

SPEECH BY MR LEE TZU YANG, CHAIRMAN, THE ESPLANADE CO LTD, AT THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY OF ESPLANADE'S NEW WATERFRONT THEATRE, ON 18 JUN 2019, 10.05AM, AT THE ESPLANADE ANNEXE STUDIO

Good morning Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth,

Ms Chua Sock Koong, Group Chief Executive Officer, Singtel,

Founding Donors of Esplanade's new waterfront theatre,

Arts practitioners, Media friends, Ladies and gentlemen.

1. Welcome to Esplanade and the Groundbreaking Ceremony of our new waterfront theatre.

2. At Esplanade, we always look to create new ways for our diverse audiences to encounter and engage with the arts. Where we are right now—the Esplanade Annexe Studio—used to be a club which we re-purposed and re-opened in 2016. This has since become a popular venue for live house music gigs, stand-up comedy, workshops, talks and more, in addition to serving as a rehearsal space for our productions.

3. The new waterfront theatre we will build, when open in 2021, will further realise our mission as the national performing arts centre. The proposed medium-sized venue fills a gap and will enable us to commission new work, support and collaborate with Singapore and regional dance and theatre practitioners and companies.

Strong Support from Arts Community, Donors & Public

4. When we first announced our plans for our medium-sized venue two years ago, we received encouraging feedback from the Singapore arts community and media friends, many of whom are here with us today. Thank you for your encouragement and continued support of Esplanade.

5. This 550-seat theatre has an estimated development budget of 30 million Singapore dollars. The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth has generously backed our fundraising efforts with the first 10 million-dollar contribution. Thank you, Minister Fu and your team at MCCY for this important boost.

6. Last year, we received the magnanimous donation of 10 million dollars from Singtel, our Principal Founding Donor for the new waterfront theatre. This is the largest single donation that Esplanade has received since we opened in 2002. In appreciation of the generous gift, we will be naming the new venue **Singtel Waterfront Theatre** for a period of 15 years from the time it opens in 2021. Thank you Ms Chua and your team at Singtel.

7. We would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Singtel Waterfront Theatre's Founding Donors and many others, for supporting us in our next stage of development as Singapore's national performing arts centre. We hope you enjoyed the memorable evening last year at Esplanade's first-ever Gala on our Theatre stage, and we look forward to seeing you at our Gala next year.

Fundraising Campaigns for Singtel Waterfront Theatre

8. Everywhere in the world, the arts are not financially sustainable without the combined support of the government, corporates, and the wider community. Singapore is no exception. As a not-for-profit organisation and charity, Esplanade requires long-term funding from the government. We receive grants from MCCY and Tote Board to supplement our earned income and support our community programmes. However, there is also an expectation that we should be less reliant over time on government support for recurrent funding needs, through our earned income, and sponsorships and donations towards our festivals and programmes. This is challenging as most perceive the arts as less of a priority than other charitable causes such as children and youth, the elderly, education and healthcare.

9. To raise the remaining funds for the new Singtel Waterfront Theatre, we will add on to conventional fundraising to come up with innovative ways to create awareness for our new theatre and build affinity with our supporters.

10. We have been fortunate and remain grateful to the many Singapore artists who have come forward to help us raise funds for the new theatre. Our ***Backstage Pass With...*** fundraising tours led by Hossan Leong, Inch Chua, Rani Singam and Siti Khalijah were well-received by avid supporters, who were curious about what-goes-on-behind-the-scenes at Esplanade. Renowned visual artist Chua Boon Kee contributed his artworks for the third time, in support of Esplanade's fundraising initiatives. The first was on the occasion of our 10th Anniversary with his exhibition ***In the Affair of Cats & Dogs, the Government's Involved and So Shall We***, and the second was for a group exhibition ***80by80*** in 2017. To raise funds for our waterfront theatre, Mr Chua's uniquely designed cats and dogs sculptures in his installation ***to have a home*** at the Esplanade Concourse were made available for public adoption.

New Adoption Opportunities and Public Fundraising Campaigns

11. Today, we are pleased to announce the launch of our ***Gift a Seat, Adopt a Space*** fundraising campaign. A limited number of seats in the Singtel Waterfront Theatre may be adopted with a minimum donation of \$2,800 per seat.

12. In addition, we welcome philanthropists and companies that wish to make a lasting contribution to the arts in Singapore to adopt various spaces at the Singtel Waterfront Theatre. These include the **Waterfront Linkway** which provides shelter for our visitors coming from the main building; the **Green Room** where our artists mingle and rest, as well as the **Dressing Rooms** where our artists transform into their stage personalities.

13. We are also launching a public fundraising campaign called **Ground Up**, in conjunction with our Groundbreaking Ceremony today, for the public to help us break new ground for our next generation of artists and audiences, and donate to the Esplanade's new waterfront theatre at the same time. **Bowen Enterprises Pte Ltd** will be contributing a dollar-for-dollar matching donation of up to \$50,000 to encourage more people to participate in this *Ground Up* campaign. We thank them for their generous donation. Our emcee Sharul will share more details in a moment on how everyone can be a part of this campaign.

Conclusion

14. On behalf of Esplanade, our artists and our audiences who will enjoy more varied performances and activities at the Singtel Waterfront Theatre, I would like to thank all of you for your support. This theatre is a true labour of love and a reflection of how the public, private and people sectors have come together to support our cultural institutions and our commitment to develop artists and audiences in Singapore.

15. Make a change through the arts, and make our next stage happen!

16. I would now like to invite Minister Grace Fu to say a few words. Thank you.