

In tune to museum

New project lets you plug into specially created music to guide you through seven iconic places

Rachel Chan

If a national monument could make music, how would it sound? A new project called Musicity may hold the answer.

The project lets you listen to tunes and soundscapes specially composed for seven iconic places here, including three national monuments. All you need is a smartphone to stream the tracks at each location.

You can also take a Saturday bus tour to the three monuments: Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore Art Museum and Hong San See Temple.

Seven Singaporean acts and two British ones were commissioned to produce the site-specific music, including local band I Am David Sparkle and English singer-songwriter Mara Carlyle.

Instrumental post-rock band I Am David Sparkle's *Walking Through Walls* at the Asian Civilisations Museum, for instance, is supposed to embody walking through the building, says frontman Amran Khamis, 35.

"The title alludes to the ability to transcend physical limitations, much like if one were to float through the museum's hidden spaces," he adds.

At the Singapore Art Museum, home-grown duo Cosa Nostra's *World Class*, recorded in the building's former chapel, guides you through the former St Joseph's Institution boys' school. "We wanted to capture our reaction to the building's evolution," says Kevin Guoh, 34, half of the duo. The result is a hypnotic, droning house piece influenced by German electronic music pioneers Kraftwerk.

Organised by the British Council, Musicity is in conjunction with annual architecture festival Archifest, on until Oct 31.

The public project, launched on Oct 3 and running until the end of next month, aims to offer a multi-sensory experience.

Says Dr Sarah Meisch, director of arts at British Council Singapore: "By experiencing the monu-

ments via contemporary tracks of music, we hope Musicity will encourage people to interact with the architectural spaces in a new way."

Singapore is the third city to launch Musicity, after London in 2010 and Tokyo in March this year.

BBC Radio 3 broadcaster and Musicity founder Nick Luscombe selected the British artists involved, with feedback from the British Council. Music producer Cherry Chan, who is part of audio-visual collective Syndicate, helped pick the Singapore artists.

"Artists were selected on the basis of their musical artistry, originality and performance achievements," says Dr Meisch.

"We feel that they provide a good representation of the original music coming from very creative artists in Singapore."

The Preservation of Monuments Board, a partner in the project, will conduct a bus tour of Asian Civilisations Museum in Empress Place, Singapore Art Museum in Bras Basah Road and Hong San See Temple in Mohamed Sultan Road tomorrow and on Oct 27.

The board is incorporating music into its tour of the monuments for the first time, says its director Jean Wee.

"We hope to use this new medium to attract new and younger audiences to the buildings, and hopefully inspire them to look at these monuments in a new light," she says.

Tour participants will learn about the history and architectural significance of each monument, and how they inspired the commissioned music pieces.

Mei Wong, better known by her stage name The Analog Girl, was inspired by a carving of a carp transforming into a dragon on one of the Hong San See Temple's pillars. The image is based on ancient Asian mythology of the carp that resisted all odds to swim upstream and was rewarded for its perseverance. "This perseverance was also seen in the people who built the temple and kept it going since the 1900s," explains Wong, 39, on the genesis of her piece *Like Dragons* for the temple.

"I translated the spirit of the building into a score that is both uplifting and transformative, by introducing crescendos and drawing out emotions from the orchestra's musicians."

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Kevin Guoh of Cosa Nostra, which recorded a hypnotic piece in the art museum. ST PHOTO: RAJ NADARAJAN



Stream and download tracks composed by The Analog Girl (left) and I Am David Sparkle (above). PHOTOS: BRITISH COUNCIL

Book it

MUSIC AT THE MONUMENTS

Where: The monuments covered are the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore Art Museum and Hong San See Temple
When: Tomorrow & Oct 27, 10am
Admission: \$5
Info: To register, e-mail nhb_nationalmonuments@nhb.gov.sg with your name, age and contact number. Individual bookings only. Pre-registration is required. The meeting venue will be disclosed when you register for the tour. A shuttle bus will transport you from one location to the next.

MONUMENTAL MUSIC

Listen to seven original tracks around the city, from now until the end of next month, for free.

Visit the places listed below and go to the Musicity mobile site sin.musicity.info/mobile on your smartphone. Press play on the site to stream the music. Alternatively, look for markers at designated listening points and scan the QR code on them to start listening.

1. ArtScience Museum, Marina Bay Sands, 6 Bayfront Avenue

Recording artists: London-based producer Jon Hopkins and Singapore producer Jason Tan of Octover

Track title: ASM

2. Gardens by the Bay, 18 Marina Gardens Drive

Recording artists: English singer-songwriter Mara Carlyle and local musician Sonicbrat

Track title: Lithe

3. School of the Arts (Sota), 1 Zubir Said Drive

Recording artist: Local DJ Koflow
Track title: Experiential

4. Asian Civilisations Museum, 1 Empress Place

Recording artist: Local band I Am David Sparkle
Track title: *Walking Through Walls*

5. Esplanade - Theatres On The Bay, 1 Esplanade Drive

Recording artist: Home-grown band Muon
Track title: *Emergence*

6. Hong San See Temple, 31 Mohamed Sultan Road

Recording artist: Singaporean solo musician The Analog Girl, featuring the Singapore Chinese Orchestra

Track title: *Like Dragons*

7. Singapore Art Museum, 71 Bras Basah Road

Recording artist: Local duo Cosa Nostra
Track title: *World Class*