

Esplanade Presents

da:ns focus – Ballet by the Bay

21 – 23 Feb 2025

www.esplanade.com/dans



Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is excited to announce that *ALICE (in wonderland)* by **Hong Kong Ballet** will be the centrepiece for the second edition of **da:ns focus – Ballet by the Bay**, which will take place from 21 – 23 Feb 2025.

Hong Kong Ballet, which last performed at Esplanade in 2004 as part of *Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts*, will be making a significant return after 20 years. This presentation will be the first featuring an Asian ballet company and a family-friendly production under the *da:ns* banner. It is important for us to showcase an Asian ballet company, offering the Singapore audience, especially the younger generation, a chance to see themselves represented on stage.

A key highlight of this production will be its large cast of local children. Ballet students in Singapore will have the unique opportunity to not only watch the performance but also to audition, rehearse, and perform with Hong Kong Ballet on the Esplanade Theatre stage. We hope that such experiences will deepen the appreciation of ballet for our audiences, and inspire our next generation of dancers and artists.

This *da:ns focus* presentation also coincides with the 160th anniversary of Lewis Carroll's novel *Alice in Wonderland*, allowing audiences to rediscover the classic tale through the vibrant, colourful, and imaginative staging by Septime Webre, Artistic Director of Hong Kong Ballet. As Mr Webre said about the work:

"I had goals going into the production, to have young people fall in love with ballet and to have the dancers challenged technically. I wanted the dancers to come out of the experience better dancers than going in... There is a lot of virtuosity in the production...it's certainly entertaining,

but it's not there because it is entertaining. It is a metaphor. When a dancer can do amazing turns, jumps, these tricks that are super-human...we are sending to the audience a message that 'life can be lived in its fullness...Go for the jugular in life, just go for it and you can be your best self.'"

I believe ballet fascinates and is loved worldwide because of its unique ability to convey extreme physicality and beauty through the human body, serving as a powerful affirmation of life and its boundless possibilities. We hope you will join us at *Ballet by the Bay*, and stay tuned for future announcements about additional programmes for the weekend, including free programmes and masterclasses.

Izumi Asakawa

Producer, The Esplanade Co Ltd

Last updated: 23 Jan 2025

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.

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Issued by *The Esplanade Co Ltd*.

For more information, please contact:

Koh Sian Eng
Senior Manager, Marketing (Communications & Content)
The Esplanade Co Ltd
Email: ksianeng@esplanade.com

Tan Wen Rui
Senior Manager, Arts Marketing
The Esplanade Co Ltd
Email: twenrui@esplanade.com

Annexe

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da:ns focus – Ballet by the Bay

21 – 23 Feb 2025

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About *da:ns focus*

Having transformed from *da:ns festival* to *da:ns focus* in 2023/24, *da:ns focus* continues with an exciting year-round season of five themed weekends in 2024/25. Experience interconnected programmes that offer their own counterpoints, dialogues and encounters in a focused exploration.

ALICE (in wonderland)

by Hong Kong Ballet

21 – 23 Feb 2025

Fri, 7.30pm

Sat, 3pm & 7.30pm

Sun, 3pm

Esplanade Theatre



Photo Credit: Dean Alexander, courtesy of Hong Kong Ballet

"It's great entertainment for children, parents and ballet lovers alike" – South China Morning Post

"A work of rich and impressive creativity" – The Washington Post

Get ready for a whimsical ride down the rabbit hole...

Full of energy and imagination, Hong Kong Ballet Artistic Director Septime Webre's *ALICE (in wonderland)* is infused with excitement and fantasy. Marvel at the playful and theatrical costumes, colourful sets and beloved original score. Revisit the fantastical world of Lewis Carroll's classic tale in the year of its 160th anniversary through this enchanting, reimagined ballet production. Come meet Alice, the Cheshire cat, the Queen of Hearts and many more

magical characters in this spectacular adventure by Hong Kong's award-winning premier ballet company.

"I had goals going into the production, to have young people fall in love with ballet and to have the dancers challenged technically. I wanted the dancers to come out of the experience better dancers than going in... There is a lot of virtuosity in the production... it's certainly entertaining, but it's not there because it is entertaining. It is a metaphor. When a dancer can do amazing turns, jumps, these tricks that are super-human... we are sending to the audience a message that 'life can be lived in its fullness... Go for the jugular in life, just go for it and you can be your best self.'" – Septime Webre, Artistic Director of Hong Kong Ballet

Production Credits

Choreography: Septime Webre

Music: Matthew Pierce

Concept and Costume Design: Liz Vandal

Set Design: James Kronzer

Lighting Design: Clifton Taylor

Puppet Design: Eric Van Wyk

About Hong Kong Ballet

Hong Kong Ballet (HKB) is recognised internationally as a world-class institution that represents Hong Kong's unique character. Since its inception in 1979, HKB has evolved into a vibrant performing arts organisation with a dynamic repertoire, forward-thinking community engagement initiatives, and an emphasis on excellence.

With 50 dancers from all over the globe, HKB has restaged classical and neoclassical masterworks and dynamic original ballets created for HKB and about Hong Kong. Additionally, HKB performs works by some of today's most sought-after choreographers as well as innovative new works by its Choreographer-in-Residence, Hu Song Wei Ricky, and numerous emerging Hong Kong choreographers.

With almost 50 tours to 11 countries, HKB has recently toured throughout Europe, the US and Asia and places a special emphasis on representing Hong Kong in Mainland China and the West. HKB maintains the newly renamed Hong Kong Academy of Ballet, a professionally-oriented ballet school, as well as a full schedule of award-winning community programmes and crossover collaborations throughout Hong Kong to ensure ballet is accessible to all. HKB has also produced engaging original videos and dance films that have collectively garnered over 10 million views online, connecting with ballet lovers worldwide.

2hrs, including 20min intermission

21 & 22 Feb 2025, 7.30pm

\$40*, \$60*, \$90*, \$120^, \$150^

*Limited concessions for seniors, NSFs and students: \$32, \$48, \$72

Limited concessions for PWDs: \$32

22 & 23 Feb 2025, 3pm

\$35*, \$50*, \$70*, \$90^, \$120^

*Limited concessions for seniors, NSFs and students: \$28, \$40, \$56

Limited concessions for PWDs: \$28

^Esplanade&Me Specials

Black: 15% savings

White: 15% savings

Discover: 10% savings (min. 2 tickets)

Choreographic Exploration: Crafting Dances informed by Character, Emotional Atmosphere and Narrative

by Septime Webre (USA/Hong Kong)

22 Feb 2025, Sat, 10.30am

Esplanade Rehearsal Studio

(Meeting Point: Theatre Studio, Level 4, 20mins before start time)



All dance works tell a human story of sorts, as the human body is not an abstract instrument.

Designed for choreographers as well as ballet and contemporary dancers interested in exploring choreographic expression, Hong Kong Ballet Artistic Director and choreographer Septime Webre leads a dynamic session of dancemaking, exploration and creativity.

During the workshop, participants will experiment with various modalities for creating movement and learn skills for generating original movement phrases inspired by elements of narrative and character. Drawing on Webre's experience as a choreographer of narrative work in both contemporary and neoclassical styles, attendees will be tasked with creating dynamic new movement combinations which are informed by the nature of a character, an emotional state or other aspects of storytelling. Newly created phrases will then be both refined and expanded, utilising movement-generating techniques, ultimately creating brief works which meditate on some aspect of the human experience.

Participants can expect to gain new skills for movement generation as well as making works which tell a story.

Participants can also expect to dance during the session and are encouraged to arrive early to do their own warm up. Participants are also requested to bring a smartphone or small video camera for recording and analysing newly generated movement.

Places are limited. Pre-registration is required to be considered for the workshop. Successful applicants will be contacted within five working days to purchase tickets for the class. Please dress comfortably.

2hrs, no intermission

Admission age: 18 and above

Ticket price: \$70

Masterclass by Hong Kong Ballet

23 Feb 2025, Sun, 10.30am

Esplanade Rehearsal Studio

(Meeting Point: Theatre Studio, Level 4, 15mins before start time)



Join an inspiring ballet masterclass with Xuan Cheng, Ballet Mistress of Hong Kong Ballet, a premiere ballet company led by Artistic Director Septime Webre.

This masterclass is recommended for male and female dancers aged 14 and above, with at least seven years of ballet training, or equivalent proficiency at RAD (Royal Academy of Dance) Advanced 1 or higher. Pointe shoes are welcome, but not necessary.

Places are limited. Pre-registration is required to be considered for the masterclass. Successful applicants will be contacted within five working days to purchase tickets for the class.

1hr 30mins, no intermission
Admission age: 14 and above
Ticket price: \$60

FREE PROGRAMMES

Ballet 101: Foundations for New Audiences

by Etienne Ferrère, Rosa Park, Chihiro Uchida, Kenya Nakamura, Pia Angela Custodio and Ma Ni (Hong Kong, Singapore)

21 – 23 Feb 2025, Fri – Sun, 7.15pm & 8.15pm
DBS Foundation Outdoor Theatre at Esplanade



Ever wondered how professional ballet dancers bring a story to life using movement? While professionals make such movements seem effortless, the magic does not happen without a rigorous training process, which takes years to develop and continues everyday throughout their careers.

Gain more insight into this beloved art form, its rich history and methodologies through this showcase designed by ballet experts. Tailored for audiences who are new to ballet, this programme will demystify how professional dancers practice and hone their skills. This includes daily ballet classes that help to build and maintain strong and precise foundations such as the five ballet positions.

Audiences will also be treated to performances of short dance excerpts by professional ballet dancers and students from Singapore. They will illustrate how ballet performances and companies are organised through rankings and unpack how ballet has influenced many dance genres and how the art form continues to evolve today.

Creative Team:

Etienne Ferrère (Concept, Creation, Choreographer, Producer)
Rosa Park (Rehearsal Director)

Performers:

Chihiro Uchida, Kenya Nakamura, Pia Angela Custodio, Ma Ni, Cayla Aw Yong Kai Li (SOTA), Yong Leigh Ann (SOTA), Toh Cheng Kye, Jamiel (SOTA) & Varcus Kang Jing En (SOTA).

About Etienne Ferrère

Etienne started dancing at a young age in Oyonnax, France, before joining the Paris Opera Ballet School in 2003. During his time at the school, he performed ballets by a wide range of choreographers and worked with Paris Opera Ballet for a year upon graduation.

Etienne moved to Singapore to join Singapore Ballet (formerly Singapore Dance Theatre) in 2010. He was promoted to First Artist in 2014 and Principal in 2018. During his time with the company, Etienne danced multiple soloist and principal roles and was a part of many new classical and contemporary creations.

Etienne is now based in Hong Kong and works as a freelance artist, specialising in choreography and show creation. He created three pieces for Singapore Ballet: *Singular* (2021), *Faux Contact* (2022) and *Don't Panic* (2023).

About Rosa Park

Rosa has a versatile career as an artist and an educator with a profound passion for dance. She serves as a Ballet Mistress with Singapore Ballet (formerly known as Singapore Dance Theatre) working closely with professional dancers and renowned international choreographers. While she was the Principal Artist at Singapore Ballet, she was featured on the cover of Dance Europe Magazine and received overwhelmingly positive reviews throughout her career. She serves as an Adjunct Lecturer at NAFA, sharing her knowledge and passion with aspiring artists. This role has allowed her to bridge the gap between her experiences as a dancer and her academic pursuits, creating a harmonious blend of mentorship and education.