



CLOUD MESSENGER

WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE? WHO IS YOUR BELOVED? WHAT IS YOUR JOURNEY?

DIRECTED BY ALVIN TAN
WRITTEN BY HARESH SHARMA

Devised by the cast of ITI graduating actors
Inspired by Megha Duta, a Sanskrit lyric poem by Kalidasa

8 AUG 2014, 8PM | 9 AUG 2014, 3PM & 8PM | DRAMA CENTRE BLACK BOX



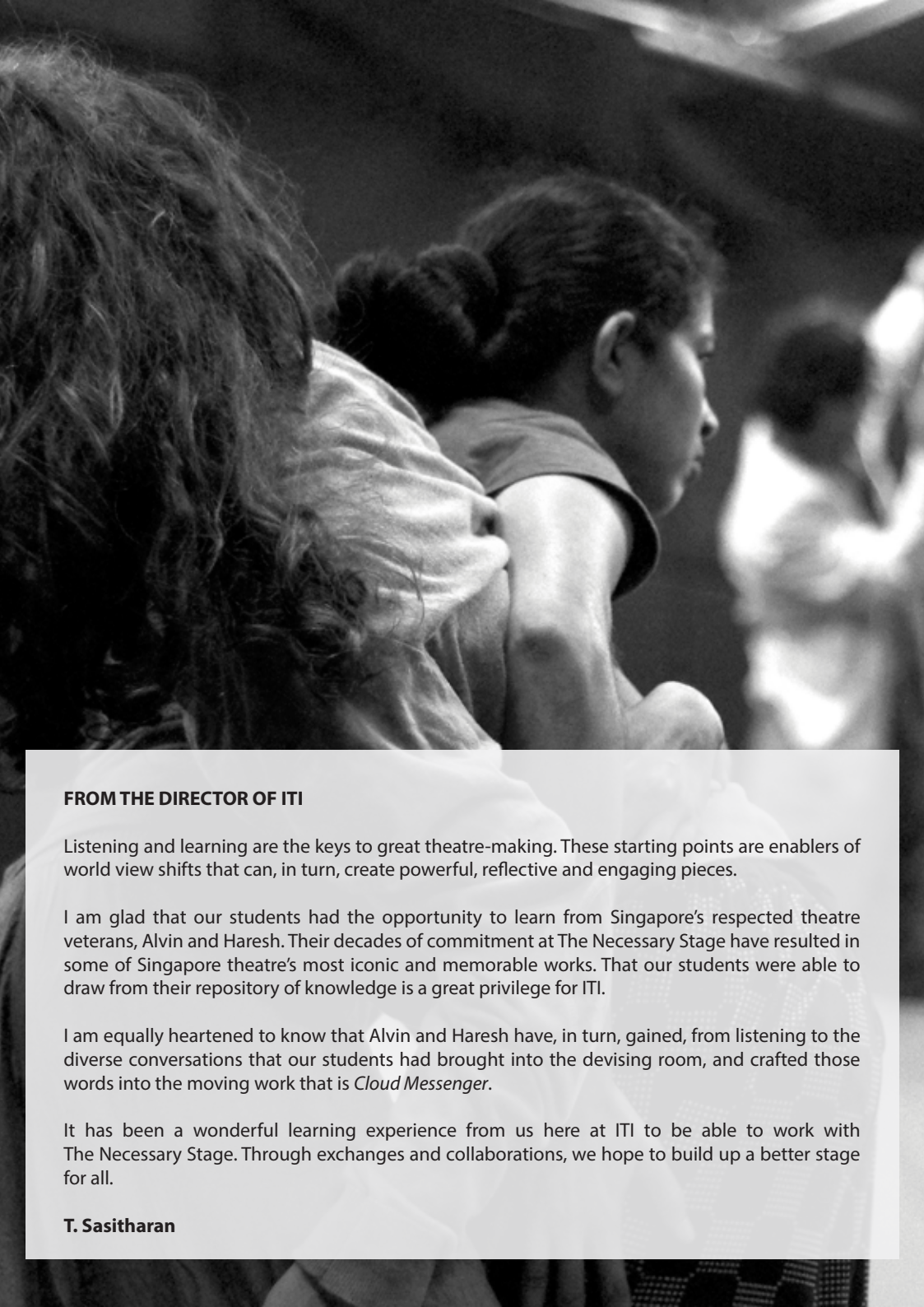
ITI 2015 INTAKE
AUDITIONS

SINGAPORE: 26 Aug 2014
INDIA: 3-4 September 2014

Apply NOW

*NAC Scholarships available for
Singaporeans/PRs*

Application forms on www.iti.edu.sg



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ITI

Listening and learning are the keys to great theatre-making. These starting points are enablers of world view shifts that can, in turn, create powerful, reflective and engaging pieces.

I am glad that our students had the opportunity to learn from Singapore's respected theatre veterans, Alvin and Haresh. Their decades of commitment at The Necessary Stage have resulted in some of Singapore theatre's most iconic and memorable works. That our students were able to draw from their repository of knowledge is a great privilege for ITI.

I am equally heartened to know that Alvin and Haresh have, in turn, gained, from listening to the diverse conversations that our students had brought into the devising room, and crafted those words into the moving work that is *Cloud Messenger*.

It has been a wonderful learning experience from us here at ITI to be able to work with The Necessary Stage. Through exchanges and collaborations, we hope to build up a better stage for all.

T. Sasitharan



THE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

On the very first day at ITI, when I got to know Denise, Grace, Giorgia, Jyothi, Lina, Pedro and Shakeel, I think we were wondering how we were going to work together. There was indeed a huge gulf between us – Haresh and I on one side with a TNS devising methodology and the ITI students with almost three years of performance training.

We started conversing, sharing our motivations, experiences, wish lists and our imagined futures. Haresh had already picked the text, *Cloud Messenger*, for our work together.

The moment we started to work, no matter how tentative it was, the discomfort of unfamiliarity left us. There was some unspoken understanding, something special that accompanied our exploration and collaboration.

We started improvising based on Haresh's scenarios. We needed to generate content so that he could compose the script for the team to rehearse in Phase 2. That has been the way we have worked for the past 27 years.

What was a true delight for me was being able to generate performance text in addition to spoken text. These trained students could easily get into a performative mode and create beautiful and evocative images, giving Haresh and myself a range of physical and visual vocabularies to explore.

There was more magic when we brought in Bani Haykal to the improvisation sessions. Then, sound and bodies began to converse and more special moments were created. We remained

inspired and genuinely excited about the possibilities. But we also had to explore the narratives we wanted to include in this then evolving work.

The ITI students worked in a very special way. Very often, I observed them accepting ideas, building on them, negotiating creatively with one another's performative concepts. They showed much endurance in this aspect, and were equally generous when it came to sharing their personal stories, some of which were later transformed into material for the final work.

During exploration, one of them would usually sit out to "direct" or watch the others apply the concept and give feedback and guidance. Then they will present to Hareh and myself, and we will give feedback and discuss.

We worked this way for some time, creating a few interesting pieces, video-recording them. Later, improv pieces selected by Hareh were transcribed and sent to him. Hareh weaved these transcribed pieces with some other scenes he had written. Then the first draft of the script came to be.

During Phase 2, we worked steadily, aiming towards a work-in-progress showing with a small audience to get feedback so we could make fundamental changes and tweak the work during Phase 3.

On Monday, 7 July 2014, we started Phase 3 of rehearsing *Cloud Messenger*. Hareh has revised the script and it is in its final stages. The set is in and the costumes are being confirmed. Bani, the sound artist, is also present. The multimedia design is being created and it will be layered on to the composition.

A thought that runs through my mind as we work in our final phase is how our very own human condition tends to associate pain with loss as it is unable to fathom how discontinuity in form does not mean discontinuity in spirit. It is beyond the capacity of the human imagination. But "Clouds" inspires some comprehension:

Sooner or later the cloud will change into
rain or snow or ice.

If you look deeply into the rain, you can see the
cloud.

The cloud is not lost;

it is transformed into rain, and the rain is
transformed into

healthy soil and the soil into cherry trees and the
cherry trees into blossoms, the blossoms into
cherries and then

into the cherry pie you eat.

Today if you eat a piece of cherry pie,
give yourself time to look at the pie and say:

"Hello, cloud! I recognize you."

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Do we make too much meaning in theatre for a life that is transitory? There are many phases in our lives and we should celebrate every one of them. But we must also prepare ourselves to let go, to not feel the pain of loss, but to celebrate the letting go.

My deepest congratulations to one and all for undergoing the three years of training and for coming through with this work. The world is now yours and here's wishing all of you the very best for a bright future in whatever you do. Thank you to the staff of ITI for their support. My heartfelt thanks to Sasi for inviting both Hareh and myself to work with these students. It has been an honour and a privilege. And thank you audience for coming to share this work with us.

Last but not least, we want to remember the spirit of Kuo Pao Kun whose vision of intercultural actor training inspired the founding of Theatre Training and Research Programme (TTRP), which has evolved to ITI today.

Enjoy.

Alvin Tan



HOW IT ALL BEGAN – THE PLAYWRIGHT’S MESSAGE

Alvin and I started working with the actors in January 2014. But as early as September 2013, I was already looking for inspiration for the project.

I began by scouring the internet for a literary work which we could use as a starting point. I decided to look for old writings, from Kalidasa, Rumi, Homer and so on. At some point, I came across *Megha Duta*.

I liked the simplicity and universality of the story. Taking away all the long-windedness, it is basically a story about a man who has been exiled for one year. A few months into his exile, and missing his wife terribly, he decides to ask a passing cloud to send her a message on his behalf. I felt that the students, most of them being away from their homeland, would identify with the exiled man. Perhaps these students too would have messages for their loved ones which the clouds can send. Perhaps, as performers, they can also act as the clouds. There was much to explore and create.


Cloud Messenger is completely different from *Megha Duta*. The poem became a starting point and an inspiration for the play. *Cloud Messenger* is a devised and collaborative theatre performance. The students have gone through the 3-phase process which is typical of The Necessary Stage.

In Phase I, we explored text, movement and improvisation. The performers wrote texts to loved ones, created characters such as the clouds as well as foreign workers in Singapore. In Phase II, we rehearsed the script which I had written based on the performers' improvisations. We had an in-house preview of the play which went really well, with a lot of very positive feedback.

During the final phase of the production all the different elements came together really well – the text, performance, movement, sound, set and so on.

The play is quite a collaborative effort, featuring everyone from Bani Haykal to Brian Gothong Tan and Neon Tights. These are the people we love in theatre. Bani worked closely with the team to create music and soundscapes. He has composed some beautiful music for the play. Brian is the multimedia designer. Neon Tights, which is an innovative design collective, is the set designer. Together they have created stunning visuals to complement the performers on stage.

Haresh Sharma



What happens in the present moment? In the present moment, you are producing thought, speech, and action. And they continue in the world. Every thought you produce, anything you say, any action you do, it bears your signature. Action is called karma. And that's your continuation. When this body disintegrates, you continue on with your actions. It's like the cloud in the sky. When the cloud is no longer in the sky, it hasn't died. The cloud is continued in other forms like rain or snow or ice. Our nature is the nature of no birth and no death. It is impossible for a cloud to pass from being into nonbeing. And that is true with a beloved person. They have not died. They have continued in many new forms and you can look deeply and recognize them in you and around you.

Thich Nhat Hanh



DENISE MORDENO AGUILAR

Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

Denise is from Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines. Her training in theatre began at 14 years old where she trained in an acting workshop with Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Tanghalang Pilipino's Nonon Padilla, Irma Adlawan and Olga Natividad in Cagayan de Oro City. Since then, she has been actively involved in various production and stage manager roles in theatre before becoming a performer and trainer with Pasundayag Community Theatre. As a theatre practitioner and educator, she believes in the arts as a powerful way to share stories and experiences that represent the complex dynamics of our society, ultimately using theatre as a creative pathway to peace and community engagement. It is with this intention that she decided to apply to ITI, and in the process equip herself with the wisdom of Asia's great theatre traditions. Denise is a recipient of the Kuo Pao Kun Foundation-ITI Scholarship.



GIORGIA TSOLAKI CIAMPI

Florence, Italy

Giorgia Ciampi was born in Florence, Italy from an Italian father and a Greek mother. She volunteered for three years as assistant director for Florence-based Perelandra Theatre Company. At 18 years old, she won a place at the University of Exeter where she graduated with a BA in Drama and subsequently with an MA in Actor Training and Directing under the supervision of renowned theatre practitioner/pedagogue Phillip Zarrilli. Her roles ranged from playwright to director, stage manager, composer and performer. Giorgia feels that her experience in ITI has completed her Western training with the practice of Asian traditional trainings in an intercultural environment. The meeting and interaction of cultures through the actors' body-minds is a very important strand of her current enquiry.



LINA YU
Singapore

Lina is excited to embark on her final year productions as one of the first batch of graduating students from ITI. As a Tan Chay Bing Education Fund Scholar, she looks forward to putting the training she has received in ITI into application.

Prior to ITI, Lina received the Japanese Government Scholarship to study in Tokyo, where she was trained in Music Business, Vocals, Computer Music Creation and Recording. She has also performed as a vocalist in various live events in Tokyo. Upon returning to Singapore, she decided to commit herself fully to the arts after a stint in the corporate world, taking up acting with NYU Tisch Asia before she applied to and was accepted by ITI.



PEDRO SIMONI TALAVERA
Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Originally from Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, Pedro is a trained concert violinist with 17 years of experience. He was a member of the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Bolivia and The Youth Symphony Orchestra of the Latin American Development Bank (CAF) touring in concert to Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Peru. In 2005, he moved to France and obtained a Bachelor in French Literature at Paris-3 Sorbonne Nouvelle University. Following that, he became a member of La Boutonnière Theatre's laboratory, directed by Habib Naghmouchin, before taking part in the *The Body's Journey*, a project of training, research and devising, directed by Leela Alaniz, in Paris. He is a Tan Chay Bing Education Fund Scholar.



JYOTHIRMAYI KURUP

Kerala, India

Jyothirmayi graduated with a Masters in Theatre Arts from the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit in Kerala, India after obtaining her Bachelors in Multimedia from Mahatma. Her training and performance experience reflects her wide range of skills, and she has acted in productions such as *Iruvattam Manavatty*, the first Malayalam adaptation of a Chinese opera in the Thiruvananthapuram International Theatre Festival directed by Ramesh Varma, a renowned theatre director in India. Jyothirmayi has also spent seven years studying classical Indian Carnatic Music. She is a Tan Chay Bing Education Fund Scholar.



KALAISELVI GRACE

Singapore

Kalaiselvi Grace is a versatile bilingual actress with stage, television, radio and film acting experience. She is also involved in theatre and storytelling education in schools. Some of her acting credits include *Macbeth* in Tamil for RDG (2001), *An Inspector Calls* in Tamil for RDG (2004), *Above Us Only Sky* for M1 Singapore Fringe Festival (2008), *Rhinoceros* for Singapore Arts Festival (2008) and *My Magic* - an Eric Khoo film featured in Cannes Film Festival (2008).

Kalai Grace feels that training at ITI has deepened the roots and widened the spectrum of her craft. After graduation, she plans to stage *Woman and Womb*, her first solo exploration piece. She also plans to explore other acting opportunities, collaborate with fellow ITI actors in creating intercultural art, and also continue theatre education in schools. She is a recipient of the NAC ITI Arts Scholarship.



SHAKEEL AHMMAD

Loni, India

Shakeel Ahmmad was born in Loni, a village in the southern state of Karnataka, India. He obtained a Diploma in Education from DIET College of Mysore and worked as a government teacher for five years before pursuing a Bachelor of Arts with the Karnatak University of Dharwad. Prior to ITI, he received professional actor training at Ninasam Theatre Institute, where he became versatile in traditional and contemporary techniques: Yakshagana Traditional Theatre, Kalari martial art, Yoga, Kolata folk dance, theatre design and contemporary acting. As an actor, he has also toured Karnataka with professional theatre companies for a year before studying in ITI. Shakeel is a recipient of an Asian scholarship sponsored by a private philanthropist.

Production Credits

Creative Team

Director: Alvin Tan

Playwright: Haresh Sharma

Costume Designer: Jaclyn Tan

Lighting Designer: Steve Kwek

Composer: Bani Haykal

Multimedia Designer: Brian Gothong Tan

Set Designers: Nizam, Liting (Neon Tights)

Production Team

Production Manager: Ed-Linddi Ong

Stage Manager: Azyyati Alias

Assistant Stage Manager: Chong Wee Nee

Production Sound: Guo Ningru

Multimedia Operator: Nadia Noordin

Surtitled Operator: Sandra Pong

Cast

Denise Mordeno Aguilar	Mimi	Jessica
Giorgia Tsolaki Ciampi	Nina	Cecile
Jyothirmayi Kurup	Ruby	
Kalaiselvi Grace	Su	Rema
Lina Yu	Gina	
Pedro Simoni Talavera	Jose	
Shakeel Ahmmad	Reva	Gadave

Special Thanks

ITI would like to especially thank The Necessary Stage, members of the press, makeup and hair stylist Leah and her assistant Diane, FOH volunteers, and those who have contributed to the production one way or another.

Our especial appreciation to our partners, supporters and sponsors who have believed in ITI all the way.

CREATIVE TEAM

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Alvin Tan is the Founder and Artistic Director of The Necessary Stage since 1987. One of the leading proponents of devising theatre in Singapore, Alvin has directed more than 70 plays which have been staged locally and at international festivals. He has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and served as a member of the curatorial panel for TransLab, an initiative created by the Australian Council for the Arts to promote intercultural theatre and performance. In 2010, Alvin was conferred the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture, in recognition of his significant contribution to the arts. Alvin was most recently awarded Best Director at the 2011 Life! Theatre Awards for *Model Citizens* by The Necessary Stage.

Alvin has also been actively involved in civil society and public initiatives, amongst which include Bird People in Tanglin Halt, an interdisciplinary project on the dilemmas of urban heritage and biodiversity. In 2012, Alvin was also commissioned by the National Library Board as Artistic Director of a time-travelling exhibition on the life and works of Singapore poet, Edwin Thumboo. Alvin sits on the Singapore50 Committee, established to coordinate nationwide celebrations for Singapore's 50th birthday in 2015. Alvin is also a Board Member the National Arts Council, Singapore (1 September 2013 – 31 August 2015). More recently, in 2014, Alvin was invited to be on the Syllabus Development Committee for the Arts Education branch of Ministry of Education, to design a drama syllabus at 'O' level for implementation in 2017 in schools.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Haresh Sharma is the Resident Playwright of The Necessary Stage. To date, he has written more than 100 plays. His play, *Off Centre*, was selected by the Ministry of Education as a Literature text for N and O Levels, and republished by The Necessary

Stage in 2006. In 2008, Ethos Books published *Interlogue: Studies in Singapore Literature, Vol. 6*, written by Prof David Birch and edited by A/P Kirpal Singh, which presented an extensive investigation of Haresh's work over the past 20 years. A collection of Haresh's plays have been translated into Mandarin and published by Global Publishing as “哈里斯·沙玛剧作选”.

Haresh was awarded Best Original Script for *Fundamentally Happy, Good People* and *Gemuk Girls* during the 2007, 2008 and 2009 Life! Theatre Awards respectively. In 2010, The Necessary Stage also published these plays in a collection entitled *Trilogy*. In 2011 and 2012, two collections of short plays by Haresh, *Shorts 1* and *Shorts 2*, as well as a separate collection entitled *Plays for Schools* were published. 2013 saw the publication of yet another new collection of Haresh's plays on medical-related issues entitled *Don't Forget to Remember Me*, launched at the Singapore Writers Festival. Most recently in 2014, his play, *Best Of* – staged four times to rave reviews in Singapore and Malaysia – was published by The Necessary Stage. Haresh was also the first non-American to be awarded the prestigious Goldberg Master Playwright by New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2011.

COMPOSER

Bani Haykal experiments with text and music. His work stretches across various disciplines including installation, poetry and theatre, often investigating cultural and socio-political climates coupled with perceptual and behavioural affects.

As a soloist, he works primarily with acoustic instruments, both traditional and/or hacked, and his studies revolve around narratives, structured improvisation and spoken word. He is also a member of b-quartet, amongst other musical outfits.

An Associate Artist with The Substation, Haykal has collaborated, exhibited,

performed and toured internationally, as an artist and a musician, participating in festivals including Media/Art Kitchen (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Japan), da:ns Festival and The M1 Fringe Festival (Singapore).

MULTIMEDIA DESIGNER

Brian Gothong Tan is known for his cutting-edge works in theatre, film and installation art.

A graduate of California Institute of the Arts under the Shell-NAC Scholarship, Brian's works have been featured in productions that have toured Italy, USA, Korea and the United Kingdom.

His first solo exhibition, *Heavenly Cakes and Sentimental Flowers*, debuted at the Singapore Art Museum in June 2003. His 2004 work, *Hypersurface*, was featured at the 9th Venice Architectural Biennale. Brian was also the youngest artist participating in the Singapore Biennale 2006 with his installation, *We Live In A Dangerous World*. In 2007, he created *Signs, Omens and Relics of Faith*, an interactive multimedia installation. In 2010, Brian was commissioned to create the Singapore Pavilion's video installation for the Shanghai World Expo.

In film, his collaboration with Ekachai Uekrongtham as Director of Photography and Editor for *Pleasure Factory*, saw it light up the Cannes Film Festival 2007 under the *Un Certain Regard* section. Brian was also appointed the Director of Film and Visual Effects for Singapore's National Day Parade 2009 and 2011, as well as the world's first Youth Olympic Games ceremonies in 2010.

His recent projects include *All is Divine* (Stockholm, Sweden 2013), *Dancing Dawn*, a collaboration with Arts Fission and *Decimal Points: 4.44*. He was awarded "Best Use of Multimedia" in the 2005 Life! Theatre Awards, "Best Multimedia Design"

in 2008 and 2012 and the Young Artist Award in 2012.

COSTUME DESIGNER

Jaclyn Tan graduated from Lasalle College of the Arts, with a major in Technical Theatre. This is her first time working as a costume designer.

Her recent wardrobe dresser experience includes Base Entertainment's *Notre Dame de Paris* (2014), *Phantom of the Opera* (2013), Cirque du Soleil's *Saltimbanco* run in Singapore, and for Kylie Minogue "Aphrodite" Tour and Resorts World Entertainment's *Voyage de La Vie* show.

SET DESIGNER

Neon Tights

Led by Nizam Supardi, Neon Tights is a design collective that creates three-dimensional craft works, stage designs and installations. Dealing with visual landscaping and engaging in cross-disciplinary work that delves into the realms of space, body and design, Neon Tights has collaborated extensively with various theatre and art groups in Singapore.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Friends of ITI

Adelbert Van Dijk
Arun Mahizhnan
Audrey Wong
Chew Kheng Chuan
Chris Lee
Damodharana
David Liew
Janice Leong
Janice Koh
Kwok Kian Woon
Lee Sia Ang
Lim Huey Yuee
Lim Mei Yin
Manalram Prasanna
Maryline Aline Sylvie David
Meta Setiawan
M. Thevarani
Michael Hor

Mukta Ahluwalia
Ng Lay Chin
Paul Rae
Peter Sau
Phan Ming Yen
Rosa Daniel
Ruth Bereson
Sai Ram Nilgiri
Sim Pern Yiau
Teo Geok Hwee
Wendy Cheong

*and other philanthropists
who wish to remain
anonymous*

Corporate Partners

Aesop Pte Ltd
APC Hosting Pte Ltd

CornerStone Wines
Cups N Canvas
Epigram Pte Ltd
First Printers Pte Ltd
Hotel Royal Pte Ltd
Pek Sin Choon Pte Ltd
Verztec Consulting Pte Ltd

Grant-makers

Lee Foundation
National Arts Council
Tan Chay Bing Education Fund
Kuo Pao Kun Foundation
Chew How Teck Foundation
Hong Leong Foundation
Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple
Arts Fund



ABOUT ITI

Intercultural Theatre Institute began as the Theatre Training & Research Programme (TTRP), founded in 2000 by renowned dramatist, Kuo Pao Kun (1939–2002), and current Director, T. Sasitharan, after a period of research, reflection and preparatory work, including discussions with an international panel of consultants.

ITI is inspired by the unique experience of contemporary theatre in Singapore over four decades 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 Peter Sau, recipient of the 2011 Young Artist Award and the Life! Theatre Awards; Yeo Yann Yann, winner of the 2013 "Best Supporting Actress" Award for her role in *Ilo Ilo* at the Golden Horse Awards, the Valdivostok International Film Festival, and the Asia-Pacific Film Festival; and Felimon Blanco, recipient of the 2013 Most Outstanding Zambosurian Award (Philippines).

Chairman

Mr Philip Jeyaretnam

Board of Directors

Mr Abel T. van Staveren

Mr Arun Mahizhnan

Mr Chew Kheng Chuan

Mr David Chiem

Dr Kwok Kian Woon

Mr Tan Tarn How

Co-Founder and Director

T. Sasitharan

General Manager

Goh Su Lin

Director of Development

Josephine Tan

Director of Administration

Hannah Tan

Assistant Director of

Marketing & Communications

Lisa Marie Tan

Administration Executives

Sentha Jayapandian

Joanne Bernard

Marketing Executive

Chionh Weiji

Curriculum Coordinator

Christine Leong

Marketing Intern

Evania Taurisia Sukwanto

With support from



**INTERCULTURAL
THEATRE
INSTITUTE**

Intercultural Theatre Institute
Emily Hill at 11 Upper Wilkie Road
Singapore 228120
www.iti.edu.sg
T: 6338 5133