibetan trumpets and cymbals, while the others display their rhythmic skills by playing drums while dancing. With a history of many performances, our group combines traditional arts and lively energy, making a lasting impression on every stage. From the strong beats to the energetic dance, we create a special and exciting show that showcases our dedication to the arts over the years.

## Workshop: An Introduction to Throat Singing

Huun-Huur-Tu (Tuva)

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Esplanade Recital Studio



Get a glimpse into what is arguably one of the world's oldest forms of music making—*xöömei* with renowned throat singers Huun-Huur-Tu. *Khoomei* or *xöömei* is the art of singing two or more notes at a time by manipulating the muscles of the throat, mimicking the sounds of the land, honouring earth, animal, water and sky. The song transports listeners to a world of rushing waters, whistling winds, galloping horses and fluty birdsong.

Find out how the Tuvan's belief in spirits is reflected in their musical practices and learn how natural sounds are mimetically transformed into music representations.

### About Huun-Huur-Tu

Huun-Huur-Tu come from Tuva, a Russian federative republic, a sparsely settled region of grasslands, boreal forests, and mountain ridges that lies just north of Mongolia. The indigenous folk music of the group formed in 1992 highlights rare and native Tuvan instruments and preserves what is arguably some of the world's oldest forms of music-making. The best-known genre of Tuvan music, *xöömei* (throat-singing), comprises what one might call a lexicon of musical onomatopoeia, in which natural sounds are mimetically transformed into musical representations.

Recognised as one of the foremost proponents of Tuvan throat-singing, Huun-Huur-Tu has released several albums and toured extensively to international festivals and prestigious venues, introducing Tuvan throat singing to audiences around the world. Their collaborations include artists from Ry Cooder to The Kronos Quartet. In 2009, Huun-Huur-Tu collaborated with electronic musician and record producer Carmen Rizzo (Niyaz, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Paul Oakenfold, Seal) for the album *Eternal*, a unique blend of ambient electronic and sonic textures compared to the style of Brian Eno. Their music has also been featured in films, video games and television series.

## Bringing It Back to Church

Callie Day (USA)

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 2pm – 3.15pm

Esplanade Concert Hall



Let your spirits soar in the presence of gifted vocalist Callie Day. Experience in the flesh, the exuberant and moving gospel music that not only transmits the remarkable heritage of African American culture and identity, but also celebrates centuries of joys and sorrows of its people.

*I looked over Jordan and what did I see?*

*A band of angels comin' for me*

*Comin' for to carry me home*

- lyrics from *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*

From its beginnings over 200 years ago, gospel music is deeply rooted in the African American experience – as early negro spirituals in the days of slavery, and as uplifting anthems in the oppression that continued in the struggle for civil rights. Gospel music has always been a source of comfort and a beacon of hope for the community.

Spirituals are the early religious folksongs that originated from enslaved Africans, sung in informal prayer gatherings in the 1700s. With their traditional drums taken from them and their traditional faiths replaced by Christianity, these songs were one of few outlets for their soaring emotions, sung raw with dancing and handclaps, sometimes even ecstatic trance.

Some songs even carried hidden messages—*Swing Low* was a reference to how antislavery activists were coming by to the south (swing low) to guide the slaves north to freedom (carry me home) through a secret network of escape routes.

After the abolition of slavery, prayer meetings moved into church buildings of the African American community and the music too evolved over time, with access to instruments and layered arrangements. The churches were hothouses of musical talent, where African American musicians developed their skills and encouraged each other in worship. Their music influenced, and was in turn, influenced by the popular music of each era, with celebrated artists

like Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston and countless others emerging from a gospel music background.

Beyond that, the church remains a safe and free space for the community to be their authentic selves, as America continues to navigate complicated racial dynamics to this day. Within the houses of worship, music transmits a heritage of African American culture and identity, celebrates, and shares in the collective joys and sorrows of the people.

#### About Callie Day

Calesta "Callie" Day is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, USA. She is an educator, artist, vocalist and vocal instructor. She is a multi-talented and gifted woman of God, with a range of vocal abilities. Her anointed style, production and spiritual perceptiveness has proven her as one of the most dynamic and compelling talents of the genre. She has travelled extensively, performing across the nation, and in Europe and Central America. Recently, Callie has taken social media by storm as fans all over the USA have captured her amazing voice in videos that have gone viral.

## Talk: Rumi & Music of the Whirling Dervishes

Kudsi Erguner (Türkiye)

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 2.30pm – 3.30pm

Esplanade Bay Room (Meet at Esplanade Concert Hall entrance, 15mins before start time.)



The ceremonies of the Whirling Dervishes of the Mevlevi Sufi Order have captivated viewers with its mesmerising beauty and solemn music. Through physical active meditation, the devotees spin in circles wearing robes of pure white, bringing them to a state that allows a personal experience of the divine. Though sometimes known to the outside world as an iconic cultural expression of Türkiye, little is understood of the significance and symbolisms of the act of whirling and of the music. In this session, master *ney* flute player and UNESCO Artist for Peace Kudsi Erguner will give an introduction of the intricacies of the Mevlevi ceremonies and music.

### About Kudsi Erguner

Kudsi Erguner is one of the foremost *ney* (Turkish reed-flute) masters of our times. He is also considered as an authority of traditional Sufi music. Erguner has, in a series of internationally acclaimed projects, introduced Ottoman and Sufi music to the world. He lives and works in Paris as a musician, composer, musicologist, teacher and author.

Erguner was born into a musical family with Sufi tradition stretching back four generations. He is the only Turkish musician of his generation to have been taught the *ney* in the classic aural tradition by his father, Ulvi Erguner, who was the last great master of that instrument, and the former director of Radio İstanbul. In his parents' house, young Erguner was fortunate enough to meet many established musicians from the older generation that held the key to Sufi tradition. Hundreds of years of musical culture that strive towards freedom and ecstasy are embodied in Erguner's music and playing.

He has performed and collaborated with a wide range of internationally celebrated artists such as Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, Markus Stockhausen, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and Jordi Savall amongst others. Erguner is also renowned for his collaboration with Peter Gabriel for the soundtrack of Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

## **A Journey into the Motherland**

Gurmat Sangeet Academy at the Sikh Centre  
13 Apr 2024, Sat, 3.30pm – 4.30pm  
Esplanade Concourse



Be enthralled by the various music styles of the Sikhs, played on traditional Sikh instruments by singers and musicians from Gurmat Sangeet Academy, regulars at *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*. Hear upbeat Punjabi folk songs, the melodious *qawwals* of northwestern India and Pakistan, and the exquisite rhythms of South India.

*“Whosoever listens to kirtan or sings kirtan of Hari shall be free of all ills.”*  
– Guru Granth Shahib

In Sikh tradition, no ceremony, occasion or event is complete without the singing of *kirtan*, which is a devotional hymn in praise of God. A recognised form of congregational prayer, it has, according to the scriptures, the ability to cleanse the mind of all impurities physical and sensual; liberate one from the yoke of time and death; cast away disease, sorrow and suffering; and bring peace and bliss.

### **Understanding the Sikh religion**

In Punjabi, the word “sikh” means “disciple”, and central to the faith is the relationship between the Sikh and his master, who guides him through the teachings and writings of the 10 Gurus. Sikhism is rooted in oneness and love, and encourages a life of servitude and spirituality. It is the belief that to lead a good life, one must work hard and live honestly, treat everyone equally, serve others, be generous to the less fortunate, and keep God close in the heart and mind at all times.

### **Hymns of Praise**

Music is a central part of worship, with the religion’s 16th century founders being skilled poets, composers and musicians. The foremost of them was Guru Nanak, who wrote his teachings

and revelations in poems, which he sang with his companion Bhai Mardana, a bard who played the *rabab* (a plucked string instrument).

Over time, Guru Nanak's hymns as well as those of his nine successors were compiled into what became the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. In the book, the hymns of the Gurus are grouped under 31 *raags* or *ragas*, modes characterised by a specific series of notes and path melodies. Each *raga* has a name, an associated time of day or year when it is best performed, and a specific emotion it is meant to induce.

In the hands of his spiritual successors and devout Sikhs, this musical tradition flourished as a means of spiritual elevation as they created and developed new *ragas*, styles and musical instruments. Continuing the tradition, the singing and contemplation of these hymns occur day and night at Sikh temples all over the world.

#### About Gurmat Sangeet Academy at the Sikh Centre

Established in 1999, the Gurmat Sangeet Academy is a not-for-profit school for Sikh music, dedicated to raising awareness of *kirtans* (Sikh hymns) and *katha* (discourse) through education, performance and outreach. Open to all ages and musicians of all backgrounds, the academy also teaches stringed and percussive instruments that feature in Sikh music, such as the *taus*, *sarangji*, *dilruba*, *tabla* and *jori*.

For this performance, students and alumni of the academy, led by champions of the Gurmat Sangeet Competition 2023, present musical compositions by instructors Arvinder Singh who has taught for over 15 years, and Gurminder Singh who trained at the renowned Jawaddi Taksal school of music. The performance is choreographed and produced by the academy's Head of Music, Rajeshpal Singh.

## Food at the Foyer: A Langgar Experience

Central Sikh Gurdwara Board

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 4.30pm – 5.30pm

Esplanade Theatre Foyer



Indulge in a soul-nourishing *langgar* experience, where every bite is a taste of tradition, and every meal a celebration of unity and compassion.

*Langgar* is a communal kitchen, typically at a *gurdwara* (place of worship) where free meals are served to all visitors regardless of their background. This practice, which began in the 13th century, is rooted in Sikh teachings of equality and selfless service, and symbolises the importance of sharing and caring for one another. Food served during *langgar* is usually vegetarian, usually consisting of lentil soups, *dal* and *chapati*.

After immersing yourself in the soulful hymns at the performance at the concourse, we warmly welcome you to join us for the *langgar* experience happening right after.

Embark on this immersive journey and explore the rich tapestry of tradition, community, and culinary delights that encapsulate the essence of visiting a *gurdwara*. As a symbol of hospitality and communal spirit, the food served during *langgar* is absolutely free for everyone to enjoy!

## Exchange: Sacred Guardians

Iwasaki Onikenbai & Zhong Lian Dian Folk Arts (Japan/Singapore)

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 4.30pm – 5.30pm

Esplanade Recital Studio



The concept of spiritual guardians can be found across cultures and belief systems. Spiritual guardians are often personified by devotees during ceremonies for various purposes, such as dispelling evil and bringing blessings to the community.

In the Northern Japanese prefecture of Iwate, the heritage ritual of Oni Ken Bai is performed by the townsfolk of Kitakami. Wearing masks representing Buddhist guardians and brandishing swords, performers stamp the ground to purify the land.

In Singapore, the folk tradition of Guan Jiang Shou, which originated from Taiwan, has been incorporated into local Chinese religious celebrations and processions. Devotees apply elaborate face paint, and carry weapons to depict the generals of the underworld. Moving in symbolic formations, the generals clear the path of evil spirits, bringing them back to stand trial in the court of the nether world.

Join this exchange between members of Iwasaki Onikenbai and Zhong Lian Dian Folk Arts as they share the differences and similarities in their traditions. Gain insight into the significance and processes of their artistic practices within their respective communities.

### About Zhong Lian Dian Folk Arts

Zhong Lian Dian Folk Arts (中蓮殿官将首八将团) is the first troupe in Singapore that presents the Guan Jiang Shou 官将首 (senior officials) and Ba Jiang 八将团 (eight generals) performances. It is also the only local group that is recognised in Taiwan, from which these folk processions originated. The troupe practises the Taiwanese style of face painting, and has continually perfected the art of Guan Jiang Shou with Chinese martial arts. The troupe has participated in festive celebrations across Singapore and Malaysia, and aims to promote and preserve Chinese traditional arts and culture.

## Muezzins of İstanbul

Imams Bekir Büyükbaş and Yunus Balcıoğlu (Türkiye)

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 6.30pm – 7.20pm

Esplanade Concert Hall (Circle 3 Foyer)

(Meet at Concert Hall entrance, 15mins before start time.)



Two of the most prominent muezzins in İstanbul, Imams (religious leaders) Bekir Büyükbaş and Yunus Balcıoğlu, will showcase the artistry of Quran recitation, under the glass domes of the Esplanade Concert Hall foyer. An honoured and respected role in Islamic communities, a muezzin is a practitioner appointed to recite the Ezan based on his mastery and expression of Quran recitation, as well as religiosity. This session culminates at sunset with the Ezan\* (Islamic call to prayer).

### About Quranic recitation

Central to Islamic worship and devotion is the memorisation and recitation of the Quran, which is done through melodic reading of the text. More than mere singing, there are codified systems by which pronunciation and rhythmic cadence of every syllable are governed.

Seven recognised lineages or recitation styles exist—known as *qira'at*, they were associated with different prominent reciter-scholars of the 2nd and 3rd centuries after the revelation of the Quran. These reciter-scholars came from the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Damascus in Syria, as well as Kufa and Basra in modern-day Iraq; each of the seven lineages reflects the dialectic differences that existed amongst Arabic speakers of the time.

In addition to the rules that ensure fidelity of recitation, emotion and beauty are woven into the vocal delivery of the sacred texts, through the usage of different musical modes known as *maqam*. *Maqams* are used in all music of the Middle East, and to most foreign ears, gives the music of the region its signature flavours. In Quran recitation however, the approaches of using the *maqams* are more specific, and they are chosen to create feelings of introspection,

humility, steadfastness, or compassion, and selected to match the emotional content of the text.

### **Mastery of recitation for transcendence**

Religious scholars further formalised rules of recitation called *tajwid*, which standardised intonation, phonetics and punctuation. This became increasingly important as Islam spread to more non-Arabic speakers—giving them clear guidelines on how to recite the Quranic texts in the way that the Prophet Muhammad was said to have pronounced them.

Mastery over these sets of rules is expected by at least one member of every Islamic community, although it is a personal obligation of all members to practise it. Beyond rules and obligation, the recitation of the Quran is an art in itself; and in its aesthetics, invokes in Muslims a profound sense of spirituality and transcendence.

*\* The venue will remain open as a contemplative space for patrons, up to 20 minutes after the end of the performance.*

### About Imams Bekir Büyükbaş and Yunus Balcıoğlu

Imams Bekir Büyükbaş and Yunus Balcıoğlu are prominent muezzins in İstanbul, Türkiye, and are recognised for their knowledge and mastery of Quranic recitation.

## **Sound to Silence with Ancient Singing Bowls**

Sound To Ground

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 7.20pm – 7.50pm

Esplanade Concourse



Experience a meditative 30-minute sound journey, guided by Sound To Ground founder and healing arts practitioner, Amanda Ling. Immerse yourself in the mystical tones of ancient singing bowls, and find solace in both the resonant sounds and the profound silence that follows each note. Allow the rich, harmonic overtones to gently lift and ground your spirit, guiding you towards a state of clarity, calmness, and inner peace.

### About Sound To Ground

Amanda Ling, founder of Sound To Ground, a creative wellness brand, has over two decades of experience as an established musician, DJ, educator, yoga teacher, sound healer, and decluttering consultant. She combines the creative arts with wellness through heart-centred and reflective approaches, drawing on ancient wisdom and practices for modern applications.

A senior apprentice at Shima Healing Institute with Akiko Igarashi, she has deepened her mastery of sound healing, and her commitment to sharing authentic healing is evident in her work. She leads enriching sound healing experiences, curates bespoke soundscapes for various settings, and facilitates workshops for a diverse range of audiences, including corporate sectors, music and wellness festivals and retreats.

Amanda holds an MA in Arts Pedagogy and Practice from LASALLE (2021), awarded by Goldsmiths, University of London, reflecting her dedication to harmonising the creative arts with healing practices.

## Throat Singers of Tuva

Huun-Huur-Tu (Tuva)

13 Apr 2024, Sat, 8.45pm – 10pm

Esplanade Concert Hall

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 9.30pm – 10.30pm

DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade



Take in the sounds of the land, nomadic life and nature with Tuvan ensemble Huun-Huur-Tu, arguably the most well-known throat-singers in the world today.

Known as *khorekter* or *khoomer* or *xöömer*, Tuvan throat singing comprises a family of multi-voiced, overtone-rich vocal techniques common to Tibetan, Altaian and Mongolian cultures, but rarely heard in the rest of the world, and certainly fits nowhere in Western music theory.

For centuries, the call of the Tuvan throat singer has resounded in the steppes of Tuva. Sometimes it consists of high, fluty whistles like birdsong. Sometimes it is a heavy, croaking

chest drone that seems to come from deep within the bowels of the earth. At other times, it trills like a bubbling brook or thrums like galloping horses.

A place like no other, Tuva is a sparsely populated region between Siberia and Mongolia that remained a mystery through the Soviet era. It is a land of boundless steppes, fir forests, jagged mountains, glacial lakes and vast meadows, sharp with bitter cold, and alive with the whistle of wind, the rush of waters and the call of birdsong.

It is here that Tuvan throat singing is practised by herdsman, hunters, shamans and everyday people (traditionally men) in the mountains, on the plains, in their yurts – to communicate with the spirits of nature, to establish harmony between man and earth, to tell their stories of wild horses, legendary hunts and nomadic life, to express loss or love, or simply to pass the time.

With Russia's late 20th century capitalism however, more and more Tuvan throat singers have been invited to perform at international music festivals and on world stages. But the thing is, Tuvan throat singing was never really a public art.

It is traditionally sung by one person who occasionally may accompany himself on a bowed or plucked string instrument. And it is sung for purposes other than performance and entertainment, such as praise and shamanistic appeals for protection and harmony.

Today, while throat singing is still practiced as part of the traditional Tuvan way of life, the younger generation has begun to depart from tradition. Since the 1990s, ensembles have incorporated non-traditional instrumentation and arrangements into the traditional. There have been numerous cross-cultural and cross-genre explorations and collaborations, such as with Western chamber orchestras and jazz, blues and rock artists. Purists have decried this trend, but others feel that this is how Tuvan throat singing lives on and stays relevant.

#### About Huun-Huur-Tu

Huun-Huur-Tu come from Tuva, a Russian federative republic, a sparsely settled region of grasslands, boreal forests, and mountain ridges that lies just north of Mongolia. The indigenous folk music of the group formed in 1992 highlights rare and native Tuvan instruments and preserves what is arguably some of the world's oldest forms of music-making. The best-known genre of Tuvan music, *xöömei* (throat-singing), comprises what one might call a lexicon of musical onomatopoeia, in which natural sounds are mimetically transformed into musical representations.

Recognised as one of the foremost proponents of Tuvan throat-singing, Huun-Huur-Tu has released several albums and toured extensively to international festivals and prestigious venues, introducing Tuvan throat singing to audiences around the world. Their collaborations include artists from Ry Cooder to The Kronos Quartet. In 2009, Huun-Huur-Tu collaborated with electronic musician and record producer Carmen Rizzo (Niyaz, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Paul Oakenfold, Seal) for the album *Eternal*, a unique blend of ambient electronic and sonic textures compared to the style of Brian Eno. Their music has also been featured in films, video games and television series.

## **The Night Ritual of Calon Arang**

Eka Suwara Santhi, Gamelan Pinda Sari and Sanggar Langlang Jagat (Singapore/Indonesia)  
13 Apr 2024, Sat, 10.30pm – 11.30pm  
Esplanade Forecourt Garden



Witness the drama of *Calon Arang*, a Balinese ritual theatre performance in a special late-night set at the Balinese Temple Stage at the Esplanade Forecourt Garden.

### **Barong, the protector and Rangda, the destroyer**

Two mythical figures are ever-present in Bali: the Barong, protector against evil forces and portrayed playfully as a creature with big eyes, clacking jaws and layers of fur; and Rangda, the much-feared though respected witch-widow queen of black magic, with aggressive bulging eyes, large tusks, matted hair, a long tongue and entrails dangling out.

Both Barong and Rangda are imbued with a strong aura of magic: old and authentic masks that bear holy inscriptions are consecrated through a set of rituals, and kept in village temples where they are revered as patron spirits.

The relationship and mythology of Barong and Rangda are complex: one destroys and the other protects; and neither one triumphs over the other permanently, but out of the chaos, balance and order is restored.

### **The Night Ritual of Calon Arang**

Barong and Rangda both feature in village drama performances, the best known of which is *Calon Arang*, based on an ancient East Javanese legend, named after the powerful widow-protagonist of the legend. To the Balinese, black magic is a living reality, and is practiced by some communities on the island. With the *Calon Arang* drama laden with such magic, it is performed in village temples, or ominous places such as cemeteries, to ward off an epidemic and restore order in the community.

As the story goes, *Calon Arang* is a widow and practitioner of black magic, with the ability to communicate with the spirits. She owns two powerful books of black magic, and because of her power, nobody dares marry her beautiful daughter. Furious, she brings about an epidemic to destroy the kingdom. Directing her followers in a ritual, young maidens dressed in white perform a dance that is the antithesis of Balinese classical dance.

The king, having heard of *Calon Arang's* intentions, sends his minister to fight her. (In another version, the prime minister marries *Calon Arang's* daughter and steals her black magic books. In a rage, she directs her followers to bring about destruction).

When the minister approaches, *Calon Arang* appears as the incarnation of Rangda. The villagers try to attack Rangda but she casts a spell to turn them against themselves; and the performance culminates in the famous scene, where the villagers stab themselves with their *keris* (asymmetrical daggers).

Barong appears, and his magic protects the villagers from self-harm, eventually overcoming Rangda's spell, bringing about peace and order. Throughout the ritual, the village priests control the proceedings, reviving entranced participants with holy water and incense.

#### About Eka Suwara Santhi

Eka Suwara Santhi was established in 2014 and is Singapore's only Balinese dance group. It performs a variety of Balinese dances ranging from traditional and ancient pieces to modern choreographies. Eka Suwara Santhi also conducts dance and movement workshops from basic to advanced levels. They also conduct lectures and talks on Balinese dance and its cultural and historical associations.

#### About Gamelan Pinda Sari

Led by maestro drummer I Nyoman Kariasa from the Indonesian Institute of Fine Arts (ISI) in Denpasar, Bali, Gamelan Pinda Sari is well-known in Bali for its exuberant playing style. The musicians are all villagers from Pinda in Bali and have performed in Singapore on several occasions.

#### About Sanggar Langlang Jagat

Sanggar Langlang Jagat was set up by I Made Suteja, a well-known dancer in Batuan, Bali. Also known as the Kaki Bebek House group after Suteja's home studio, Sanggar Langlang Jagat performs traditional Balinese dances in the classic *Batuan* style. The group also conducts classes and workshops for adult learners and children.

## **Sunday Morning Gospel**

Callie Day (USA)

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 11am – 12pm

Esplanade Concourse



Feel your spirits lift with gifted vocalist Callie Day and her band in this acoustic Sunday morning gospel experience, filled with favourites from the African American church tradition.

Experience in the flesh, the exuberant and moving gospel music that not only transmits the remarkable heritage of African American culture and identity, but also celebrates centuries of joys and sorrows of its people.

### **About gospel music**

From its beginnings over 200 years ago, gospel music is deeply rooted in the African American experience – as early negro spirituals in the days of slavery, and as uplifting anthems in the oppression that continued in the struggle for civil rights. Gospel music has always been a source of comfort and a beacon of hope for the community.

Spirituals are the early religious folksongs that originated from enslaved Africans, sung in informal prayer gatherings in the 1700s. With their traditional drums taken from them and their traditional faiths replaced by Christianity, these songs were one of few outlets for their soaring emotions, sung raw with dancing and handclaps, sometimes even ecstatic trance.

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*I looked over Jordan and what did I see?  
A band of angels comin' for me  
Comin' for to carry me home  
- lyrics from *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot**

After the abolition of slavery, prayer meetings moved into church buildings of the African American community and the music too evolved over time, with access to instruments and layered arrangements. The churches were hothouses of musical talent, where African American musicians developed their skills and encouraged each other in worship. Their music influenced, and was in turn, influenced by the popular music of each era, with celebrated artists like Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston and countless others emerging from a gospel music background.

Beyond that, the church remains a safe and free space for the community to be their authentic selves, as America continues to navigate complicated racial dynamics to this day. Within the houses of worship, music transmits a heritage of African American culture and identity, celebrates, and shares in the collective joys and sorrows of the people.

#### About Callie Day

Calesta “Callie” Day is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, USA. She is an educator, artist, vocalist and vocal instructor. She is a multi-talented and gifted woman of God, with a range of vocal abilities. Her anointed style, production and spiritual perceptiveness has proven her as one of the most dynamic and compelling talents of the genre. She has travelled extensively, performing across the nation, and in Europe and Central America. Recently, Callie has taken social media by storm as fans all over the USA have captured her amazing voice in videos that have gone viral.

## Talk: Unveiling the Fusion of Dance and Religion in Balinese Rituals

Dr Irving Chan Johnson

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 1pm – 2pm

Esplanade Recital Studio



In this talk led by Dr Irving Chan Johnson, learn about how dance and religion are intrinsic components of Balinese temple ceremonies. Gain an understanding of how temples are sites of artistic and theatrical activity, with case studies from Balinese genres such as *Calon Arang* and *Wayang Wong*.

While the performing arts of Bali, Indonesia are diverse and complex, almost every form of music, dance and drama originates from a ritual function. The purpose of these dances is to appease the deities and ancestral spirits of Bali, as well as to express the values that Balinese philosophy holds high, such as balance and harmony. All Balinese performers thus strive to achieve *taksu* (spiritual charisma), in which the artist can enrapture both the divine and human audience.

### About Dr Irving Chan Johnson

Growing up listening to stories of corpse chin oil, violent deaths and magic from his Kelantanese Thai mother and grandfather, Dr Irving Chan Johnson has had a long-standing interest in Southeast Asia, particularly in the areas of art, traditional performance and borderland identities and religion. Irving graduated with a PhD in Social Anthropology from Harvard University in 2004, where he worked on issues of marginality, borders, movements and history in Kelantan's northern frontier. He has studied Balinese masked dance (*topeng*) and classical Thai dance. Irving is also an accomplished Thai mural painter and has conducted workshops on Thai visual art in Singapore and abroad. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, where he teaches art and anthropology, and specialised classes in Thai traditional art, traditional dance in Southeast Asia and Balinese theatre.

## Sacred Organ Works

Dong-ill Shin (South Korea)

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 3pm – 4pm

Esplanade Concert Hall



Experience sacred organ works from different countries and periods, performed by established organist Dong-ill Shin. This recital will be played on Singapore's largest—4,470 pipes and 61 stops—pipe organ, built by German organ builders Johannes Klais Orgelbau.

### Programme\*:

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <i>Toccata BWV 538</i>                         | J.S. Bach    |
| <i>Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Ehr BWV 664</i>  | J.S. Bach    |
| <i>'Tierce en taille' from Gloria</i>          | N. de Grigny |
| <i>Litanie</i>                                 | J. Alain     |
| <i>There is a Happy Land</i>                   | G. Shearing  |
| <i>I Love Thee, My Lord</i>                    | G. Shearing  |
| <i>Jesus is All the World to Me</i>            | D. Hustad    |
| <i>Amazing Grace</i>                           | C. Pardini   |
| <i>Tu es Petra from Esquisses Byzantines</i>   | H. Mulet     |
| <i>Prière à Notre Dame from Suite Gothique</i> | L. Böellmann |

\*not in order of performance

### About the organ

With one of the largest solo repertoire of any musical instrument, the organ has traditionally been used to accompany voices in praise of God, with a body of music inspired by or written for the Christian church.

From its earliest form with seven pipes of different sizes played by mouth, its design has evolved through time, influenced, among other factors, by its changing role as a status symbol in the Byzantine court in 757 AD.

By the 15th century, pedals, ebony keys and new parts were introduced to the instrument to enable performance of polyphonic choral pieces that were popular at the time. Tones were made possible, bass could be emphasised and keyboards were placed closer together so that one person could play them both. Builders created instruments more suited to church acoustics. Aesthetically, pipe organs grew more elaborate and richly adorned, and by the 20th century, the organ's full power was evident.

With so much of its repertoire composed to induce a meditative state, or to communicate grandeur and power, the sound of a pipe organ is best described as majestic, moving and profound; this is music inspired by, and aspiring to, the heights of religious fervour. In turn, it has long been acknowledged for its ability to deepen worshippers' sense of connection with God.

#### About Dong-ill Shin

Organist Dong-ill Shin has been hailed as "one of the world's most promising talents of his generation" (*Echo Republicain*, France) and as having "formidable discipline and considerable musicality" (*Dallas Morning*, USA) and "an amazing technique, sensibility, and talent" (*ABC*, Spain).

Shin debuted as a pianist with The Busan Philharmonic Orchestra at the age of 10 and began his organ studies with Dr. Sun-woo Choo at 14 years old. Having majored in Organ Performance and Church Music under Dr. Tong-soon Kwak at Yonsei University in Seoul, he graduated with a Bachelor of Music in 1997. Shin furthered his studies in France with Jean Boyer and received Diplôme National d'Etudes Supérieures Musicales from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Lyon. He later enrolled in the prestigious Cycle de Perfectionnement Program and studied under Olivier Latry and Michel Bouvard at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris.

Shin has won numerous international accolades at competitions such as the Musashino-Tokyo International Organ Competition, the Prague Spring International Music Festival and Competition, the St. Albans International Organ Competition, and the Grand Prix de Chartres International Organ Competition.

A prolific performer, Shin has held concerts all over the world and played at prestigious venues such as the Grand Auditorium de Radio (France), Cathédrale de Notre Dame (France), Bartok National Concert Hall (Budapest), Meyerson Symphony Hall and the Methuen Memorial Music Hall (USA), Mariinsky Concert Hall (Russia), Musashino Bunkakaikan (Japan), Victoria Concert Hall (Singapore), Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall, Forbidden City National Concert Hall (China), Lotte Concert Hall (Korea) and Melbourne Town Hall (Australia). He has also performed at the Washington National Cathedral, St. Patrick's Cathedral (New York City) and the First Congregational Church (Los Angeles). He has played at several music festivals, including the Monaco International Organ Festival, Chartres International Organ Festival, St. Albans International Festival, Nuremberg International Festival, the Festival du Comminges, and International Bamboo Organ Festival.

Shin has played under the baton of Jean-Claude Casadessus, Yoel Levi, Hans Graf, Myungwhun Chung and Thierry Fischer. He has also collaborated with musicians, such as Sumi Cho and Yo Yo Ma. He has premiered new works by Unsook Chin and Joel Martinson and has been commissioning new works for organ and saenghwang. His collaboration with saenghwang player Hyoyoung Kim has been highly praised as a "wonderful collaboration between two instruments that have different backgrounds but have the same way of producing

sound. They show how a Korean traditional instrument can marry with a typical Western instrument.”

He has been a featured artist on KBS Radio (Korea), NHK Satellite Television (Japan), France Musique, Radio France, and MEZZO Television (France), Lithuanian National Television, Hungarian National Radio, Spanish National Radio, Bayerischer Rundfunk Radio, Radio Luxembourg, Australian 'Art and Sound' Radio, and WCRB, UPR, KBYU, and Pipedreams in the USA.

Shin held music positions for over 10 years in the USA before moving back to his native South Korea in 2011. He is currently Professor of Organ and University Organist at Yonsei University, Seoul.

## Call to the Divine: Music of Sufi Rites

Kudsi Erguner & Muezzins of İstanbul (Türkiye)

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 4.30pm – 5.45pm

Esplanade Theatre



Be entranced by the sounds of centuries-old Sufi music in this performance of ceremonial preludes and mystic songs. *Ney* master Kudsi Erguner and two of the most prominent Turkish Islamic vocalists, Imams Bekir Büyükbaş and Yunus Balcıoğlu, alongside percussionist Bruno Caillat, present a repertoire of music from whirling dervish rituals (*ayin*) and various brotherhoods (*İlahî*), as well as *ghazals* from Sufi Poets.

### The significance and symbolism of the whirling dervish

A plaintive song, accompanied by a drum and flute starts up. Wearing a tall hat (*sikke*) to represent the tombstone of his ego, and dressed in a flowing robe symbolising the ego's shroud, the Sufi whirling dervish starts to spin around meditatively, his robe fanning out like a flower. As the music progresses, the dervish removes his cloak, symbolising a spiritual rebirth. Crossing his hands over his shoulders, he embodies the picture of unity with God.

Sufism is an aspect of Islam that emphasises the emotional experience of God's presence, and its followers believe that these experiences of divine truth and love can be attained through personal encounters with God. The earliest form of Sufism can be traced back to the Umayyad Dynasty in the 7th century. Later on, numerous preachers who built communities had orders (*tarikât*) named after them, such as the Qadiris from Sheikh Abdülkadir al-Jilânî in the 11th century and the Naqshbandis from Bahâ'uddîn Naqshband in the 14th century.

Each brotherhood carries a lineage of spiritual poetry, which was combined with music for use in prayer ceremonies. Of which, the most often represented are the Mevlevi whirling dervish ceremonies (*sema*) which originated from the famous Sufi mystic and poet Jalaluddin Rumi in the 13th century. He would fast, meditate, and dance to reach a state of transcendent enlightenment.

Integral to the music is the Turkish *ney* (a vertical or end-blown flute). With its mournful sound, it is said to represent the intense longing of the human soul and body for the love of God. Kudsi Erguner describes it in an interview with J.Y. Atlas,

“The importance of the *ney* lies in the fact that it is made from hollow reeds. The metaphor is that those who want to be open to the high inspiration, need to be clean and empty like the insides of the reed flute. You have to become like the *ney*. You have to let God blow through you.

As such, if there is no *ney*, you cannot properly perform the ceremony because when the *ney* is not played, there is separation; when the *ney* is played, there is unity. Separation is the life of this world. Since we are here, we are in separation, but we have this innate yearning for unity.”

#### About Kudsi Erguner

Musician, composer, musicologist, teacher and author Kudsi Erguner is one of the foremost *ney* (Turkish reed flute) masters of our time and an authority of traditional Sufi music who has introduced Ottoman and Sufi music to the world.

Born in Diyarbakır into a family of musicians following the Sufi tradition, Erguner is the only Turkish musician of his generation to learn the *ney* in the classic aural tradition. In 1975, he moved to Paris to study architecture and musicology. Erguner has published many field recordings of traditional music, and made studio recordings of music from the 16th century Ottoman repertoire.

Erguner has performed and collaborated with a wide range of internationally celebrated artists including Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, Alexandre Desplat, Nusret Fathi Ali Khan, and ensembles like the Hillard Ensemble and the New Ensemble. Based in Paris, he has also released more than a hundred albums dedicated to different aspects of Ottoman music, and published books in French.

In 1981, Erguner founded the RUMI association, an institute for the study of the classical music and teachings of the original traditions of Sufis. He gives conferences on Sufism and Sufi music all over the world and leads two small communities connected to the Mevlevi tradition; one in Paris and one in İstanbul. In 2014, Erguner was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Bulent Ecevit University in Türkiye and was designated a UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2016. He is a professor at the Rotterdam Conservatory (CODARTS), and conducts master classes (Birun) at the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice.

He performed in Singapore with the Kudsi Erguner Ensemble at the Esplanade Concert Hall as part of Esplanade’s *A Tapestry of Sacred Music* in 2018.

#### About the Muezzins of İstanbul

Imams Bekir Büyükbaş and Yunus Balcıoğlu are prominent muezzins in İstanbul, Türkiye, and are recognised for their knowledge and mastery of Quranic recitation.

## Pipe Organ Tour

Dr Evelyn Lim

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 5pm, 6pm & 7pm

30mins per session

Esplanade Concert Hall

(Meet at Concert Hall entrance, 15mins before start time.)



Come for an exclusive backstage tour to see Singapore's largest pipe organ up close. Three storeys high, the pipe organ in the Esplanade Concert Hall has 4,740 pipes and weighs about 25 tonnes (or five elephants). This is your chance to examine the pipes and mechanisms of this magnificent Klais organ in person, and discover how the instrument makes a range of sounds, from a tiny whistle to a monstrous growl.

[Find out more about Esplanade's pipe organ >](#)

### **Kecak: Sanghyang Dedari**

Eka Suwara Santhi, Gamelan Pinda Sari and Sanggar Langlang Jagat (Singapore/Indonesia)

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 6.30pm – 7.00pm

Esplanade Forecourt Garden



Witness the graceful ceremonial dances and frenzied interlocking vocals in this performative version of the *sanghyang* and *kecak*, at the Balinese Temple Stage at the Esplanade Forecourt Garden.

#### **An ancient ceremony to restore balance and bring peace**

In the most holy ground of the temple, preparations are made for a visit from the goddesses – incense is burnt, the smoke is waved over a group of young girls. Aged 7 – 12, these girls have not reached puberty and are considered the personification of purity. The intense smoke invokes the spirits to enter their bodies; they become the embodiment of goddesses (*dedari*) and have temporary divine powers. The girls lose consciousness, dancing carelessly and acting playfully, performing dangerous acts such as walking through fire or climbing 4-metre-high bamboo poles fearlessly.

The *Sanghyang Dedari* ritual can be traced back to ancient times, it is performed to show gratitude to the gods and goddesses, repel illness; as a prayer for healthy crops and a successful harvest, for protection from rice pests among other problems.

*Sanghyang Dedari* is a social and communal event where people's participation is the essence of the ritual. Individuals surrender their problems, and afterwards any social conflict or imbalance is cured by the presence and possession of the goddesses, even emotional

instabilities are restored to neutral. At the end of the ceremony, the dancers are sprinkled with holy water by the priest; they are revived and regain their consciousness, having no recollection of the acts that they performed.

The ceremony is not accompanied by the usual *gamelan*, but by a group of adults chanting and singing (*gending*), alternating with a group of males clad in checkered cloth around their waist, who make the formation of a circle, standing or sitting while shouting 'cak!' in a rhythmic manner (*kecak*). The dancing and singing produces spiritual strength, and the intention to carry out the ceremony is granted by the gods.

#### About Eka Suwara Santhi

Eka Suwara Santhi was established in 2014 and is Singapore's only Balinese dance group. It performs a variety of Balinese dances ranging from traditional and ancient pieces to modern choreographies. Eka Suwara Santhi also conducts dance and movement workshops from basic to advanced levels. They also conduct lectures and talks on Balinese dance and its cultural and historical associations.

#### About Gamelan Pinda Sari

Led by maestro drummer I Nyoman Kariasa from the Indonesian Institute of Fine Arts (ISI) in Denpasar, Bali, Gamelan Pinda Sari is well-known in Bali for its exuberant playing style. The musicians are all villagers from Pinda in Bali and have performed in Singapore on several occasions.

#### About Sanggar Langlang Jagat

Sanggar Langlang Jagat was set up by I Made Suteja, a well-known dancer in Batuan, Bali. Also known as the Kaki Bebek House group after Suteja's home studio, Sanggar Langlang Jagat performs traditional Balinese dances in the classic *Batuan* style. The group also conducts classes and workshops for adult learners and children.

## Taoist Processional Arts – Guardians of the Gods and Dance of the Qilin

Zhong Lian Dian Folk Arts and Yan Wong Cultural Troupe

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 7pm & 8.30pm

30mins per session

DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade



Vivid and colourful depictions of powerful deities, fierce torture-weapon wielding guardians or animated mythical creatures, are all recognisable traits of Taoist rituals. Steeped in tradition and yet running contrary to the religion's philosophy of simplicity and material detachment, these Taoist processional traditions have endured centuries of change, and are still believed to usher in good fortune and protection for the community.

Taoism is the oldest indigenous Chinese religion still in practice today—in Singapore and around the world, said to have originated nearly 5,000 years ago by the deified sovereign Yellow Emperor (2,697–2,597 BCE). Its early practices drew from rituals and beliefs of prehistoric Chinese religions that included elements of shamanism and ancestral worship. It was not until 4-6 BCE that its philosophy and tenets were concretised by sages such as Laozi and Zhuangzi, who emphasised living in harmony with the natural ways of the universe.

To make the religion more relatable to the masses, local communities had evolved the practice of Taoism alongside folk culture, communal beliefs and conditions that varied across different localities. Many of these Taoist festivities are centered around temple gatherings (庙会), and involve processions where representations of the gods would be paraded around the district.

Although the religion's most important texts had a simple yet profound philosophy, and promoted a detachment from worldliness, Taoist festivities are often very elaborate, loud and colourful occasions.

### **Guan Jiang Shou – Guardian-Generals of the Gods**

In Taoist mythology, there are guards in the underworld who serve the nether deities. Many of them are depicted in *guan jiang shou* (chief vanguard officers, 官将首) and *ba jiang tuan* (eight generals, 八将团) performances, which are important features of traditional folk processions all over Taiwan as they serve to punish evil and reward good.

The main characters in *guan jiang shou* are underworld generals Zeng and Sun. It is believed that the generals can see through the good and bad in people and have different abilities: General Zeng, depicted with a red or blue face, has the power to prolong the life of do-gooders, while General Sun, who has a green face, can shorten the lifespan of evil-doers.

Although the name *ba jiang tuan* means eight generals, the performance features nine performers, one of whom carries a gourd or sword representing the Guiding Prince (引路童子). It is believed that the generals were all demons subdued by the City God (城隍爷), who eventually became his guards, to drive away or capture spirits. All eight generals are equipped with different tools of torture and are differentiated by the drawings on their faces. Together, the performers create formations with Taoist spiritual symbolism, such as *ba gua* (eight trigrams, 八卦), *wu xing* (five elements, 五行) and *qi xing* (seven stars of the Northern Dipper, 七星).

### **The Qilin – Mythical Beast**

With the head of a dragon, a deer-shaped body covered with scales, the tail of an ox and four goat-like hooves, the *qilin* is a mythical beast that exudes a menacing aura and a commanding presence. Despite its somewhat aggressive appearance, it is believed to be an excellent judge of character, and is associated with righteousness, benevolence and virtue.

The Hakka *qilin* dance is a sacred ritual and a cultural heritage of the Hakka people—the fourth-largest Chinese dialect group in Singapore. Usually performed at celebratory or religious events, this dance ritual originated from prayers for bountiful harvests. The Chinese idiom 国泰民安, 风调雨顺 (peace in the country, favourable weather) is often sewn onto the body of the *qilin* costume or painted onto the bottom of its head frame.

The *qilin* performance comprises two dancers (much like the ubiquitous and auspicious Chinese lion dance), where the one in front controls the head, while the dancer behind acts as the torso. Driven by the percussive music, *qilin* dancers embody the expressiveness and vitality of the dance, involving gestures that depict surprise, strength, even suspicion, peppered with sudden bursts of movement where they leap high into the air and kick their hooves with vigour.

Today, the dance plays an important role in preserving the heritage and culture of the Hakka people in Singapore and abroad.

#### About Yan Wong Cultural Troupe

Founded in 2015, Yan Wong Cultural Troupe Singapore (恩隍文化团新加坡) is one of the first troupes that practices, performs and advocates the Hakka *qilin* dance in Singapore. Besides performing at popular local events like *Chingay* and Wan Qing Yuan's (Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall) lunar new year festivities, the troupe has also been invited to perform overseas, in Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Taiwan.

Yan Wong Cultural Troupe represented Singapore at the 2017 International Hakka Unicorn

Championship, and claimed the top honour of King of the Qilin Dance World (世界麒麟王).

#### About Zhong Lian Dian Folk Arts

Zhong Lian Dian Folk Arts (中蓮殿官将首八将团) is the first troupe in Singapore that presents the *Guan Jiang Shou* (chief vanguard officers, 官将首) and *Ba Jiang Tuan* (eight generals, 八将团) performances. It is also the only local group that is recognised in Taiwan, from which these folk processions originated. The troupe practises the Taiwanese style of face-painting, and has continually perfected the art of *Guan Jiang Shou* with Chinese martial arts. The troupe has participated in festive celebrations across Singapore and Malaysia, and aims to promote and preserve Chinese traditional arts and culture.

## Songs of the Life of Guru Nanak

Gurmat Sangeet Academy at the Sikh Centre

14 Apr 2024, Sun, 7.45pm – 8.30pm

DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade



Embark on a musical exploration of the life of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. Be serenaded by tales of the divine Guru who changed the fabric of the land he set foot on, presented by devotees of the Gurmat Sangeet Academy.

“Whosoever listens to kirtan or sings kirtan of Hari shall be free of all ills.”  
– Guru Granth Shahib

In Sikh tradition, no ceremony, occasion or event is complete without the singing of *kirtan*, which is a devotional hymn in praise of God. A recognised form of congregational prayer, it has, according to the scriptures, the ability to cleanse the mind of all impurities physical and sensual; liberate one from the yoke of time and death; cast away disease, sorrow and suffering; and bring peace and bliss.

### Understanding the Sikh religion

In Punjabi, the word “sikh” means “disciple”, and central to the faith is the relationship between the Sikh and his master, who guides him through the teachings and writings of the 10 Gurus. Sikhism is rooted in oneness and love, and encourages a life of servitude and spirituality. It is the belief that to lead a good life, one must work hard and live honestly, treat everyone equally, serve others, be generous to the less fortunate, and keep God close in the heart and mind, at all times.

### Hymns of Praise

Music is a central part of worship, with the religion’s 16th century founders being skilled poets, composers and musicians. The foremost of them was Guru Nanak, who wrote his teachings

and revelations in poems, which he sang with his companion Bhai Mardana, a bard who played the *rabab* (a plucked string instrument).

Over time, Guru Nanak's hymns as well as those of his nine successors were compiled into what became the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. In the book, the hymns of the Gurus are grouped under 31 *raags* or *ragas*, which are modes characterised by a specific series of notes and path melodies. Each *raga* has a name, an associated time of day or year when it is best performed, and a specific emotion it is meant to induce.

In the hands of his spiritual successors and devout Sikhs, this musical tradition flourished as a means of spiritual elevation as they created and developed new *ragas*, styles and musical instruments. Continuing the tradition, the singing and contemplation of these hymns occur day and night at Sikh temples all over the world.

#### About Gurmat Sangeet Academy at the Sikh Centre

Established in 1999, the Gurmat Sangeet Academy is a not-for-profit school for Sikh music, dedicated to raising awareness of *kirtans* (Sikh hymns) and *katha* (discourse) through education, performance and outreach. Open to all ages and musicians of all backgrounds, the academy also teaches stringed and percussive instruments that feature in Sikh music, such as the *taus*, *sarangji*, *dilruba*, *tabla* and *jori*.

For this performance, students and alumni of the academy, led by champions of the Gurmat Sangeet Competition 2023, present musical compositions by instructors Arvinder Singh who has taught for over 15 years, and Gurminder Singh who trained at the renowned Jawaddi Taksal school of music. The performance is choreographed and produced by the academy's Head of Music, Rajeshpal Singh.

### **Mindful Tea Appreciation Session**

Joyful Garden Sangha and Fort Sanctuary  
8 – 12 Apr 2024, Mon – Fri, 2.30pm – 5pm  
13 & 14 Apr, Sat & Sun, 2.30pm – 6.30pm  
respecT by Fort Sanctuary  
(Esplanade Mall, #02-01/03)



Purchase a drink and take part in this self-guided workshop. Choose between a tasting experience featuring two different teas or a brewing experience using the *gaiwan*, a traditional Chinese porcelain lidded bowl.

The experience will be accompanied by an audio meditation guide created by Joyful Garden Community of Mindful Living, which will be played via a link accessible on smartphones. Participants are required to bring your own smartphones and earpieces.

#### About respecT by Fort Sanctuary

respecT by Fort Sanctuary is a calm and meditative tea establishment at Esplanade Mall, which carries some of the finest freshly brewed teas. The founders of Fort Sanctuary have worked closely with farmers and tea experts in Wuyishan, China, a region well-known among tea experts and connoisseurs for producing some of the finest teas in the world. Using the expertise, learnings and experience from their years in Wuyishan, the founders set up Fort Sanctuary to demonstrate that Singapore is capable of producing fine teas and contributing to the global tea market.