

British High Commission Singapore and the British Council celebrates 'Shakespeare Lives' Day at library@esplanade

*Young Singaporean poet awarded top prize for British Council's
'Writing the City' Shakespeare themed competition*

Singapore, 23 April 2016 - An array of actors and theatre personalities including thespians Adrian Pang, Debra Teng, director Natalie Hennedige, SRT's Gaurav Artistic Director Gaurav Kripalani, Executive Director Charlotte Nors joined the British High Commission Singapore and the British Council and the Guest of Honour for the event, Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, to celebrate 'Shakespeare Lives' Day at the library@esplanade. His Excellency Scott Wightman, High Commissioner to Singapore and Roland Davies, Country Director for British Council, thanked partners at the event for their support of celebrating Shakespeare's legacy in Singapore, including: The Arts House, Costa Coffee, The Esplanade, National Library Board, Singapore Post, Singapore Philatelic Museum and Singapore Repertory Theatre for hosting a variety of different events and activities.

To encourage new writers to share their work and provide an opportunity to take their writing forward, British Council organised a 'Writing the City' competition, where writers had to submit works inspired by Singapore's city life and 'Shakespeare'. The top prize award winner was Theophilus Kwek (22 years old) who had penned a poem titled "**Letter to a Young Civil Servant**" (After Shakespeare's Sonnet LXXXIII). HE Scott Wightman presented the prize to his mother as Theophilus is currently in the UK reading at Oxford University.

As part of the celebration, SingPost has launched a Mystamp booklet (S\$21.80), celebrating Shakespeare and his language featuring popular quotes from his plays.

With support from the Singapore Mint, stunning Shakespeare-themed coin collections from Britain's Royal Mint were on display for guests, including a Limited Edition Shakespeare 2016 Five-Ounce Silver Proof Coin struck in sterling silver retailing at S\$830 in Singapore.

Talks and panel discussions on 23 April

2.00pm to 4.00pm library@esplanade: NLB Insider Series - "**Adapting Shakespeare in Singapore**" with thespians Natalie Hennedige and Noorlinah Mohamed.

3.30pm to 5.30pm Costa Somerset@313, **Coffee With Shakespeare** - An afternoon exploring Shakespeare through comedy, discussion, performance and coffee. The event features Singapore's most iconic Shakespearean thespian Adrian Pang, SRT Artistic Director Gaurav Kripalani, and Roland Davies, Country Director of the British Council. The panel discussion will be followed by a Shakespeare themed comedic skit in Singaporean style directed by Jonathan Lim from Chestnuts.

William Shakespeare passed away on April 23, 1616, his 52nd birthday; Shakespeare Lives is a global programme of events and activities celebrating the world's most popular playwright's work on the 400th anniversary of his death in 2016. To celebrate his life and work, 'Shakespeare Lives' day was chosen as it is believed that Shakespeare's birthday was also on April 23. This is based on evidence that he was baptised on 26 April 1564, and it is believed that in the times of traditions, babies were baptised when they were three days only, making April 23 his birthday.

Shakespeare's work enables the exploration of complex issues and develops stronger relationships between Britain and the world. In Singapore, the 'Shakespeare Lives' programme consists of a host of events, including theatre performances, film screenings, exhibitions, lectures, panel discussions and educational resources for English language learners.

Shakespeare themed events happening in Singapore include:

- The Arts House Shakespeare film festival running from April 21 to 24
- Esplanade's NT Live screening of 'Hamlet' starring Benedict Cumberbatch – sold out shows on 23 and 24 April
- National Library Board's 'Letters to Shakespeare' exhibition
- SRT's Shakespeare in the Park 'Romeo and Juliet' at the Fort Canning Park from April 27
- Singapore Philatelic Museum "Shaking It With Shakespeare Exhibition" from 14 May 2016 – January 2017 with quality programmes for children direct from Shakespeare's Globe in London.
- European Union Film Festival (19 May), Golden Village Suntec, will screen Peter Greenaway's Prospero's Books (1996) based on Shakespeare's The Tempest, as witnessed through the eyes of Prospero.

On 12 May, at Centre 42 at Waterloo Street, Select Centre will host as part of its Literally Speaking series, an engaging panel discussion where Professor Richard Angus Whitehead will share his concerns on the impacts on culture, linguistics and society if educators in Singapore ignore Shakespeare. For updated information on Singapore events, visit www.britishcouncil.sg/ShakespeareLives

In Britain, *Shakespeare Day Live* is a digital festival launching on 23 April, featuring content special contributions from the Royal Opera House, Shakespeare's Globe, the BFI, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Hay Festival and the Royal Shakespeare Company. The collection of interpretations of Shakespeare's work is available for audiences around the world to experience. Co-curated by the BBC and the British Council and co-ordinated by the Shakespeare digital team based in Birmingham and will broadcast online at bbc.co.uk/shakespearelives. Actors and musicians participating in the digital festival include **Dame Judi Dench, Sir Ian McKellen, David Tennant, Dame Carol Ann Duffy, Adrian Lester, Germaine Greer, Ralph Fiennes, Simon Russell Beale, Lauren Cuthbertson and Edward Watson**, the **BBC Scottish Symphony** and the **BBC Concert Orchestras**.

April 23 is also St George's Day, the feast day of St George, England's patron saint, and in London this year, the celebration of the life and work of England's greatest playwright William Shakespeare will be one of the highlights of London's St George's Day festivities and will take place in Trafalgar Square on **Saturday 23 April**.

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'SHAKESPEARE DAY LIVE ' Highlights

Hay Festival: Talking About Shakespeare

A collection of short films from the world's leading actors and academics, playwrights and directors, poets and novelists, including **Stephen Fry**, **Germaine Greer** and **Dame Judi Dench**, exploring Shakespeare, his works and his legacy, celebrating Shakespeare's contemporary resonance and giving an insight into the work of the greatest writer with a global perspective.

Shakespeare on Stage, Screen and Elsewhere, with Ian McKellen

BFI

Sir Ian McKellen shares his unique insights into the problems and joys of interpreting Shakespeare for the theatre, television, radio and cinema.

Being Hamlet

BBC

Two of the greatest contemporary Hamlets, **Simon Russell Beale** and **Adrian Lester** discuss this most celebrated and challenging of roles. Their discussion of the Prince of Denmark fittingly takes place on Danish soil in the elegant surroundings of the ambassador's residence in London. From Gielgud to Branagh, Olivier to Plummer, they explore the rich variety of approaches to a role to which so many actors aspire.

The Works

Set on a Peckham council estate, this short film, written and directed by **Elliot Barnes Worrell** celebrates Shakespeare's timeless themes with a cast headed by **Ralph Fiennes**. Using only the words of Shakespeare, *The Works* explores the vast complexities that exist within a community of young Londoners who refuse to be defined by their circumstances.

About the 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.

For more information, please visit: www.britishcouncil.org. You can also keep in touch with the British Council through <http://twitter.com/britishcouncil> and <http://blog.britishcouncil.org/>.

About the British High Commission

The British High Commission in Singapore is committed to building on and strengthening the close economic, social and political ties between the United Kingdom and Singapore. It undertakes a range of diplomatic and consular activities in the Republic which covers a wide range of interests including political, economic, commercial, science and climate change.

For more information, please visit us at www.gov.uk/government/world/singapore. You may also want to follow the High Commission on Facebook at UKinSG and Twitter @UKinSingapore.