



Esplanade
Presents

The Studios

This Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May)

by Wichaya Artamat
(Thailand)



6 & 7 Sep 2024, Fri & Sat, 8pm
Esplanade Theatre Studio

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.

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Season Message

Today is a volatile place. Almost daily, we hear of global unrest, growing isolationism, the climate emergency, and insecurities on many fronts. There is a sense that we are living amid overlapping fault lines—multiple points of tension that may suddenly erupt—disrupting and displacing the global systems and structures as we know it.

It is wishful thinking and out of touch to proclaim that art is the solution to today's complex problems; of course, it cannot solve or alleviate the critical and urgent needs in the world. So, what's the point? Why continue with art? Borrowing the words of Norwegian writer and playwright, Jon Fosse, written in commemoration of World Theatre Day on 27 Mar 2024:

Art, good art, manages in its wonderful way to combine the utterly unique with the universal. It lets us understand what is different—what is foreign, you might say—as being universal. By doing so, art breaks through the boundaries between languages,



geographical regions, countries. It brings together not just everyone's individual qualities but also, in another sense, the individual characteristics of every group of people, for example of every nation.

Art does this not by levelling differences and making everything the same, but, on the contrary, by showing us what is different from us, what is alien or foreign. All good art contains precisely that: something alien, something we cannot completely understand and yet at the same time do understand, in a way. It contains a mystery, so to speak. Something that fascinates us and thus pushes us beyond our limits and in so doing creates the transcendence that all art must both contain in itself and lead us to.

It is an essential part of our collective humanity—our inherent ability to create, appreciate beauty, express and be immersed in our joys and sorrows and everything in between—to remind us that who we see on screen, onstage, and sitting beside us are fellow persons worthy and deserving of respect and compassion. It is art that will help us to understand and to make sense of the insensible.

From 12 Jul – 7 Sep 2024, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay presents the second part of the Land trilogy in our contemporary theatre season, *The Studios 2024*, where four artists invite everyone to consider the world today, to examine the powerful forces that shape our

trajectories as individuals, communities, societies and nations. Where did they begin? How can we learn from these global histories and personal histories to make sense of this current time when confronting significant shifts in international politics and economy? Can our pasts inform, remind and teach us as we move forward?

We open the season with an updated staging of *Air* by Drama Box, looking at the dispossession and loss of the Orang Seletar, an indigenous community of Singapore, as they strive to preserve their heritage in the face of encroaching changes around them. Next, we jointly present the Asian premiere of *Rhapsody in Yellow* by Ming Wong with Singapore Art Museum. In a time of rising tensions between the US and China, the work traces Sino-American “ping-pong” diplomacy during the Cold War, charting the changing balance of power between the two superpowers in a duet of discord and harmony, chaos and serendipity, humour and pathos. Closer to home and set against the sweeping backdrop of the Malayan Emergency, visual artist Sim Chi Yin’s debut theatrical performance *One Day We’ll Understand* is an evocative exploration of memory, inheritance and family history. Lastly, Thai director Wichaya Artamat makes his Singapore debut with *This Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May)*, reflecting on the relationship between individual and national history, the ceremonial and the ordinary, and time—in relation to both our everyday lives and the collective events that shape it.

In a world that so often demands immediacy, art reminds us to pause. Like the invisible but constant tectonic movement that shapes our physical landscape, the process of creating art is a slow and considered, sometimes violent, one. Perhaps, for us, the audience, in going to the theatre and sitting with artists amongst the many difficult and messy questions of today, we will also come to encounter something hopeful.

It is our immense privilege to work with these artists and to be able to share their work with you. Thank you for joining us at *The Studios*.

Lynn Yang

Producer

The Esplanade Co Ltd



About The Studios

Eclectic, genre-bending and running the gamut from neo-realism to experimental, *The Studios* features works that challenge the boundaries in theatre and performance. It is interested in contemporary artists, ideas and expressions, and offers a space for dialogue and reflection on the questions that matter to us today.

Synopsis

17 May 2015: A pair of Thai-Chinese siblings reunite to perform a traditional Chinese ceremony in remembrance of their late father.

19 May 2018: They reunite again to perform a traditional Chinese ceremony in remembrance of their late father.

22 May, some years later: They reunite once again to perform a traditional Chinese ceremony in remembrance of their late father.





This Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May) zeroes in on a small kitchen space in Bangkok. A brother and sister live through three days there in May, each time in a different calendar year, to commemorate their deceased father in a traditional Chinese ceremony. They cook, eat, chat and joke about nothing in particular. Their retiring nature contrasts with the captivating and often absurd conversations they engage in. Past, present and future blend subtly, connected to the political context of the Thai metropolis. The play shows life as it is, without drawing a veil over its alienating character. The characters' statements do not serve any logic and neither do they lead to a clear end.

This is an unpolitical story with its own politics. Written and directed by award-winning playwright Wichaya Artamat, who has been recognised as a leading figure in contemporary Thai theatre, *This Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May)* premiered in 2015 at Crescent Moon Space, Bangkok, Thailand, to great reception by audiences and critics alike. It was awarded Best Play by the International Association of Theatre Critics, Thailand Centre (IATC) in 2016, and was nominated for Best Performance by a Male Artist, Best Performance by a Female Artist, and Best Original Script awards in the same year. It toured major European festivals such as Festival d'Automne, Theater Spektakel, Kunstenfestivaldesarts and Wiener Festwochen, and now makes its way to Esplanade as Wichaya's debut work in Singapore.

This is a story that allows audiences to see how ordinary people can survive in a world in which they will never win, dead or alive. A world that will repeat itself May after May, day after day. A world that plays its people into the politics of the invariably unpolitical story of life.

(1hr 40mins, no intermission)

Performed in Thai, with English surtitles.

There will be a post-show dialogue after each performance.

About the Creatives

Wichaya Artamat

Director



Photo Credit: Bea Bergans

Wichaya Artamat is a co-founding member of For What Theatre. He has been long captivated by performances, even when he was still studying film. He started working in theatre as a project coordinator for Bangkok Theatre Festival 2008. He joined the New Theatre Society in 2009, during which he grew to become a director recognised for various experimental forms and unconventional theatrical approaches.

Wichaya's work was awarded Best Play for two years in a row (2014–15) by the International Theatre Critics Association, Thailand Centre (IATC). His international exposure started when he worked as an assistant director to Toshiki Okada's *Pratthana* which toured in Bangkok, Paris, and Tokyo. Since the European premiere of his most prominent work *This Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May)* at

Kunstenfestivaldesarts 2019, Wichaya has been extensively touring and creating in Europe, Asia and beyond.

Hailed as “one of the most promising contemporary theatre creators of Southeast Asia”, Wichaya is especially interested in exploring how society remembers and unremembers its history through certain calendar days. He co-founded For What Theatre in 2015 and is also a member of Sudvisai Club and Collective Thai Scripts.



Parnrut Kritchanchai

Actress

Parnrut Kritchanchai is a theatre practitioner based in Bangkok and a member of the New Theatre Society. She has been working as a director, actor and writer since 2004. Parnrut holds a Bachelor of Arts in German from Chulalongkorn University and a Master of Arts in Performance Studies from Royal Holloway, University of London. Since 2019, she has been the director of the Bangkok Theatre Festival. In addition to her work in directing, acting and playwriting, she also mentors and lectures part-time at several universities.



Jaturachai Srichanwanpen

Actor

Jaturachai Srichanwanpen is a Thai theatremaker based in Bangkok, Thailand. Juggling between reality and the magical components of theatre, his works explore small details in different types of relationships to portray the bigger picture of society. He works on both originals and adaptations. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Advertising from Bangkok University and a Master of Arts in Arts and Cultural Management from LASALLE College of the Arts. He is recognised for his remarkable work as a scriptwriter on the project *My Mother's Kitchen*, which was supported by the Embassy of Portugal in Thailand. Additionally, he has won several IATC awards for his theatre scripts, including *Big Head Monster* (2013) and *Mon Rak Transistor* (2022).



Pornpan Arayaveerasid

Technical Director

Pornpan Arayaveerasid is a theatre designer and researcher, who holds a Master of Arts degree in Theatre Design from Chulalongkorn University and a specialisation in Lighting Design from the University of Victoria. With extensive experience as a lighting and set designer, she has contributed to various theatre productions, including concerts and experimental performances. As the Design Director of DuckUnit, a multidisciplinary design studio in Bangkok, her work showcases a commitment to the innovative exploration of light and space. Noteworthy projects include her contributions to Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Fever Room*; the lighting design for Toshiki Okada's *Pratthana – A Portrait of Possession*; and her scenographic work with Wichaya Artamat and For What Theatre, which has been touring extensively across Europe and Asia. In addition to her artistic practice, Pornpan is also an educator, lecturing on theatre design and researching themes such as non-human performance and time-image in performing arts.



Rueangrith Suntisuk

Scenographer

Rueangrith Suntisuk joined DuckUnit in 2005, initially working on storytelling through video and animation. With diverse interests and a passion for exploring possibilities, his work connects various media, ranging from video to lighting design, moving objects and spatial design. This approach has been applied across various contexts, including concerts, performance art, and installation art. DuckUnit, led by Rueangrith Suntisuk and Pornpan Arayaveerasid, has expanded its interest in experimenting with mechanical systems to integrate with various forms of art while continuing to develop interests in other disciplines.



Sasapin Siriwanij

Producer

Sasapin Siriwanij is a Bangkok-based performing arts producer, curator and artist. She holds both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English from the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University. For over a decade, Sasapin has built a distinguished career at B-Floor Theatre as a performer, director and producer, where she has become a core member and expert in movement-based performance practices. Her work is deeply rooted in social critique, personal empowerment and societal transformation. Sasapin has been the Artistic Director of the Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting (BIPAM) since 2018. She also co-founded the Producers of Thai Performing Arts Network (POTPAN), reinforcing her commitment to the development of the local arts scene in Thailand. In addition to her leadership roles, Sasapin is an independent theatre artist and international touring producer, collaborating extensively with For What Theatre and Wichaya Artamat.

The Politics of an Unpolitical Story by Tomorn Sukpreecha

Some so-called political events pass us by unnoticed. In the turbulent sea of life, what you always care about are not any huge demonstrations on the high streets of your city, not any massacres that happened to happen to your compatriots on a darn hot day of violence, not any coup d'état with causes you should or shouldn't care about. What matters most to you is always what happened to people in your intimate circle, your brothers and sisters or your mum and your beloved dad—not what happened to other people.

Family affairs always appear to be much more significant than any social issues, whether good or bad, small or big, regal or humble.

The Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May) resonates with the very human characteristics of a brother and sister who, on three different days in May across three different calendar years, ponder, mourn and talk about their late father, reflecting on the bittersweetness of their past and present life, and, of course, lamenting some beloved songs their father used to croon.

The siblings are two middle-class Thai of Chinese origin, so their conversations are full of Chinese vibes and manners. They exchange their absurd yet captivating conversations, ask each other how they were in the past year or years. Time flies. They are getting old. An unspoken truth of death shrouds the room—not just their father’s death but their own and ours, simultaneously.

The fact that these three specific days in May happen to be the dates of three dreadful political events does not change the fact that this performance is an unpolitical story about two siblings who have never been sure of their father’s date of death. They just sit there in their father’s empty house, carrying on their never-ending talk that leads somewhere far away, on and on, over and over.

But what happened on the dates when they met? Those three days in May, though not the exact same day?

In Thailand, May 1992 is called “Black May”. On the 17th of that grim month, more than 200,000 people demonstrated in central Bangkok against the military regime that showed its vigorous determination to hold onto power. At the height of the protest, a military crackdown resulted in dozens of deaths, hundreds of injuries and thousands of arrests. This sad story was rescued by royal intervention at the end of the day.

On 19 May 2010, another military crackdown occurred. It was the culmination of months of red-shirt protests that called on the government to dissolve parliament and hold elections. This time the crackdown resulted in more than 85 casualties, thousands of injuries and an undisclosed number of arrests. The Thai media dubbed the crackdown “Savage May”. Since this menacing act of subjugation, Thai society has never been the same. It has been split in two ever since.

On 22 May 2014, the latest Thai coup d’état occurred after six months of political crisis during which Bangkok was shut down on many occasions. After the coup, the Thai military established a junta that governed the nation for five straight years.

It’s hard to deny that the three dates the siblings come together on are political. However, the purpose of their meetings is unpolitical beyond any doubt. They are just two people who are trying to swim in their own stream of life and who share their experiences and struggles. Wichaya Artamat, the director and scriptwriter of this performance, shows us life as it is. Ordinary, simple and mundane.

Of course, life can be absurd, life can be adorable, life can be overwhelming, life can so often be too much, but life can still be unpolitical too, yes, as much or as little as it can be, and as long as one can bear it.

This Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May) is merely an unpolitical story with its own politics. This is a story that allows audiences to see how ordinary people can survive in a world in which they will never win, dead or alive. A world that will repeat itself May after May, day after day. A world that plays its people into the politics of the invariably unpolitical story of life.

We all live in that world, though more or less unnoticeably.

This article was originally commissioned for the presentation of *This Song Father Used to Sing (Three Days in May)* at Kunstenfestivaldesarts in 2019.



Production Credits

Script

Wichaya Artamat
Jaturachai Srichanwanpen
Parnrut Kritchanchai

Director

Wichaya Artamat

Cast

Jaturachai Srichanwanpen
Parnrut Kritchanchai

Scenographer

Rueangrith Suntisuk

Technical Director /

Lighting Designer

Pornpan Arayaveerasid

Scenographic and

Technical Assistant

Piti Boonsom

Music Video

Atikhun Adulpocatorn

Pianist

Studio28 (Thailand)

Stage Manager

Pathipon Adsavamahapong

Surat Kaewseekram

Producer / Touring Manager

Sasapin Siriwanij

Production

For What Theatre

SONG CREDITS

House music

Feng Ye Piao Piao

performed by Teresa Teng

Song 1

Yue Liang Dai Biao Wo De Xin

performed by Leslie Cheung

Song 2

Ye Lai Xiang

performed by Teresa Teng

Song 3

SUBARU (or Xing in Chinese)

performed by Teresa Teng

Song 4

Tian Mi Mi

performed by Leon Lai

Song 5

HAHA UE SAMA

(ending theme song of

Japanese cartoon Ikkyū-san)

performed by Tomoko Mariya

English Surttitle

Translation

Sasapin Siriwanij

Olan Kiatsomphol

Special thanks

Arai Arai

B-Floor Theatre

Sliding Elbow Studio

Companion Programmes



In Conversation with Wichaya Artamat

by Wichaya Artamat and Sasapin Siriwanij

Moderated by Tan Shou Chen

Let one of Thailand's most exciting theatremakers unfurl the hidden metaphors behind his works steeped in contemporary Thai political history.

(1hr 30mins)

7 Sep 2024, Sat, 11am, Esplanade Black Room

Free, by registration.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



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Presents

Raga

"Jyoti Dogra's *Maas* served up society's gaze on a fat, female, middle-aged body in the most entertaining and disturbing ways." – **The Hindu**

MAAS

A PIECE BY
JYOTI DOGRA
(INDIA)

A sharp, humorous critique of beauty standards and body image in a world that's fixated on perfection.

(1hr 45mins, no intermission)

Performed in English with some Hindi, with English surtitles.

Advisory 16: Mature Theme and Coarse Language

27 & 28 Sep 2024
Fri, 8pm | Sat, 3pm & 8pm
Esplanade Recital Studio

\$35**

*Limited concessions for students, NSF's, seniors and PWD's: \$28



Information correct at time of print.



BOOK NOW!

www.esplanade.com/raga

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Discover: 10% savings (min. 2 tickets)

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High Commission of India
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In Collaboration
with Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

VECTOR#5: PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIES

Exhibition of Performance
Presented by Dance Nucleus in collaboration
with Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

28 Sep, Sat, 4 – 10pm
29 Sep, Sun, 2 – 8pm
Esplanade Annexe Studio

Featured Artists:
Pietro Marullo
Transfield Studio
ashleyho+domeniknaue
Pat Toh and Jenni Large

Find out more



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Presents

da:ns

TOTEM

VOID AND HEIGHT

SANKAI JUKU

(JAPAN)



After eight years, one of the world's most well-known *butoh* companies returns with the final choreographic work by its late founder, Ushio Amagatsu.

(1hr 15mins, no intermission)

4 – 6 Oct 2024

Fri & Sat, 7.30pm | Sun, 3pm

Singtel Waterfront Theatre at Esplanade

\$45[^], \$65[^]

Limited concessions: \$36, \$52

The international premiere of the production is presented as part of *da:ns focus – Connect Asia Now (CAN)*.

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[^]Esplanade&Me Specials available

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**Esplanade
Presents**

da:ns

AN ESPLANADE CO-PRODUCTION

MAGIC MAIDS

EISA JOCSON & VENURI PERERA

(PHILIPPINES & SRI LANKA)



Collaborating together for the first time, Jocson and Perera unsettle oppressive power structures through an embodied inquiry into the entanglements between witch hunts and female labour.

(1hr 20mins, no intermission)
Please refer to advisories online.

4 – 6 OCT 2024
FRI, 7.30PM | SAT & SUN, 5PM
ESPLANADE ANNEXE STUDIO

\$30^
Limited concessions: \$24

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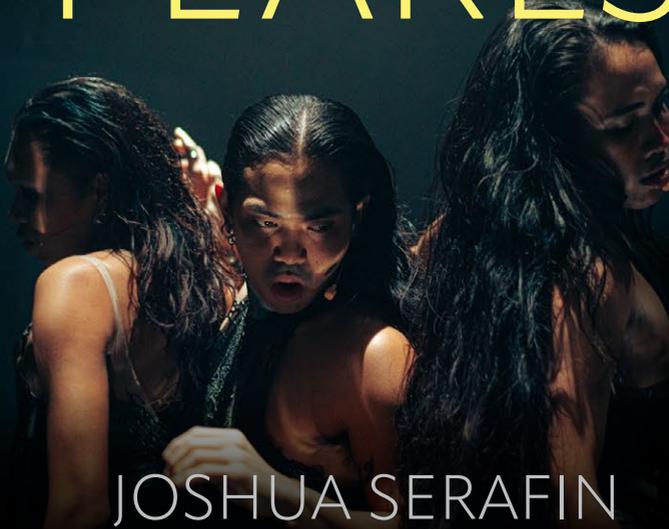


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AN ESPLANADE CO-PRODUCTION

PEARLS



JOSHUA SERAFIN
(PHILIPPINES/BELGIUM)

Drawing parallels to how pearls are formed, this production transfigures dark histories into new potentialities for a brighter, more diverse future.

(1hr 10mins, no intermission)

Admission age: 18 and above. Please refer to advisories online.

4 – 6 Oct 2024

Fri, 9pm | Sat, 7.30pm | Sun, 3pm

Esplanade Theatre Studio

\$30*

Limited concessions: \$24

The Asian premiere of this production is presented as part of *da:ns focus – Connect Asia Now (CAN)*.

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"it is an otherworldly, strangely moving, even groundbreaking experience, and will ensure that what is effectively Sakamoto's final concert can be enjoyed forever."
- Guardian



"A spellbinding performance by the late Ryuichi Sakamoto"
- Daily Telegraph

"a fantastic and totally unique experience among mixed reality events that I have ever seen"
- medium.com

KAGAMI

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO + TIN DRUM
(JAPAN/USA)

One of the final works by the legendary pianist and composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, this mixed reality concert experience offers a glimpse into his artistry through groundbreaking technology.

(1hr 20mins, no intermission)
Please refer to advisories online.

\$108[^]

Limited concessions: \$91.80



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Free upgrade when you spend \$500



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4,562

activities took place at Esplanade.



3,354

 Free

1,057

 Paid

3,260,515

People attended our activities at the centre.



Free

1,487,680

Paid

287,931

*Figures for Esplanade's activities from Apr 2022 to Mar 2023.



602

 Activities

12,059

 Participants

We believe that everyone should be able to experience the joy of the arts, including children, youth, seniors, migrant workers and individuals with special needs. Our community engagement activities bring the arts to those in need.



Your contribution* will make a difference.

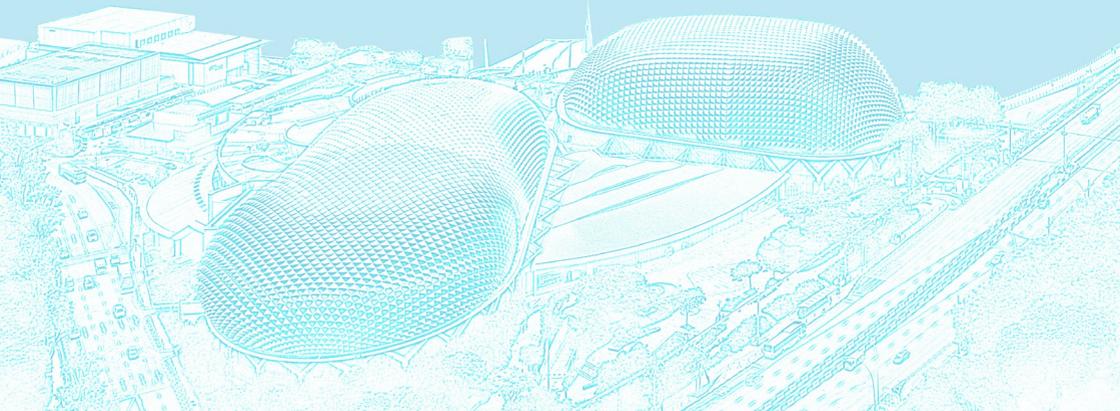
On behalf of the communities we serve, thank you!

Find out how you too can make a difference through the arts at Esplanade.

Donate at www.esplanade.com/donate

To find out more, email us at donations@esplanade.com or speak with us at 6828 8321.

Esplanade is a charity and an Institution of a Public Character. Your donation to us is matched dollar-for-dollar by the Cultural Matching Fund. Please note that the prevailing tax exemption scheme for donors and sponsors of Arts-Related Businesses will depend on the qualifying criteria imposed by IRAS.



With Gratitude

Esplanade–Theatres on the Bay is a charity, a not-for-profit organisation and Singapore's national performing arts centre.

We seek to entertain, engage, educate and inspire through the arts. We thank everyone who has helped us bring positive impact to Singaporeans by supporting the arts and Esplanade.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes especially to our Donors and Sponsors, for their steadfast belief in our mission and for their generous contributions.

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Join us in sharing the joy of the arts and help us reach more communities in need.

We believe that an experience with the arts is special and that with your generous support, more people will get a chance to enjoy the arts. Join us in sharing the joy of the arts and help us reach more communities in need.



Esplanade also receives grants from the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, as well as support for our Community Programmes from the Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.



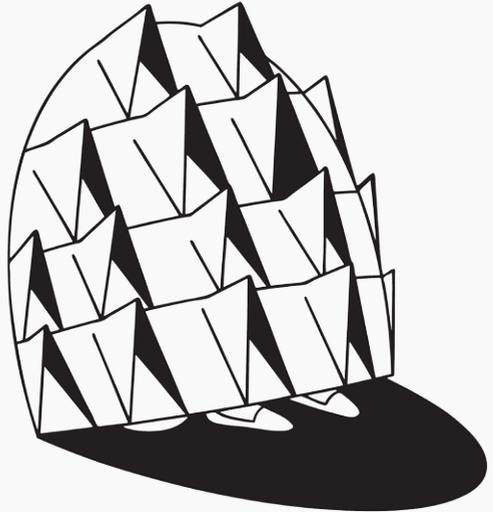
“

I could just scroll through IG or TikTok but I thought why should I when I can do the same on Offstage? It makes me feel like I know more things. Great arts content, anytime, anywhere.

Highly recommend.

”

Totally Anonymous Person
(who is not related to www.esplanade.com/offstage)



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Esplanade is a charity and not-for-profit organisation. Help us bring the joy and inspiration of the arts to different communities, including the underserved.

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Find out more
www.esplanade.com/thestudios

Information correct at time of print.



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