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Our Memories, Our Stories The Festival Invites You to Remember

From 13 May to 5 June 2011, the Singapore Arts Festival will be presenting 35 ticketed and 27 non-ticketed productions by 81 artists and arts companies, based on the curatorial theme, *I Want to Remember*. Inspired by the recollection of memories, both personal and public, of Singapore and the region, these selected and commissioned works are an intense investigation into the complexity of memory as well as the condition of amnesia to stir consciousness, imagination and heart.

The Festival's direction to evolve into a Creation and People's Festival, with a strong focus on developing and showcasing Asian works, was first chartered in 2009 when developing the *Between You and Me* edition. It will continue to deliver on that promise with this second instalment in the trilogy.

There are 18 new commissions, of which 13 are from Singapore – these are record numbers in the past decade. Of the 81 artists and arts companies featured, 64 (80%) of them are Asian while 49 (60%) of them are local. The Festival's commissions now undergo an average development period of two years, allowing artists more time to embark on a more rigorous process of research, rehearsals and phase showings. For instance, discussions for this year's local commissions started in October 2009.

The Festival Village will also make a grand return after a 10-year hiatus, now at a new site – the Esplanade Park. Intended to be a key gathering point for artists and audiences, it will host free and ticketed performances that are extensions of the Festival's thematic threads, enjoyed over food and drinks. The Festival Village will also play home to the first Kids Arts Village, a not-to-be-missed experience curated, performed and managed entirely by children.

“I see the Singapore Arts Festival as a dynamic, ever evolving arts platform that responds keenly and sensitively to what is happening in Singapore and the world around us by presenting relevant works that probe deeply into city life and the urban condition. The Festival has a critical role to play in raising awareness of contemporary issues, provoking thought and opening up avenues for discourse. With 2010’s *Between You and Me*, we seeded the beginnings of an intimate conversation with artists and audiences for a closer relationship that will deepen and strengthen the mirroring connection between arts and life. This year’s *I Want to Remember* examines our own capacity and desire to remember what has been lost, left behind or forgotten in the name of progress and civilisation, because to progress inevitably necessitates a state of perpetual erasure, in order to make way for the new. Yet we cannot *not* remember, for the past provides reference points to navigate both present and future. This tension fuels the Festival’s creative programming to offer reinterpretations, even reinventions to fill the gaps in fragmented memories to make sense of them,” said Low Kee Hong, General Manager of the Singapore Arts Festival.

In the 2011 Festival, the works explore the theme *I Want to Remember* and are grouped into five curatorial threads comprising **Dance Greats, Histories, Lost Languages & Memories, Personal Memories, Sites.Sights.Sounds**

Dance Greats

In tribute to the three dance icons who have had a profound impact on dancers and dance-enthusiasts all over the world, the Festival explores the body of work left behind by German choreographer Pina Bausch in the playful **Out of Context – For Pina** (Belgium), an intimate and captivating dance performance investigating the very fundamentals of dance, directed by Alain Platel, a friend of Bausch’s. Dance enthusiasts can also look forward to choreographer Boris Charmatz’s **Flip Book** (France), an inventive reconstruction of the movements and dance techniques which form the legacy of late choreographer Merce Cunningham. Yoshito Ohno, son of the late Kazuo Ohno, one of the pioneers of the *Butoh* dance form, honours his father in the touching and beautiful tribute, **Kuu** (Japan), which means “emptiness”. The dance/film platform, which was first introduced to local audiences in last year’s Festival, will also feature a selection of films dedicated to the memory of these legends.

Histories

In **The 1955 Baling Talks** (Malaysia/Singapore), history comes alive before your eyes. The dates are 28 and 29 December 1955, when the revolutionary war now known as the Malayan Emergency has been going on for seven long years. In a simple schoolroom in Baling, Kedah, a pivotal moment of Malayan-Malaysian-Singaporean history is playing out: the talks to finally bring an end to the war.

Inspired by the late political heavyweight S. Rajaratnam, *The Necessary Stage* examines modern Singapore by bringing to life a host of historical characters in real and imagined situations, juxtaposed with contemporary characters, in the seriously funny **SINGAPORE** (Singapore). And while history often celebrates men, theatre group Drama Box explores the extraordinary accomplishments of women in the

1950s and 1960s, told through tales of her trials and tribulations as a woman, a wife, and a mother, with an unfulfilled dream she has only just begun to realise, in **HERstory** (Singapore).

A collaboration between Australian music artists Topology and Loops, **Airwaves** (Australia) is a mammoth retrospective of 100 years of key moments in radio broadcast history that borrows famous quotes by George Bush, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King and other public figures, transforming them into exhilarating 're-mixes'. Meanwhile, the moving story of Wilbur and Orville Wright, who strived to achieve the first powered flight, is at the heart of **The Wright Brothers** (UK) by the Oxford Playhouse.

Lost Languages & Memories

Forgotten memories, ancient languages and local dialects form the basis of this series of productions and represent a useful starting point as an investigation into our past. Dancers from T.H.E Dance Company explore the boundary between memory and reality, focusing on the transient in **As It Fades** (Singapore). In **Tempest: Without A Body** (Samoa/New Zealand), Samoan choreographer Lemi Ponifasio draws from Shakespeare's classic story of institutional injustice to question the escalation of state powers and erosion of individual freedoms in a post-9/11 era.

Recall and celebrate the roots of the Hokkiens and traditional *Nanyin* music with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) in **A Heritage Journey: Elegance of Nanyin** (Singapore). Featuring a new composition by the acclaimed Law Wai Lun, this work is a combination of orchestra, ensemble playing, choral work, and sound effects coupling live music with electronic mixing in collaboration with sound artist Casey Lim, the Quanzhou Nanyin Ensemble and the Siong Leng Musical Association. In **Soul Capture** (Singapore/China), award-winning Chinese composer Hu Xiao-ou and Singapore's premier classical quartet T'ang Quartet transport audiences on a musical journey to the *Jinsha ruins* and *Sanxingdui*, sites with clues which point to the mystical Shu Kingdom.

Personal Memories

Artists draw from personal memories and stories to weave fascinating and deeply poignant tales that compel audiences to begin a journey of self-exploration, long after the productions have ended. China's Living Dance Studio tells the personal stories of survivors of the Great Famine (1959 – 1961) through film and live performance in **Memory II: Hunger** (China). Audiences are encouraged to fast the night before the epic eight-hour production, to fully experience this powerful piece that recalls dark and distant memories that most young Chinese are unable to recall. Another piece driven by a desire to put China's relentless march forward in perspective is **2** (China), a new commission created by international dance sensation Tao Ye. With his unparalleled dance vocabulary, he stretches the boundaries of the flesh to rediscover the body's unknown or lost possibilities.

A musical unlike any other, **Life and Times – Episode 1** (USA) by the Nature Theater of Oklahoma saw director Pavol Liska pose sound designer Kristin Worrall a seemingly simple question: "Can you tell me your life story?". The resulting verbatim transcript of this original phone interview became the libretto for

a musical unlike any other, as the company sings every word - including every "um", "uh", "oh" of the original phone conversation, raising what might be considered very mundane and ordinary life to the level of something truly transcendent. Episode 1 of *Life and Times* covers Ms Worall's life story from birth to 8 years old and features a cast of 10 with live musical accompaniment.

Rimini Protokoll's Stefan Kaegi returns to Singapore with **Radio Muezzin** (Germany), after last year's successful run of *Cargo: KL-Singapore*. This time, the lives of four Egyptian muezzins – men traditionally tasked to issue the Muslim call to prayer – collide when they meet an engineer who plans to record their voices, eventually replacing them with a CD, turning their profession into a distant memory. Padmini Chettur, one of India's most influential contemporary dance practitioners, draws upon her practice of traditional Indian dance forms, her study of organic chemistry and her exploration of a contemporary dance idiom, to create **Beautiful Thing 2** (India), a look at how the memories of who we were influence who we become.

In **Inhabitants Singapore** (Spain), put aside what you think you know about Singapore, as Teatro de los Sentidos investigates the unseen side of Singapore through sensory language, body memory and theatre, in a production which promises to be a completely unique experience for those who seek to see Singapore in a different light. Award-winning Belgian theatre performance group Ontroerend Goed explores another spectrum of interactive theatre by inviting audiences to participate in two unforgettable productions that challenge the way audiences encounter a performance and each other. In **Internal**, five actors engage one-on-one with five audience members in a conversation on topics intimate yet guarded, while in **A Game of You**, seven actors take turns mimicking individual audience members through a careful game with darkly humorous results.

While the image the world has of Cambodia is usually associated with the atrocities of the Pol Pot era, today's Cambodia is driven by its youthful population, eager to move forward while still coming to terms with the tragic legacy it has inherited. A new commission **Crack** (Germany/Belgium, Cambodia) sees Brussels-based choreographer Arco Renz collaborating closely with dancers from Phnom Penh-based Amrita Performing Arts, to ascribe and describe through contemporary dance, music and performance, the zeitgeist of a transformed country.

A first for the Festival, a short film has been commissioned. The new short film, *I Want to Remember*, by award-winning director Royston Tan spotlights and celebrates personal memories of a diverse group of Singaporeans including a street opera artist, Youtube pop star and a muay thai boxer.

Sites.Sights.Sounds

Trigger your memory with a series of works that engage different sites, sights and sounds. The **Academy of Ancient Music** (UK) offer audiences the unique opportunity to listen to a selection of pieces from legendary composers such as Vivaldi, Bach and Purcell, played using early music instruments, as they were intended to be heard. The Orchestra's entrancing music will be further lifted

by one of the world's most sought-after sopranos, **Sumi Jo**. Following a successful turn in 2010, Nitin Sawhney returns to the Festival to conduct the Singapore Festival Orchestra in **A Throw of Dice** (UK / Singapore). Nitin's score dovetails with the drama of the beautiful silent film classic *Prapandcha Pash* (*A Throw of Dice*), German director Franz Osten's great work inspired by the pivotal gambling episode from Indian classic *The Mahabharata*.

The visually and aurally stunning Buddhist music project **Li and Sa** (Korea) is an enthralling confluence of Korean traditional music, Buddhist chant and dance, modern music performance. Live music is played, mixed and engineered with electronic sounds, against an absorbing backdrop of omnipresent video projections. The **Mahler Chamber Orchestra** (Germany), conducted by new generation wunderkind Music Director and Principal Conductor **Daniel Harding** (UK), focuses on the Romantic repertoire, developing higher levels of richness and tonal vitality enhanced by their chamber music approach. One of its concerts honours its namesake Gustav Mahler, exactly 100 years since he passed away, while the other celebrates Brahms' third and fourth symphonies.

FESTIVAL VILLAGE 2011

The Festival will open with **When a Gray Taiwanese Cow Stretched** (Japan), an exquisite outdoor performance by award-winning company Ishinha, timed for the spectacular transition between daylight, sunset, dusk and night. This is the first time that this unique performance will be seen outside Japan, and will kick-start an intense, three-week celebration of the arts.

Local director Jeremiah Choy pays tribute to William Teo, one of the pioneers of English-language theatre in Singapore in **The Conference of the Birds** (Singapore), a play first directed by Teo in 1991, on the tenth anniversary of his passing. The late William Teo also used to curate the former Festival Village at the Fort Canning Park

A double-bill of Indonesia artists in **Javanese Moonlight Intertwined** (Indonesia) sees court dancers of the Mangkunegaran Palace performing *Bedoyo Dirodo Meto*, a sacred dance performed only for the Royal court. The second half of the evening features Acapella Mataraman, a group of acapella musician-actors who reconstruct Javanese *gamelan* and traditional Indonesia music into a new and exciting form.

In **Mother India 21st Century Remix** (UK), leading UK-based electronic composer DJ Tigerstyle re-interprets the score to the epic film *Mother India*, which was nominated for an Oscar in 1957 for Best Foreign Film, and has come to symbolise the post-colonial Indian psyche.

In response to *HERstory* (Singapore), the **Choral Association** performs a two evening programme focusing on popular choral songs often sung during the 1950s to 1970s, a time when Singapore was finding its footing in its incredible drive to being the cosmopolitan metropolis it is today.

Singaporeans will get to unleash their inner singing potential with **Yesterday – Mobile Karaoke** (Singapore), a mobile lorry outfitted with blaring speakers where everyone can hop on, select from a song list of tunes at least 20 years old, and perform. The lorry will tour to various neighbourhoods and to the Festival Village, and play host to a “choir karaoke-thon” on the final day of the Festival.

The revelry goes late into the night as the Festival Village features Nitin Sawhney, DJ Tigerstyle and a host of other deejays and performers in late night dance and music sets.

PLATFORM CAMPUS AND COM.MUNE

As part of the Festival’s ongoing commitment to developing the capabilities of young local artists as well as Singaporeans’ appreciation of the arts, this year’s Festival will also see the return of the Platform Campus series which supports and develops student-led and performed work, allowing young participants a larger audience base and a forum at an international arts festival. In **Re: Almost Left Behind** (Singapore), local arts group Thespiis embarks on a year-long exploration of memories and travelling, while **In The Middle** (Singapore) exhibits the work of up-and-coming choreographers Foo Yun Ying and Zhuo Zihao, as they remember their childhood.

The Festival’s year-round public participation programme, *com.mune*, was initiated at last year’s Festival and will include the first ever **Kids Arts Village**, a special visual and performing arts space designed, curated, performed and managed by children, for children. The ongoing **People’s Exhibition**, the Festival’s first ever community participation exhibition, features reconstructions of old arts performing venues based on photographs, ticket stubs and other forms of memorabilia contributed by the public in the six months leading up to the Festival. Members of the public are also invited to submit folded paper planes in **5000 Planes**, a celebration of creativity anyone can take part in.

As part of *com.mune*, the **Festival Community Tour** revisits the art of storytelling with radio station Rediffusion, which used to command the living room before the arrival of the television. Senior citizen group, The Glowers, will reach out to the public at hawker centres to practice some basic conversational dialect through storytelling and reading of the daily news.

TICKETING INFORMATION

Early bird sales for ArtsFest Club members commence 1 March, while general sales begin 8 March. Tickets can be purchased through SISTIC (www.sistic.com.sg). Sign up as an ArtsFest Club member for free at www.singaporeartsfest.com/register to enjoy early bird benefits and other exciting privileges.

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