

Arts and Disability Forum 2017 shapes perspectives for greater inclusivity

SINGAPORE – The **Arts and Disability Forum (ADF)** returns from **20 to 21 April 2017** with an even stronger focus on creating greater social inclusiveness through the arts. In its third year overall, and second year working with co-organisers from the National Arts Council, British Council and Singapore International Foundation, ADF 2017 will highlight ways to shape a more inclusive society through opportunities for meaningful collaborations for artistic development within the disability sector.

Over the past three years, ADF has grown from a half-day forum with a focus on bringing together healthcare professionals, artists and policy makers to raise awareness about the gaps between the arts and disability sectors, to the current – two days of programming with insights from keynote speakers with local, regional and international perspectives on a variety of topics surrounding the theme of inclusiveness, empowerment and collaboration. The theme for 2017 is *Shaping Perspectives and Enabling Opportunities*.

Chua Ai Liang, Director of Arts & Communities, National Arts Council said, “Year on year, we strive to grow collaborations between the arts and disability sectors to bridge the gaps in this sphere. This year, we hope the open discussions and workshops will encourage deeper appreciation and understanding of challenges faced in Singapore and the region; strengthening the notion that everyone has a part to play in fostering inclusiveness.”

ADF 2017 will address topics on regional trends and make the case for inclusive arts, as well as overcoming challenges in bridging theory and practice between arts and disabilities. Among the speakers are industry experts such as **Dr Alice Fox**, accomplished author on inclusivity, and Tate Exchange Artist; **Myra Tam**, Executive Director at Arts with the Disabled Association (Hong Kong); and esteemed Glasgow-based Singaporean artist and London theatre veteran, **Ramesh Meyyappan**. Fox and Tam will focus on distinguishing disability arts from inclusive arts and its trends in the region, while Meyyappan will share his experience and growing success working in the arts as a theatre creator, despite being deaf.

Dr Sarah Meisch Lionetto, Director of Arts from the British Council said, “The British Council is focusing its efforts in Inclusive Arts this year. The campaign endeavours to inspire people to develop full and equal access to the arts via awareness and skills and to create an appreciation of inclusivity as central to the vitality and dynamism of the arts. It’s about removing a homogenous image of the arts scene, cultivating more access and diversity and creating opportunity.”

During the first day of ADF, the programme will engage Forum participants in Focus Group Discussions on ways to support and empower persons with disabilities to integrate and participate actively in the community. These conversations will galvanise multi-sectorial players to come together to envision a way forward for the arts in fostering a more inclusive society for Singapore. The discussions will inform stakeholders in the field of arts and disability, and in considering recommendations from the Singapore’s Third Enabling Masterplan, a plan that aims to build a more inclusive society for persons with disabilities.

Soh Lai Yee, Head of Cultural Exchange, the Singapore International Foundation, said, “The SIF’s Arts for Good initiative seeks to connect communities, leverages cross-cultural wisdom and arts-based activities for positive social change. The ADF is a tremendous opportunity to connect people from multiple sectors and across cultures and borders to work towards a common goal of fostering an inclusive society for all.”

The second day of the Forum will feature a half-day workshop covering the topics of ‘Inclusive Artmaking 101’ by Dr Alice Fox and ‘Tools, Considerations and Approaches in Programming for Diverse Audiences’ by Myra Tam.

ADF 2017 will take place on 20 and 21 April at The Enabling Village. For more information, please visit www.artsanddisability2017.sg

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For more information please read:

Annex A: Programme Schedule

Annex B: Keynote Speakers Biographies

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL (NAC)

The National Arts Council champions the arts in Singapore. By nurturing creative excellence and supporting broad audience engagement, we want to develop Singapore as a distinctive global city where the arts inspire our people and connect our communities. We preserve our rich, cultural traditions while we cultivate accomplished artists and vibrant companies for the future. Our support for the arts is comprehensive – from grants and partnerships to industry facilitation and arts housing. The Council welcomes greater private and corporate giving to and through the arts so that together we can make the arts an integral part of everyone's lives. For more information on the Council's mission and plans, visit www.nac.gov.sg.

About British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. Using the UK's cultural resources we make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications.

Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. The majority of our income is raised delivering a range of projects and contracts in English teaching and examinations, education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. Eighteen per cent of our funding is received from the UK government.

About the Singapore International Foundation

The Singapore International Foundation makes friends for a better world. We build enduring relationships between Singaporeans and world communities, and harness these friendships to enrich lives and effect positive change. Our work is anchored in the belief that cross-cultural interactions provide insights that strengthen understanding. These exchanges inspire action and enable collaborations for good. Our programmes bring people together to share ideas, skills and experiences in areas such as healthcare, education, the environment, arts and culture, as well as livelihood and business. We do this because we believe we all can, and should, do our part to build a better world, one we envision as peaceful, inclusive and offering opportunities for all. Find out more at www.sif.org.sg

ANNEX A

Programme Schedule

DAY 1	
TIME	ITEM/VENUE
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome speech by Guest-of-Honour
09:30 – 10:30	Making the Case for Inclusive Arts Keynote speech by Dr Alice Fox
10:30 – 10:50	Tea break
10:50 – 11:50	Regional Trends in Inclusive Arts Programming: Hong Kong Keynote speech by Myra Tam, Arts with the Disabled Association Hong Kong
11:50 – 12:40	Overcoming Challenges in Bridging Theory and Practice in Arts & Disability Panel discussion by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myra Tam • Dr Alice Fox • Ramesh Meyyappan • Fatima Mustafa, Director (Disability), MSF • Maureen Goh, Very Special Arts
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 14:30	Artist Sharing: Spotlight on performer Ramesh Meyyappan Keynote speech by Ramesh Meyyappan
	Track A (140 pax)
	Track B (40 pax)
14:30 – 15:15	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Moving forward in overcoming gaps in Arts & Disability</p> <p>Panel discussion with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myra Tam • Let's Play Lah! Volunteers • Luanne Poh, theatre producer • Caroline Lee, Director, THK EIPIC <p>Topics to cover:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicating the value of the arts (advocacy & impact) 2. Activating spaces and people (volunteers, venues, institutions) 3. Identifying resources (funding, training) </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Inclusive Programming Moderated by Jean Ng</p> <p>Panel discussion with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Alice Fox • Hina, Redefinition • R Chandran, Very Special Theatrics • Ministry of Bellz • Joshua Yang, Vertical Submarine and teaching artist at Pathlight School • Jean Loo, Superhero Me <p>Topics to cover:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conceptualizing an inclusive programme 2. Ethics and considerations 3. Programme design </div> </div>
15:15 – 16:15	Focus Group Discussions (FGD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying resources • Activating spaces and people • Advocacy and impact • Programme design
16:15 – 16:45	Tea break
16:45 – 17:00	Presentation of findings from FGD & Closing Speech by Singapore International Foundation

DAY 2

09:00 – 13:00/16:00	<p><u>WORKSHOP (ONE DAY)</u> Inclusive Artmaking 101 by Dr Alice Fox</p> <p>An interactive creative session to equip artists interested in collaborating with persons with disabilities. This workshop will explore the role of artists in classrooms, and considerations of the effects of changing roles and space when working with people with disabilities.</p>	<p><u>WORKSHOP (HALF DAY)</u> Tools, considerations and approaches in programming for diverse audiences by Myra Tam</p> <p>A hands-on introduction to creative approaches in integrating accessibility into programmes. This workshop will encourage participants to start considering a more inclusive approach in arts spaces and programmes.</p>
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Annex B

Keynote Speakers Biographies

Dr. Alice Fox

Alice Fox is an expert on arts education and practice for social inclusivity with a career history of initiating successful collaborative projects. Alice has initiated radical new arts collaborations between university students and local community groups which aim to develop appropriate and meaningful inclusive arts practice between artists with and without learning disabilities. She lectures and researches in fine art practice with a role as assistant head of school and is course leader and founder of the pioneering MA Inclusive Arts Practice. Alice Fox is the Artistic Director of the Rocket Artists group which consists of fourteen artists; some have learning disabilities others are lecturers/artists at the University of Brighton. Funded by the Arts Council England since 2005 they regularly meet to make art in their own studio.

In recent times, Alice has initiated progressive new arts collaborations between university students and local community groups aimed at developing appropriate and meaningful inclusive arts practices between artists with and without learning disabilities. Her ground breaking book, *Inclusive Arts Practice and Research*, interrogates this exciting and newly emergent field, presenting a radical call for collaboration on equal terms.



Myra Tam

Myra Tam is currently the Executive Director at Arts with the Disabled Association (Hong Kong). She has previously held the position of Development Manager with Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and Hong Kong Arts Festival, and continues her role as an educator for the Professional Diploma in Arts Administration at Hong Kong Baptist University School of Continuing Education.



Ramesh Meyyappan

A Glasgow-based Singaporean, Ramesh Meyyappan is a theatre creator who develops performances using an eclectic mix of visual and physical theatre styles. Ramesh continually seeks to develop and extend his theatrical visual vocabulary, for example incorporating circus techniques, bouffon, puppetry and illusion within his work. He enjoys the challenge of creating strong narrative visual work.

Over the years, his solo performances and collaborations have toured nationally and internationally (over 20 countries) to much critical acclaim. He has been nominated four times for Best Actor at the Life! Theatre Awards (Singapore) being awarded the accolade twice, once for GIN & TONIC & PASSING TRAINS based on an inspiration from Charles Dickens's The Signalman and a second time for Snails and Ketchup.

Snails & Ketchup & Skewered Snails were commissioned by the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad project Unlimited. Snails & Ketchup was nominated for Total Theatre Awards UK and was also selected as Critics Picks of The Year Singapore.

Ramesh's most recent production - Butterfly was a striking adaptation of Madame Butterfly that incorporated puppetry, premiered at the Esplanade, Singapore it was also presented in Scotland as part of Manipulate Festival and the Edinburgh Festival as part of the British Council and Made in Scotland Showcases. Butterfly toured to Europe and was performed in New York April / May (2016) as part of the Brits Off Broadway Festival. Butterfly was described as; 'poetic...absolutely breath-taking...physical aspect of theatre, equally magical and beautiful' The Flying Inkpot Singapore. 'Meyyappan's superb, simple, deeply emotive aesthetic is a very welcome addition to Scottish Theatre' Sunday Herald.

Ramesh is currently teaching the module he developed - Visual Theatre Module (BA Degree for Deaf) at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow, Scotland.

www.rameshmeyyappan.com

