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PRESS
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Stephen Riady Donates S\$1 Million to ITI in Support of Arts Education

17 October 2019, Singapore — Intercultural Theatre Institute (“ITI”) has received S\$1 million from prominent businessman and philanthropist, Dr Stephen Riady — one of the largest gifts from an individual donor to an independent arts organisation in Singapore.

This landmark gift sees Dr Riady, Executive Chairman of OUE, leading the way in supporting arts education. The gift is a strong affirmation of ITI’s work in nurturing theatre artists using a unique intercultural approach that includes immersions in traditional Asian theatres from Indonesia, China, Japan and India, as well as contemporary theatre practice.

Dr Riady said, “The performing arts play a vital role in fostering creativity and building appreciation for a country’s culture. Over the years, ITI has played a unique role in training contemporary theatre artists that draw on Asian traditional art forms and I am pleased to support their efforts. Through its distinctive actor training pedagogy, ITI has made great contributions to the local arts scene, having produced graduates that go on to become artists, teachers and cultural leaders. I hope this gift will help to contribute to the development of Singapore’s arts and cultural sector and the broader community.”

In honour of Dr Riady’s support, ITI will name a new chair, the *Stephen Riady Master Chair in Beijing Opera*, the first named chair in performing arts in Singapore.

Theatre Training Nonpareil

ITI is an independent, non-profit theatre school for contemporary artists, founded by acclaimed theatre practitioners and cultural thought leaders Kuo Pao Kun (1939–2002) and T. Sasitharan, both recipients of the Cultural Medallion.

The institute’s unique programme has produced critically and socially engaged artists who make original, contemporary theatre, and are at the forefront of cultural development in their communities, such as alumna Yeo Yann Yann, whose performance in *Wet Season* was recently nominated for the Golden Horse Award for Best Leading Actress.

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Supporting a Treasure of World Theatre

Beijing Opera is one of four traditional Asian theatre forms taught at ITI, with the aim of instilling in students the aesthetic, discipline, skills and cultural perspectives of traditional forms that they may draw upon as artists, enhancing their own contemporary practice.

An art form that brings together singing, acting, dance and acrobatics, Beijing Opera is recognised by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Holder of the Stephen Riady Master Chair in Beijing Opera, Mdm Li Qiu Ping from the Shanghai Theatre Academy, describes Beijing Opera as “the quintessence of Chinese culture”.

Taking the Lead in Supporting Arts Education

ITI Chairman Arun Mahizhnan said, “Dr Riady’s gift will have a transformative impact on not just ITI. It will also send a strong signal that arts and culture is vital to our community and society at large, especially in these times. To have Dr Riady join us on this journey is a privilege and an honour.”

T. Sasitharan, Co-Founder and Director of ITI, stated, “With dollar-for-dollar matching from the government’s Cultural Matching Fund, Dr Riady’s contribution will result in a total of \$2 million towards ITI’s mission. This level of support for arts education is most significant and means the world to ITI.”

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