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## **KOH WAN CHING APPOINTED HEAD OF ACTING AT ITI**



Koh Wan Ching at the ITI campus

**14 JUNE 2023, SINGAPORE** — Singaporean actor and director Koh Wan Ching has been appointed Head of Acting at Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), beginning on 1 July 2023. This appointment signals the first succession of leadership since the school - formerly known as the Theatre Training and Research Programme (TTRP) - was co-founded by Kuo Pao Kun and T. Sasitharan in 2000. To this day, ITI offers the only Professional Diploma in Intercultural Theatre (Acting) in the world.

Koh Wan Ching is an established and highly regarded actor, performer and director in Singapore, having worked with several leading theatre companies over the last 20 years. She previously served as an Adjunct Lecturer in the BA Acting programmes at both LASALLE College of the Arts and NAFA. In 2020, she joined ITI's permanent faculty, teaching Acting and Movement to the international student cohort. ITI is fortunate to have her lead the school going forward.

Brief statement from Koh Wan Ching:

**ITI is about living traditions, and people. I want more people to know about ITI and its unique programme, charged with the traditional and the contemporary. I want people to see our students' experiments in theatre-making. I look forward to collaborations and deep engagement with local and regional practitioners. As I take on new responsibilities, I remember all with whom I have crossed paths because of ITI. I also thank each and every colleague, old and new, who works tirelessly so that the school on the hill does not fall apart...I celebrate all these human beings and their reasons for coming to ITI, and am honoured to be on this journey with them. [continued in Appendix C]**

Wan Ching's appointment follows the engagement of younger, more innovative and diverse faculty at the school, whose students and alumni come from 18 countries.

Prior uncertainty surrounding the campus in 2022 has been abated with a new lease for the premises, with new tenants finding a home at the historic 11 Upper Wilkie Road. Renovation works by the Singapore Land Authority will be completed by the end of the year.

Wan Ching will assume directorial responsibilities from T. Sasitharan, taking over leadership of the Professional Diploma In Intercultural Theatre (Acting) course.

T. Sasitharan (also known as Sasi), will retain the designation Director and ease out of daily administrative and curriculum-based tasks. He will assume a mentorship role while continuing to teach the Humanities (Cultural & Literary Theory module) and focus on research, writing and strategic planning.

Since Kuo Pao Kun's passing in 2002, T. Sasitharan has helmed the artistic vision of ITI and upheld the integrity of its aims. Under Sasi's stewardship, the foundation of the intercultural pedagogy has been elaborated and strengthened, and the school has grown to nearly 100 graduates - 100% of those continuing to work in the arts within the year after graduation.

Over the years, he has received numerous awards in recognition of his contributions to arts education in Singapore, most recently receiving the 2022 Harvard Club of Singapore (HCS) Fellow Award; National University of Singapore Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (NUS-FASS) Distinguished Alumni Award 2022; and honoured as an arts educator at the inaugural University of the Arts Singapore (UAS) Arts Symposium. In 2012, he received the Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest honour for artists, from the President. His nomination for the Cultural Medallion was supported by artists of all disciplines in Singapore, and by artists, academics and educators from all over the world.

## APPENDIX A



ITI students performing traditional Indonesian theatre Wayong Wong

### ABOUT ITI

ITI began as the Theatre Training & Research Programme (TTRP), founded in 2000 by renowned dramatist **Kuo Pao Kun** (1939–2002) and current Director **T. Sasitharan**. ITI was inspired by the unique experience of contemporary theatre in Singapore over four decades prior to its inception and, in particular, by Kuo Pao Kun's artistic vision and multicultural practice. ITI's teaching methodology draws from a matrix of traditional theatre systems and conceptions of theatre-making from different cultures, with a view to producing critically and socially engaged artists who make original, contemporary theatre.

ITI's distinguished alumni include **Yeo Yann Yann**, winner of two Golden Horse Awards for her performances in *Wet Season* and *Ilo Ilo*, International Emmy Award nominee for her role in *Invisible Stories*, and current lead actor in *American Born Chinese* on Disney+; **Grace Kalaiselvi**, theatre actor, director, educator, translator and writer, founder of Brown Voices: a playwriting collective through which she makes work that expands representation of minorities in Singapore; **Caroline Chin**, Singaporean artist and full-time company dancer at Chowk, a unique dance company that asserts the contemporaneity of Asian traditional dance forms through living embodiment in training, community-building, and performance.

## APPENDIX B

### BIO: KOH WAN CHING

**Koh Wan Ching** started working in theatre as stage crew while training as a performer and now also teaches and directs. She served as Adjunct Lecturer in the BA Acting programmes at both LASALLE College of the Arts and NAFA before taking up a faculty position at the Intercultural Theatre Institute in 2020. Since then, she has taught Acting and Movement at ITI.

For almost 20 years, Wan Ching has worked as an actor with several major theatre companies in Singapore including Drama Box, Nine Years Theatre, The Necessary Stage and Wild Rice. She has performed in and presented work at festivals in Beijing, Brisbane, Hong Kong, Macao, Seoul, and Toyama as well as the Singapore International Festival of Arts (2015, 2021, 2023) and the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival (2018, 2019, 2021). From 2008–2012, she was part of the theatre collective A Group Of People (AGOP), which focused on experimental and collaboratively devised works.

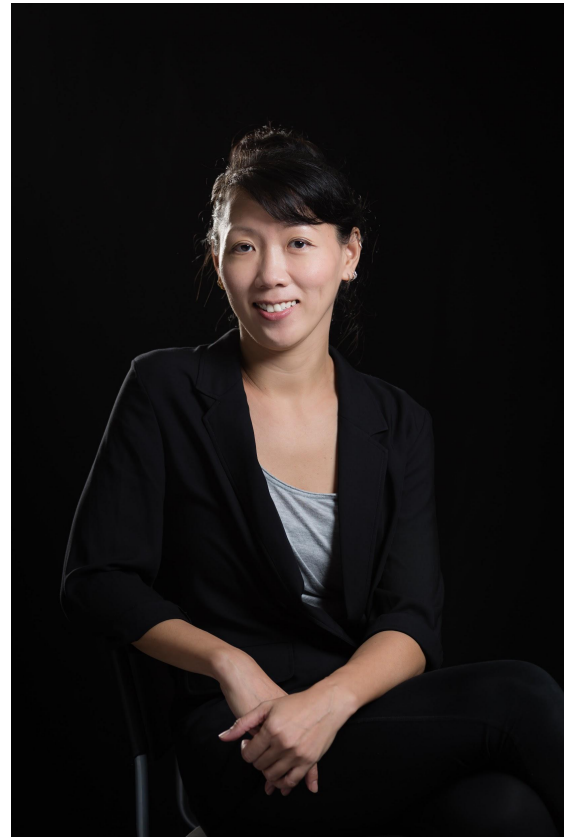


Photo credit: Bernie Ng

Notable works include co-directing two outdoor productions *It Won't Be Too Long: The Cemetery* (2015) with Kok Heng Leun at Bukit Brown Cemetery, and *Tanah•Air 水•土 : A Play In Two Parts* (2019) with Kok Heng Leun and Adib Kosnan at the Malay Heritage Centre. Her work builds upon her practice, which focuses on physical and movement studies. She trained with SITI Company as well as the Suzuki Company of Toga and is a graduate of the inaugural SITI Conservatory Program, a full-time, 9-month immersion program for international theatre artists. Wan Ching holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theatre Studies from the National University of Singapore.

## APPENDIX C

### STATEMENT FROM KOH WAN CHING ON HER APPOINTMENT AS HEAD OF ACTING AT ITI:

The students of ITI train daily for three years. In those three years, they take difficult, sometimes painful steps away from self-consciousness towards awareness. They edge from imitation towards embodiment. They struggle to find relevance and their own voices. Fail, fail, fail, and try again, before finding brief moments of illumination. I am having the time of my life in ITI, because every day, watching someone teaches me something.

ITI is about living traditions, and people. I want more people to know about ITI and its unique programme, charged with the traditional and the contemporary. I want people to see our students' experiments in theatre-making. I look forward to collaborations and deep engagement with local and regional practitioners.

As I take on new responsibilities, I remember all with whom I have crossed paths because of ITI. I also thank each and every colleague, old and new, who works tirelessly so that the school on the hill does not fall apart, or get washed away by floods, or overcome by overzealous tree-trimmers. I celebrate all these human beings and their reasons for coming to ITI, and am honoured to be on this journey with them.

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**ITI: Upcoming Events**

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|-------------------------|--|
| 31 August – 2 September | Final Year Performance 1 directed by Li Xie (Singapore)  |
| 9 – 11 November         | Final Year Performance 2 directed by Arne Neeme (Australia)                                    |
| 27 – 29 November        | Asian Intercultural Conference presented in collaboration with Esplanade – Theatres by the Bay |

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