

Esplanade Presents

da:ns focus 2023: CAN – Connect Asia Now

13 – 15 Oct 2023

www.esplanade.com/dans



Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay presents *CAN – Connect Asia Now*, a weekend dedicated to contemporary works by Asian dancemakers, from 13 – 15 Oct 2023. *CAN* will take place annually as part of *da:ns focus*, our year-round dance season comprising five themed weekends.

CAN is a dedicated platform where we will continue supporting artists from the region and introduce their work to Singapore audiences, carrying on from our efforts over the past 17 years as part of *da:ns festival*. It is a gathering place for artists, practitioners, producers and international presenters to come together, to connect and further develop Asia's contemporary dance scene. The title is also a playful reference to our colloquial way of saying "yes!" in Singapore.

TAO Dance Theatre (China) makes a long-awaited return to Singapore with the Southeast Asian premiere of their latest works, *13 & 14*. Known for their distinctive minimalist style and precision in movement, they are one of the most acclaimed Asian contemporary dance companies in the world, having won the Silver Lion Award at La Biennale di Venezia this year.

For the inaugural *CAN*, Esplanade is commissioning new works by two Southeast Asian female choreographers, **Kornkarn Rungsawang** (Thailand) and **Melati Suryodarmo** (Indonesia).

Kornkarn Rungsawang is an exciting up-and-coming artist who has worked with the renowned Pichet Klunchun Dance Company for several years. *Mali Bucha: Dance Offering* marks Kornkarn's debut as a choreographer in her own right and will be her first full-length production. She represents a new generation of Asian dancemakers who continue to bridge traditional and contemporary dance.

The acclaimed Indonesian visual and performance artist Melati Suryodarmo is known for her bold, durational solo performances most often seen in gallery spaces. As part of *CAN*, Melati premieres *Lapse*, a new dance creation performed by dancers from Indonesia and Taiwan, with collaborators from Singapore, including Yuen Chee Wai from The Observatory. From 29 Sep 2023 – 7 Jan 2024, Esplanade will also be presenting *Fracture*, a visual arts exhibition by Melati at Jendela (Visual Arts Space).

We are excited to bring these very distinct and important Asian voices to our audience, and we look forward to the exchanges and dialogues that will come out of *CAN* as a key platform for dance and performance from Asia.

Izumi Asakawa

Producer, The Esplanade Co Ltd

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 – 2019 and 2022. Esplanade is Singapore's first Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue and a certified Dementia Go-To Point, as well as a Guide-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*.

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Annexe

Esplanade Presents

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13 & 14

by TAO Dance Theater (China)

13 – 15 Oct 2023, Fri – Sun

Fri: 7.30pm

Sat: 7.30pm

Sun: 3pm

Singtel Waterfront Theatre at Esplanade



Photo Credit: Fan Xi

“Tao Ye is emerging rapidly as a force to be reckoned with, as well as the most exciting name in modern dance.” – Time Out Beijing

“... confounds and amazes. It is rare to be able to say, ‘I’ve never seen anything quite like it,’ and really mean it.” – CVNC Online Arts Journal North Carolina (USA)

“Absolutely amazing ... An extraordinary experience for the audience.” – Västerbottens-Kuriren (Sweden)

After their sold-out performance at *da:ns festival* nine years ago, the acclaimed TAO Dance Theater takes the stage at Esplanade once again, this time on a grander scale with 14 dancers at the Singtel Waterfront Theatre. The award-winning contemporary dance company presents a double bill of *13* and *14*, the two latest instalments of choreographer Tao Ye's signature *Numerical Series*. Known for their distinct minimalist style of repetition and restriction, TAO has found immense success worldwide and is recognised as one of Asia's leading contemporary dance companies.

This production is presented as part of *da:ns focus – Connect Asia Now (CAN)*, a weekend that spotlights contemporary dance works by Asian artists focusing on distinct voices and creative impulses from the region.

1h 15mins, including 15mins intermission.

About 13

13 is the twelfth instalment of choreographer Tao Ye's *Numerical Series*. This contemplative work uses the concept of a trinity to correspond to the number 13, and examines the interactions and connections formed between solo, duet and group dances. These three kinds of permutations constitute the entire creation.

The concepts of single, dual and multiple dimensions form a rule. In this creation, the choreographer cultivated the three changes of body, space, and time to form a chaotic whole. Rigorous and open concepts are used in the choreography to respond to the different states of the present concrete and the impermanent.

In the work, the dancers are connected into a whole, and then gradually fission into different forms. The continuous changes in the dance sequence during the movement open up a complex physical world: the realisation of impact, extrusion, fusion, and falling, rebound, pull and other infinite phenomena. Through varying speeds and rhythms, the bodies are transformed into water, mountains, rocks and all things alike. At this time, the body as a medium, demonstrates the vagaries of imagination.

Production Credits

Choreographer: Tao Ye

Composer: Xiao He

Lighting Designers: Ma Yue, Tao Ye

Costume Designer: Duan Ni

Costume Maker: Dnty

About 14

Rhythm is the linkage of all life.

14, the thirteenth work of Tao Ye's *Numerical Series* presents a study of rhythm and change. How does one challenge the new context of the body? This time, Tao Ye, breaks the previous creative method of repeated cycles, and uses the ever-changing texture of movement to explore the space-time possibility between movement and stillness.

The music of this work boldly adopts a single minimalist well-balanced temperament, using the progressive method of the hour hand to correspond to the complex dynamics of the body in dance. The cuttings and foldings of points, lines and planes in the space, the agitation and swing with the control of weight, make the work return to pure body movement, with all possibilities unfolding in a changing yet unchanged rhythm.

Following the philosophy of “less is more” in regard to the relationship between audio and visual, TAO Dance Theater’s unique body technique, the Circular Movement System is expanded and realises its ultimate potential.

Production Credits

Choreographer & Sound Conception: Tao Ye

Lighting Designers: Ma Yue, Tao Ye

Costume Designer: Duan Ni

Tao Ye

Founder, Choreographer & Artistic Director of TAO Dance Theater

Born in Chongqing, Tao ye is a graduate of the Chongqing Dance School in China and has performed with the Shanghai Army Song & Dance Ensemble, Shanghai Jin Xing Dance Theater, and the Beijing Modern Dance Company (BMDC). In 2008, at the sage of 23, Tao ye founded TAO Dance Theater. His main works include the *Numerical Series*, weight 2 through 14, *Non-numerical Series – Contrast*; *Arts Live Series – 12 Hours* and *Infinite Walking*.

Inspired by Asian philosophy, Tao Ye developed the Circular Movement System in combination with his own style of dance. He has several international achievements under his name, such as performing at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York, USA, as well as being one of Sadler’s Wells New Wave Associates from 2011 – 2013. He has done several cross-disciplinary collaborations in film, theatre, fashion and more, having worked with Japanese brand Y-3, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and starred in the film *Blue Sky Bones*.

Tao Ye’s choreography is distinct, recognised for its minimalistic style, repetition and restriction. His cutting-edge creative concepts have been acknowledged for being challenging for both dancers and spectators.

Duan Ni

Founding Dancer & Artistic Director of TAO Dance Theater

Born in Xi’an, Duan Ni graduated from the Shaanxi Art College. She graduated from the Beijing Dance Academy modern dance choreography department (Guangdong branch), led by pioneer Madame Yang Meiqi, the founding director of China’s first modern dance company, Guangdong Modern Dance Company. In school, Duan Ni received a scholarship to attend the American Dance Festival. For the first time, Duan Ni systematically taught “Relaxation Techniques” in China, and her cutting-edge teaching concepts subverted the inherent concept of body movement of domestic dancers.

Duan Ni has danced with Shanghai Jin Xing dance Theatre, Akram Khan Dance Company (UK), and Shen Wei Dance Arts (USA). In August 2008, she joined TAO Dance Theater as its Founding Dancer and Artistic Director. As the first Chinese contemporary dancer invited by international dance companies, Duan Ni accepted all concepts and dstyles and formed he own body language and characteristics—softness and toughness, pure and open. She has performed at the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts in New York with different three dance companies. Each time, her performance was singled out by The New York Times, lauded by critics as “extraordinary”, “formidable” and “athletic control”.

TAO Dance Theater

TAO Dance Theater is a full-time contemporary dance company founded by Tao Ye, Duan Ni and Wang Hao in 2008. It is the first contemporary dance company in China to be invited to perform at the Lincoln Center Art Festival in the United States, the Edinburgh International Art Festival in the United Kingdom, the Sydney Opera House in Australia and Theatre de la Ville in France. They have also been invited to perform at the American Dance Festival (ADF),

where they additionally served as resident artists. The Sadler's Wells Theatre in London – UK, has commissioned five works by the company and invited them to perform in London six times.

The projects of the *Numerical Series*, created by the company with a simple creative concept and straightforward physicality, have toured five continents, more than 40 countries and over 100 different art festivals. The company has attracted extensive attention from people from all walks of life, becoming one of the most sought-after Chinese contemporary dance companies on the international stage.

In terms of interdisciplinary activity, the company has presented its work in a wide range of spaces, such as the ruins of the ancient Roman arena, the Paris Fashion Week Show, the ArtScience Museum in Singapore, the Aranya Seaside Stage, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra Concert Hall, and Beijing International Design Week. At the 2015 Paris Fashion Week, the company was invited to collaborate on-site with the brand Y-3 by Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto. In 2019, the company and Cloud Gate dance Theatre co-produced *Exchange*, touring more than ten cities in China. In 2021, the DIY performance *Infinite Walking* was listed on the TikTok hot search list for several weeks in a row. Tens of thousands of viewers imitated the body-free-walking style, and the relevant videos were played nearly 500 million times.

Alastair Macaulay, the chief art critic for the New York Times, described the work of the dance troupe as “theatrical force and authority. (The dancers’) athletic control is remarkable. Powerful drive... physicality and momentum... extraordinary and appealing.” Time Out New York named the company’s performance one of the “10 Best Dance Shows of 2014,” making them the only Asian company on the list. In 2023, TAO Dance Theater was awarded the Silver Lion for Dance at La Biennale di Venezia.

In 2021, TAO Dance Theater established the DNTY art extension brand and TAO Studio. The former combined artistic innovation with the design concept of “clothes that follow the body”, inspired by the style of creative individuals from all fields. The latter “pays attention to more people’s bodies”, launching the Circular Movement System, so that more people may discover that “the body can still move like this”, experiencing and exploring the infinite possibilities of their physicality.

Ticket: \$35, \$55*^

*Limited concessions for seniors, NSFs, students and PWDs: \$44

^Esplanade&Me Early Bird Specials available (3 – 9 Aug)

Black: 20% savings

White: 15% savings

Discover: 15% savings

Discover (Package of 4 or more): 15% savings

Enjoy savings with purchase of 4 or more tickets to the same show or across applicable shows at *da:ns focus – Connect Asia Now (CAN)*.

^Esplanade&Me Specials available (From 10 Aug, 9am)

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An Esplanade Commission
Mali Bucha: Dance Offering
by Kornkarn Rungsawang (Thailand)

13 – 15 Oct 2023, Fri – Sun
Fri: 9pm
Sat: 7.30pm
Sun: 3pm
Esplanade Theatre Studio



Photo Credit: Bernie Ng

Cross material and virtual worlds with up-and-coming choreographer Kornkarn Rungsawang in this ritual-inspired performance that combines dance, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). *Rum Kea Bon* is an ancient ritual performed at shrines and temples in Thailand where dance is used as a tool for negotiation by humans towards higher beings in a bid to make wishes come true. The charming dancer, hired as a messenger to access higher beings, enhances the likelihood of one's wish fulfilment.

Inspired by this ritual, Kornkarn created *Mali Bucha: Dance Offering*, a hybrid constellation of augmented reality, virtual reality and dance. This immersive and participatory iteration of *Rum Kea Bon* crosses between physical and immaterial worlds, with a digital shrine accessible through AR and VR throughout the duration of the performance. Audience members will be able to view, make wishes and offer flowers to the digital shrine, with VR headsets present on site for audiences.

Kornkarn thus acts as an interface between the material plane (the real-time audience) and the digital realm (the virtual shrine), communicating individual wishes and thanksgiving to higher beings through dance. Flowing as a current throughout *Mali Bucha* is a belief system

that concerns itself with duality—economics and ecology, image and sound, old and new, the mundane and the transcendent.

This performance marks the full-length premiere of *Mali Bucha: Dance Offering*, after being workshopped at various leading platforms in Asia and Europe, such as Dance Nucleus in Singapore, Kinosaki International Arts Centre in Japan, and Tanz Kongress in Germany. As a dancer, Kornkarn has spent years performing with the renowned Pichet Klunchun and training in both classical and contemporary dance forms. Now as a dancemaker to watch, she continues to bridge the traditional and contemporary, reflecting modern cultural impulses of this generation.

Mali Bucha: Dance Offering is commissioned by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

This production is presented as part of *da:ns focus – Connect Asia Now (CAN)*, a weekend that spotlights contemporary dance works by Asian artists focusing on distinct voices and creative impulses from the region.

1hr 15mins, no intermission.

Advisory:

- There will be no latecomers' admission or readmission for this performance.
- Free seating. You may choose to sit on chairs or floor cushions during the performance. Both seating options will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- There will be post-show talks on 14 & 15 Oct.

Production Credits

Concept, Choreography and Dance: Kornkarn Rungsawang (Thailand)

Sound Design: Zai Tang (UK/Singapore)

VR/AR Design: The Virtualizers (Thailand)

CG Supervisor/VFX Director: Asst. Prof. Gomesh Karnchanapayap (Ph.D)

Technical Director/Lead Programmer: Siwat Suksri

3D Scanning/3DAnimator/Rigging: Piyanon Somboon

Assistant Technical Director: Wijitra Prasatkaew

Lighting Design: Asako Miura (Japan)

Dramaturg: Tang Fu Kuen (Singapore/Norway)

Costume Design: Manit Theppatimaporn, Kanapoot Viruttanachai (Thailand)

Production Stage Manager: Yap Seok Hui (Singapore)

Technical Direction: ARTFACTORY

Producer: Sojirat Singholka (Thailand)

Residency supported by: Kinosaki International Arts Center (Toyooka City)

About Kornkarn Rungsawang

Born in Bangkok in 1988, Rungsawang represents a new generation of dance artists whose aim is to bridge the traditional and contemporary. Trained in diverse Thai traditions, from royal court to popular folk forms, she applies her wide knowledge of traditional kinesthetic systems to the contemporary body and urban rhythms to formulate new dance expressions that reflect the current social, cultural and political environment. Since 2007, she has been a full-time artist in Pichet Klunchun Dance Company under the tutelage of renowned choreographer Pichet Klunchun. Her new solo work *Dance Offering* has been workshopped in Bangkok (2021, online version), Singapore (2022, Dance Nucleus and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay),

Germany (2022, Tanz Kongress in Mainz) and Indonesia (2022, Indonesian Dance Festival). Kornkarn is also part of the Artist-in-Residence Program 2023/2024 at the Kinosaki International Arts Center (KIAC).

Ticket: \$30^

Limited concessions for seniors, NSFs, students and PWDs: \$24

^Esplanade&Me Early Bird Specials available (3 – 9 Aug)

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^Esplanade&Me Specials available (From 10 Aug, 9am)

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An Esplanade Commission
Lapse
by Melati Suryodarmo (Indonesia)

13 – 15 Oct 2023, Fri – Sun
Fri: 7.30pm
Sat: 5pm
Sun: 5pm
Esplanade Annexe Studio



Known for her bold, durational solo performances, acclaimed Indonesian visual and performance artist Melati Suryodarmo premieres *Lapse*, a new dance creation performed by collaborators from Indonesia, Taiwan and Singapore.

First released as two short films, this iteration marks the live performance premiere of *Lapse*. Here, Suryodarmo dives into the metamorphic constellation of body and environment through evocative, visceral imagery suspended in factual absurdity. With sound design and live music by Yuen Chee Wai from Singapore music collective The Observatory, Suryodarmo orchestrates movement patterns that steer the group of performers to connect by failures while collectively attempting a new structure and alchemy of senses.

Drawing inspiration from by-products of chaos and situations that represent a gradual decline in the efficiency, stability, and overall functioning of society, *Lapse* signifies a transition from a state of order and coherence to one of disorder and confusion. Within this deep-rooted turbulence, Suryodarmo points to the symptomatic nature of systemic breakdowns, ethical decline and societal disillusionment of our time. While lapses in society begin to manifest through the decay of behaviour, diminishing social cohesion, ruptured institutions and the disintegration of moral frameworks, the work investigates the unpredictable space between reality and a vision of collective commitment towards change.

Lapse by Melati Suryodarmo is commissioned by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

This production is presented as part of *da:ns focus – Connect Asia Now (CAN)*, a weekend that spotlights contemporary dance works by Asian artists focusing on distinct voices and creative impulses from the region.

1hr, no intermission

Advisory:

- Admission age: 6 and above (Recommended for ages 12 and above.)
- Latecomers will not be admitted once the performance has begun. There will be no re-admission for this performance.
- Audiences may be required to either sit on the floor or stand during this performance.
- There will be post-show talks on 14 & 15 Oct.

Production Credits

Concept: Melati Suryodarmo

Choreography: Melati Suryodarmo

Installation: Melati Suryodarmo

Performed by: Razan Wirjosandjojo, Mekratingrum Hapsari, Gabriela Hasianna, You Feng Lai

Live music: Yuen Chee Wai

Lighting design: Adrian Tan

Costume design: Melati Suryodarmo

Rehearsal coach: Razan Wirjosandjojo

Production management: Studio Plesungan

Technical and Stage Manager: Yasmina Zulkarnain

Special thanks to Nibroll (Tokyo), Century Contemporary Dance Company (Taipei), Dai Wen Chen (Taipei/Hongkong), Retno Sulistyorini (Surakarta), Kristiyanto (Surakarta), Naoki Iwata – Skank (Tokyo), Shu-Feng Yao (Taipei)

Production: Studio Plesungan (Karanganyar)

About Melati Suryodarmo

Melati Suryodarmo (b. 1969, Solo, Indonesia) graduated from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, Germany. Her practice is informed by Japanese Butoh, dance and history, among others. Her work is the result of ongoing research in the movements of the body and its relationship to the self and the world. These are translated into photography, dance choreography, video and live performances. Suryodarmo has presented her works in locations all over the world, including Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland; MMCA, Gwacheon, South Korea; National art Centre Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan; Para Site, Hong Kong; QAGOMA, Australia; and Singapore Art Museum. She has presented her choreographic pieces in various festivals, including at TPAM, BankArt, Yokohama (2016) Witch Dance Festival, Sophien Saele, Berlin (2016); Europalia Festival at KVS Brussels (2017); De Singel, Anwerp; Frankfurt LAB, Frankfurt (2015) and Indonesia Dance Festival, Jakarta Theatre, (2016).

In 2019, she created *Orfeus* a dance piece based on Goenawan Mohamad's poetry, performed at Salihara Jakarta. In December 2019, she directed and choreographed *Opera Gandari*, an opera composed by Tony Prabowo at Graha Bakti Budaya, Jakarta Art Centre, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta. Since 2007, Suryodarmo has been organising PALA and Undisclosed Territory, both annual performance art festivals, in Solo, Indonesia. In 2012, she founded Studio Plesungan, an art space for performance artists. She was the Artistic Director of the Jakarta Biennale 2017, and since 2021 she has been working as Artistic Director of the Indonesia Bertutur, the art and culture festival presented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia.

Ticket: \$20^

Limited concessions for seniors, NSFs, students and PWDs: \$16

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TAO Dance Theatre Circular Movement Workshop

14 Oct 2023, Sat, 2pm
Esplanade Rehearsal Studio



Photo Credit: Fan Xi

Developed for professional dancers, dance teachers and students, this workshop imparts knowledge of the Circular Movement System, a signature movement vocabulary developed by Tao Ye and Duan Ni, the Artistic Directors of the acclaimed TAO Dance Theater.

Led by current touring company dancers, the objective of this workshop is to enable participants to free their body and uncover underlying possibilities. The class will revolve around the relaxing of one's joints, the shifting of one's body weight, and the idea of weightiness.

There is a maximum of 25 participants in this class for a more intimate experience, where more focused attention and individual feedback can be provided.

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

Be sure to catch *13 & 14*, a double bill performance by TAO Dance Theater presented as part of *da:ns focus – Connect Asia Now (CAN)*, a weekend that spotlights contemporary dance works by Asian artists focusing on distinct voices and creative impulses from the region.

1hr 30mins, no intermission

Ticket: \$30

Advisory:

Pre-registration is required. Please dress comfortably for the workshop.

Admission Age: 16 and above

Recommended age: 16 to 40