



LAUNCH OF ITI-ASIA SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTED BY U.S. EMBASSY SINGAPORE; 6 MORE SCHOLARSHIPS OPEN

17 March 2016, Singapore – Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), together with U.S. Embassy Singapore, are pleased to announce the launch of the inaugural ITI-Asia Scholarship supported by U.S. Embassy Singapore. The in-principle three-year scholarship will cover partial tuition fees to an ITI student from any of the 10 ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) member states. The first year grant amount is confirmed for US\$10,000 (approximately S\$14,000).

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Building Cultural Connectivity

The launch of the ITI-Asia Scholarship commemorates the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community and the adoption of the AEC Blueprint 2025, which furthers ASEAN connectivity and the strengthening of ASEAN's relationship with external parties.

This marks the first time a diplomatic mission has partnered with an independent theatre school in Singapore to nurture talent from across ASEAN. It is also U.S. Embassy Singapore's first scholarship for a Singapore institution in three years.

"ITI has a long history of supporting freedom of expression in the performing arts, and its unique programme immerses students in diverse forms of Asian theatre. This new scholarship will help create an equally diverse student body, enabling the next generation of creative talents from different ASEAN nations and economic backgrounds to learn and grow together, and continue to influence each other for years to come," said U.S. Embassy Singapore Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Blair P. Hall.

The scholarship will support a talented ASEAN student selected after rigorous auditions and interviews, who faces challenges affording fees and living expenses in Singapore – the most expensive city to live in globally*.

The ITI-Asia Scholarship supported by the U.S. Embassy will go far to ensure that talented young actors from ASEAN can avail themselves of ITI's training without being barred by their financial challenges.

Co-Founders

Kuo Pao Kun (1939 – 2002)
T. Sasitharan

Board of Directors

Arun Mahizhnan
(Chairman)
Kwok Kian Woon
Chew Kheng Chuan
David Chiem
Tan Tarn How
Abel T. van Staveren

T Sasitharan, Director and Co-founder of ITI affirmed, "Student scholarships are the very lifeblood of our work in ITI. The best actor training programme would mean little if the best and most deserving students can't be in it. The ITI-ASIA Scholarship will enable one more student from ASEAN to have a shot at becoming a theatre artist; a chance for one more student to make a difference as an artist."

Award Eligibility

The ITI-Asia Scholarship supported by U.S. Embassy Singapore will provide partial coverage of fees for a student (2017 - 2019) enrolled at ITI, who is a citizen of any one of the following 10 AEC member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.

More details on the scholarship award details are found in Annex I.

6 More Scholarships Open

The support of U.S. Embassy Singapore underscores the need for continual funding of arts education, which is costly across the world.

For the many students from developing economies who form ITI's student body, those who were already working as actors or others running their own non-profit theatre companies, the three-year, full-time training will be financially challenging.

ITI is committed to the need to train artists. To that end, the following scholarships will be made available to students:

- Four available: ITI Scholarships made possible by donations from the ITI Angels Initiative and the Cultural Matching Fund;
- Two available: ITI-William Teo Scholarship named in honour of the game-changing, late theatre-maker.

At present, students are also being generously supported by:

- The Tan Chay Bing Education Fund; and
- A philanthropist who wishes to be remain anonymous.

Tan Dib Jin, an Advisory Committee Member of the Tan Chay Bing Education Fund, which is administered by HSBC Trustee (Singapore) Limited, speaks of why the family has steadfastly provided financial assistance, "Supporting youth who are so talented yet financially in need is extremely meaningful and important. This is especially so when they have no recourse to the usual avenues for funding their education."

Teo Swee Leng, sister of the late William Teo adds, ""Whether as a theatre practitioner or private individual, William had always been driven by a deep compassion for people. His theatre practice stemmed from a genuine respect for the cultures, traditions, rituals, aesthetics of people and his concern for their survival and wellbeing ... I am grateful to T. Sasitharan and the Intercultural Theatre Institute for honouring my brother and for acknowledging his contribution to Singapore theatre with the ITI-William Teo scholarship."

ITI continually seeks to create and/or attract more scholarship supporters for its students.

Further details of the above-named scholarships and selected award recipients may be found in Annex II.

**Worldwide Cost of Living Survey. Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014, 2015 & 2016.*

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About Intercultural Theatre Institute

ITI offers a peak-level theatre training programme that has attracted international recognition of the highest order – from well-known artists, respected educators to master teachers in the performing arts.

ITI's three-year (full-time) Professional Diploma in Intercultural Theatre (Acting) programme is based on Kuo Pao Kun's vision of intercultural actor training using 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.

The industry's most illustrious names such as Prof Richard Shechner (Tisch School of the Arts, New York University), Prof Anuradha Kapur (former Director, National School of Drama, India), John Clark (former Director, National Institute of Dramatic Art, Australia), Kutiyattam master Gopalan Venu and Noh master performer Yoshimasa Kanze have taught at and endorsed ITI.

On ITI's academic and examination boards are renowned names such as Prof Erik Ehn (Director, Brown University, USA) and Mr Aarne Neeme AM (Order of Australia).

About U.S. Embassy Singapore

U.S. Embassy Singapore consists of 19 U.S. Federal Government agencies working in Singapore and the region. Through the Embassy, the United States maintains a strong bilateral relationship with the Government of Singapore and stands ready to assist the more than 30,000 American citizens in Singapore, many of whom work for American businesses with offices in this country. Additional information about U.S. Embassy Singapore can be found at <http://singapore.usembassy.gov>.

Annex I

ITI-Asia Scholarship Supported by U.S. Embassy Singapore

Scholarship Award Specifics

The ITI-Asia Scholarship supported by U.S. Embassy Singapore is an in-principle three-year scholarship grant. It will support a student, enrolled from 2017 onwards at ITI, with partial tuition fees coverage. The first year grant amount is confirmed at US\$10,000 (approximately S\$14,000).

The scholarship is open to a student who is a citizen of any one of the following 10 AEC member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.

Full tuition fees at ITI for an academic year are S\$18,000.

The scholarship will be awarded to a student with demonstrated financial need and be based on merit, in consideration of artistic talent and ability, maturity and commitment.

The ITI-Asia Scholarship is designed to build intercultural connectivity between ASEAN AEC member states by enabling students from countries with developing economies – including Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam – to attend ITI regardless of their financial challenges.

Selection of award recipients and the final award will be made by ITI's Scholarship Panel in consultation with U.S. Embassy Singapore.

Annex II

Scholarships for students at Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI)

All scholarships at ITI are awarded on an annual basis. Applications for renewed scholarship entail a new application by students wishing to be considered in each following year that they are enrolled at ITI.

- **ITI-William Teo Scholarship**

The scholarship is named as a tribute to the theatre work and legacy of William Teo, which bears much synergy with the training of ITI.

Teo's work – as a director and with his company, Asia-in-Theatre Research Centre (ATRC) – was premised on a blend of resources drawn from traditional Asian performance forms and a Western theatre-approach to dramaturgy. ATRC's productions also committed to in-depth research and extensive actor preparation and training.

ITI holds many approaches in common with Teo's visions – borne out in our Acting Programme that immerses students in four Asian traditional theatre forms (Beijing Opera, Kuttiyatam, Wayang Wong and Noh theatre), and juxtaposes these interactions with Stanislavskian and post-Stanislavskian actor training techniques.

Our final aim is to nurture critically and socially engaged artists who make original, contemporary theatre. It is an aim that Teo had articulated before: "[As an artist], all I'm saying is 'How can I help you to understand our own life, our own existence?' That for me is why art is very important, whether you're a dancer, painter or musician ... Art and theatre are really celebrations of your own life."

The ITI-William Teo scholarship is open to currently enrolled Singaporean or Permanent Resident Second-Year and Third-Year students at ITI. It covers full tuition fees (S\$18,000) for an academic year.

The scholarship is awarded primarily based on merit, in consideration of artistic talent and ability, maturity and commitment. Financial need forms a secondary consideration factor.

- **ITI Scholarships**

There are up to four ITI scholarships available for Singapore/PR students currently enrolled at the institute per cohort.

The ITI scholarships are created by the institute from donations received from the ITI Angels Initiative, and from 2016 onwards, also from grants from the Cultural Matching Fund – a dollar-for-dollar matching programme by the Ministry of Culture, Communications and Youth to cultivate private cultural donations.

These cover 80 per cent of tuition fees.

- **The Tan Chay Bing Education Fund**

The Tan Chay Bing Education Fund has been supporting ITI students from 2012-2014, and in 2016. The number of scholarship recipients vary per cycle of funding.

For 2016, two students from Singapore have been awarded monies from this Fund that will cover 100 per cent of their tuition fees for the year. Selection is based on the Fund's trustees' preference to support local students in this cycle. Previously, the Fund had supported ITI students from other countries as well as Singaporeans.

- **Scholarship by a philanthropist who wishes to be remain anonymous**

This scholarship is sponsored by a philanthropist who prefers to remain anonymous. Students from any nationality are eligible. The scholarship covers part of the tuition fee each year, and also has a component covering living expenses in Singapore.

Selected Scholarship Recipients

- **ITI-William Teo scholarship: Sonia Kwek (Singapore)**

Sonia was already performing on the professional stage prior to embarking on her training at ITI – working with the likes of In Source Theatre and The Necessary Stage (TNS).

However, the Queensland University of Technology graduate knew she wanted to expand her knowledge further. “I aspire to become a versatile and well-rounded contemporary theatre practitioner with a keen understanding from different cultures, to improve and expand upon my skill sets in both contemporary and traditional performance methodologies and to instil a sense of discipline and sensitivity in my craft.”

Alvin Tan, artistic director of TNS and Cultural Medallion recipient backs the potential of the current second-year student, “Sonia demonstrates a keen enthusiasm for learning, and gamely takes up every role and task given to the best of her abilities. Her work has always been efficient. Her good nature also makes her a great team player, which is especially important when working across cultures and disciplines.”

Her progress is steady mid-way through her three-year training and Sonia's Acting teacher, Alberto Ruiz Lopez, says, “[Sonia] has a good presence on stage, and it is so clear and powerful the inner dialogue, even when she is silent ... congratulations, her development in acting is strong and solid.”

- **The Tan Chay Bing Education Fund: Desmond Soh (Singapore)**

First captured by the power of theatre in school at River Valley High School, Desmond became so inspired, he went on to join and eventually head the school's Chinese Language Drama and Debate Society (CLDDS).

Always seeking learning opportunities wherever he can, Desmond looked beyond school and became an active volunteer in the arts. He joined Drama Box's youth wing, ARTivate, and was most recently the director's assistant for a work in “The Young Can Change e World” – a forum theatre platform that was presented in July 2015, as part of Scenes.

Koh Hui Ling, associate artistic director of Drama Box says of the Singaporean actor's commitment, “Desmond is a very reliable and conscientious learner. He displays keen observation as well as incisive insights as the assistant supporting the director in the most recent ARTivate project. He also manages to gain trust from his team members

as the director's assistant. I look forward to his progress after gaining formal training at ITI, and the sensitive works he would create in the future."

Of his appreciation for the performing art form now, Desmond himself says, "Theatre is important for me because it is the form that is able to articulate concerns while being able to connect directly on a large scale without losing aesthetics, often the case with other forms of dialogue ... I believe theatre has the power to chart new directions in the current discourse on identity and culture."

Desmond's post-graduation plans look towards community theatre: "I hope to work in theatre projects that have a strong local community emphasis. I am particularly interested in exploring the cultural identity issues that Singapore continually grapples with – particularly in light of the large demographic changes we have seen in the past decade.

- **Scholarship by a private philanthropist who wishes to be remain anonymous: Soti Rama Pati Dwivid (India)**

Soti Ramapati D. (Soti) hails from Tilhar, Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh, India.

No newcomer to theatre, Soti has been working as an actor and director for over six years. He has acted in plays helmed by some of India's most luminary directors including Mohan Maharishi, Abhilash Pillai, Satyabrata Rout, N.J. Bhikshu, Noushad Mohamed Kunju and Sreejith Ramanan.

In Uttar Pradesh, Soti established a theatre company with a focus to improve the lives of people through its works.

Committed to the craft, Soti then decided to pursue a year-long Masters programme in Theatre Arts at the University of Hyderabad before furthering his training in ITI.

Soti holds a joint Bachelor of Arts in Hindi and Sociology, as well as a Master of Arts in Hindi from M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, India.

After this training at ITI, Soti hopes to explore the intercultural, psychophysical, acrobatic and physical aspects in theatre-making.

- **ITI Scholarship: Liz Sergeant Tan (Singapore)**

As an energetic little girl, Liz Sergeant Tan was only ever still when she was an enraptured audience member at her mother's mime shows – the late theatre stalwart, Christina Sergeant. Since then, she's been hooked on theatrical energy.

She believes strongly in the communal enterprise and the tremendous power of theatre, and hopes to devise worthy shows of substance and magical spirit for both children and adults.

Liz studied theatre at the School of the Arts, and was part of the first graduating cohort in 2012. She has performed twice at the Arts House (*Manifest*, January 2014 and *Floating Bones*, July 2014), and has acted in short films produced by Tisch Asia students.

When she's not busy enjoying her training in ITI, she entertains at children's birthday parties. After ITI, she hopes to work in the Singapore theatre community, before eventually seeking more specialised training.