

MEDIA RELEASE
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British Council-NAC Memorandum of Understanding to Increase Cross-Cultural Collaboration

Enhanced partnership focuses on developing capabilities and providing opportunities for showcasing works



From left: Mr Roland Davies, British Council's Director Singapore, Ms Kathy Lai, Chief Executive Officer of NAC and Mr Graham Sheffield CBE, British Council Director Arts.

Singapore, 10 March 2015 – The British Council and the National Arts Council, Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today, committing to greater collaboration between Singapore and the United Kingdom (UK). The MOU is testament to the strong cultural ties between the two countries and maps out a clear framework for cultural dialogue and exchange between arts practitioners, administrators and organisations in the future.

2 In a ceremony held at the British High Commissioner's residence in Singapore, the MOU was signed during the GREAT British Week by **Ms Kathy Lai**, Chief Executive Officer of the National Arts Council, **Mr Graham Sheffield CBE**, Director Arts, British Council and **Mr Roland Davies**, the British Council's Director Singapore.

3 The MOU embraces the following areas:

- Knowledge and skills development including masterclasses and short courses in technical theatre, creative production and leadership, festival and exhibition programming and arts administration;

- Opportunities for exchanges, residencies and to showcase work in content creation, playwriting and theatre for young audiences;
- Literary Arts projects including *Writing the City*, Singapore Writers Festival and a new Literature Prize;
- Arts and Disability initiatives to share best practices on how the arts can bring value in enriching lives and contributing to health and well-being in the disability sector; and
- Cultural Leadership roundtables bringing together thought-leaders from the UK and around the region to engage in dialogue about arts, culture and education policy.

4 Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Graham Sheffield says: “Like Singapore, the UK strongly believes in the value of the arts in boosting tourism, trade and international standing. As we become increasingly interconnected in a changing world, it is important to continually evolve and invest in arts and culture to the benefit of more open, inclusive and creative societies. Artistic collaboration between our two countries is already strong and my hope is that this Memorandum of Understanding will sow the seeds for many future projects, sharing the UK’s arts and creative industries but also learning from Singapore.”

5 Ms Kathy Lai adds: “In the 50 years since independence, Singapore has developed a diverse arts landscape that takes into account our unique multi-lingual and multi-cultural background. Singapore is also a cultural gateway to the art offerings from the region. The UK is a very mature cultural centre that offers much for Singapore and the region to learn from. The arts connect people and foster mutual understanding. I am excited about the activities that we will jointly organise under the auspices of the MOU.”

6 The National Arts Council will be tapping on the Cultural Diplomacy Fund announced by the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Lawrence Wong on 11 March 2014, to support this international collaboration.

Recent Significant Collaborations

7 Singapore and the UK have enjoyed a strong cultural relationship for more than two decades. Recent significant cultural exchanges between the two countries include:

- Ms Janet Morrison, Chief Executive of Independent Age, was invited to share insights on how voluntary welfare organisations can leverage the arts to improve cognitive, emotional and physical well-being of the elderly at the NAC’s inaugural Arts in Eldercare Seminar held in January 2014.
- The launch of the three-month-long Youth Arts Overseas Attachment Programme in April 2014 in partnership with the UK Bridge Company, Artsworld, where Singaporean youths had the opportunity to embark on an immersive experience at established organisations in the UK specialising in youth arts programmes. Participants included music producer Roland Lim (attached to Rhythmix), dancer and choreographer Lam Gin Chia (attached to Wessex Dance Academy) and arts programmer Nur Sahirrah bte Mohamed Safit (attached to All Change Arts).

- Two Singapore writers, Isa Kamari and Alfian Sa'at, were invited to attend the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August 2014 as featured authors.
- In 2013 and 2014, the NAC participated in the London Book Fair, organising a Singapore Pavilion.
- UK writers regularly participate in the Singapore Writers Festival (namely Pico Iyer in 2012, Carol Ann Duffy in 2013 and Paul Muldoon in 2014), with the British Council presenting sessions to local audiences and students.
- Musicity Singapore brought together two UK recording artists and seven Singaporean recording artists to compose original tracks of music inspired by iconic locations in Singapore. In Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law and Ministry of Education, Ms Indranee Rajah's speech at the Queen's Birthday Party in 2013, she affirmed that "much credit goes to the British Council, which has been tireless in [...] showcasing the innovation, creativity and excellence of the British arts [...]". She singled out the Musicity project calling it a "key cultural collaboration" that "lent colour to our [the Singaporean] cultural landscape".

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About British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. We work in more than 100 countries and our 7,000 staff – including 2,000 teachers – work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year by teaching English, sharing the arts and delivering education and society programmes.

We are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter. A core publically-funded grant provides less than 25 per cent of our turnover which last year was £781 million. The rest of our revenues are earned from services which customers around the world pay for, through education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. All our work is in pursuit of our charitable purpose and supports prosperity and security for the UK and globally.

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About National Arts Council

The National Arts Council (NAC) spearheads the development of the arts in Singapore while advancing the country's aspiration to be a distinctive global city for the arts. NAC's mission is to nurture the arts and make Singapore's rich and diverse culture an integral part of people's lives. Anchored on the twin strategies of excellence and engagement in the arts, NAC aims to build a vibrant arts sector by creating a conducive environment where the arts is accessible to all, and artistic talents have the necessary resources and capabilities to excel and achieve long-term sustainability. For more information on NAC's programmes and initiatives, please visit www.nac.gov.sg.
