

Nusantara Open Circle 2026 – Open Call

Nusantara Open Circle is a playwright developmental programme presented by Esplanade and produced by Main Tulis Group. The programme encourages and supports the development of new scripts in Bahasa Melayu, Bahasa Indonesia, or Malay and Indonesia-related dialects.

Three works will be selected for this development phase, and each selected playwright will be paired with an experienced mentor.

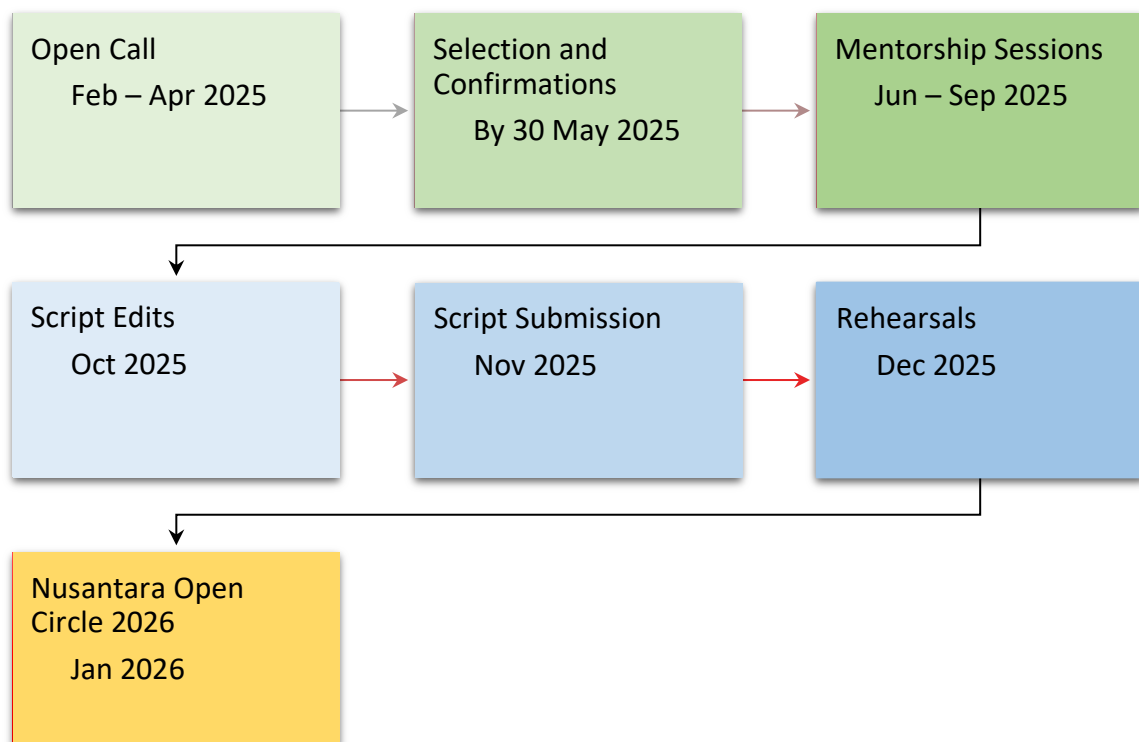
As part of the application, playwrights must submit a brand-new short script on the theme of “*Lapar*”.

You are encouraged to interpret this theme in any way, and the relevance of your script to the theme must be explained in your application.

Through group workshops and one-on-one mentorship sessions, scripts will be developed for a dramatised reading in Singapore in January 2026 at Esplanade as part of *Nusantara Open Circle 2026*.

While this residency is particularly suitable for emerging playwrights, all writers who believe they can benefit from mentoring and guidance are welcomed to apply.

Timeline for Nusantara Open Circle



There will be three mentor-led group workshops that selected participants will have to attend between June to September 2025.

In addition, participants must meet with their specific mentor at least three times between June to September 2025 to work on and receive guidance for their scripts.

A stipend of SGD\$300 will be provided to each writer for the mentorship phase between June to November.

A separate fee of SGD\$700 will be provided for their participation in the *Nusantara Open Circle 2026*, to be held in Singapore in January 2026. For playwrights in Malaysia and Indonesia, flights and accommodation in Singapore will be covered during the event period.

Application Submission Deadline will be 28 April 2025, 11.59pm (GMT+8).

Applications will be assessed by a panel of representatives from Esplanade and Main Tulis Group.

For enquiries, please write to maintulisgroup@gmail.com.

Applications open from 25 February 2025, 3pm.

Applicants who have been shortlisted to be part of *Nusantara Open Circle* will be notified by 30 May 2025.

As part of your application, you will be required to submit:

1. An original script that must be a minimum of 6 and maximum of 10 pages. It can be a full play or an excerpt and must not have been staged before.

Who can apply?

1. Playwrights with original work who are based in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, who are able to write in Bahasa Melayu, Bahasa Indonesia, or Malay or Indonesia-related dialects. There is no age limit.
2. Participants must be able to travel to Singapore between 30 January – 1 February 2026.

Responsibilities of Playwrights during Nusantara Open Circle

1. Selected playwrights are to be available to attend 3 workshop sessions between June to September 2025, held online on Zoom.
2. Selected playwrights are to arrange at least three one-on-one sessions with their specific mentor between June to September 2025 to further develop their submitted scripts.
3. Selected playwrights must submit their revised scripts by 3 November 2025, 12pm. This submitted script must be at least 20 pages long.
4. Selected playwrights must participate in the events of *Nusantara Open Circle*, to be held at Esplanade in Singapore in January 2026.
5. Selected playwrights are to ensure that they have all the necessary documents to travel into Singapore (valid passport/visa) in January 2026.

Selection Criteria

1. There can only be one entry per playwright. Once submitted, the entry is considered final.
2. Applications will be considered based on the following:
 - Relevance of script to the theme, and how the script interprets and responds to the theme
 - How the playwright can benefit from the mentorship programme
 - Potential of the submitted script to be further developed into a 20-page script for a dramatised reading presentation in January 2026

Note: As this is a development programme, we will not penalise playwrights for submitting unfinished scripts or excerpts as part of their application to this open call.

3. The selection panel's decision in all matters is final and no correspondence from then on will be entertained.

Terms & Conditions of Nusantara Open Circle 2026 – Open Call

1. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
2. Applications are to be submitted using the provided platform.
3. Selected playwrights will be notified via their given email address.
4. The submitted script must be a new script which has never been staged before. It should be written mostly in Bahasa Melayu, Bahasa Indonesia, or Malay or Indonesia-related dialects spoken in your country. If regional dialects or slang terms are used, please include translations and/or footnotes.
5. The submitted script must be a minimum of six pages and maximum of 10 pages with the formatting: Times New Roman, font size 12, 1.5 line spacing. It can be a full play or an excerpt.
6. If your submitted script is longer than the stipulated length, we will only read the first 10 pages.
7. Selected playwrights will enter into a contractual agreement with Main Tulis Group as the producer of this development programme and *Nusantara Open Circle* event. The contract will outline the terms of the engagement, including all deliverables and deadlines, and terms of payment.
8. Selected playwrights must give at least 72 hours' notice before the start of the first workshop session should they choose to withdraw from the programme. This might entail being paid partial fees if agreed upon deliverables have not been met.
9. Selected playwrights agree to have their names, voices, likenesses, sound materials and photographs used by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and sponsors for the purpose of publicity, broadcasting, advertising and or trade without further compensation or notice.
10. Selected playwrights agree to participate in promotional activities, including but not limited to media interviews, promotional appearances and events arranged by Esplanade for publicity and promotional purposes, for which no additional fees shall be paid to the playwright.
11. Esplanade and Main Tulis Group reserves the right to amend the open call's rules and guidelines without prior notice.
12. By participating in this open call, selected playwrights agree to abide by the rules and regulations, terms and conditions, and all decisions made by Esplanade and Main Tulis Group.

About Nusantara Open Circle

Nusantara Open Circle (NOC) is a transnational exchange of new ideas and writings from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. NOC presents a series of dramatised readings from works in progress of an exciting playwright from each country, written primarily in Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia and performed by Singapore actors. Each read will be accompanied by a feedback session where attendees can learn more about the artist and their craft while sharing their responses to the work.

NOC is a three-year programme starting from 2025. Besides the flagship programme that takes place in January, the development phase comprises open calls for new plays in development, and mentorships with the region's most notable playwrights.

Nusantara Open Circle is presented by Esplanade and produced by Main Tulis Group. Our collaborators Panas Panas Theatre from Malaysia and Indonesia Dramatic Reading Festival from Indonesia are consulted about various aspects of the programme.

Main Tulis Group

Founded in 2016, Main Tulis Group (MTG) is Singapore's only collective that works on developing English and Malay plays. The emphasis is on *main* (play) and *tulis* (write)—writing organically, without restrictions—while also being about playwriting as a craft. The group organises regular readings of works-in-progress known as Open Circle sessions, and is known for its dramatised readings showcase ETA : 9 MIN. MTG has worked with institutions such as Centre 42, Esplanade, Singapore Writers Festival and the National University of Singapore, organising readings, workshops and outreach events on writing.

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 the 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 for more information.