

For Immediate Release

Local Artists Support Uni Arts Scene

NUS Arts Festival links local arts with student talents and academia

SINGAPORE, 20 January 2010 – Over three weekends from 5 March, catch a host of Singaporean artists from diverse genres at Asia Alive - NUS Arts Festival (NAF) 2010. On the theme of “Through Asian Lens”, NAF 2010, organized by NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA), mines arts talents in Singapore and takes a quantum leap towards a symbiotic relationship between Singapore’s arts scene and the university campus.

1. **NAF Opening Show – wo(men)**

Co-produced by Checkpoint Theatre and NUS Stage, *wo(men)* stars Lok Meng Chue, household name Neo Swee Lin, a veteran actress and NUS law alumna, and Patricia Toh whose resume includes *The Crab Flower Club* from the Singapore Arts Festival 2009. Besides A-list cast, *wo(men)* features professional production design from Wong Chee Wai (set), Lim Woan Wen (lighting) and Philip Tan (sound). The play is directed by Claire Wong, Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre. *wo(men)* is supported by CFA’s theatre mentorship and laboratory programme.

wo(men) typifies the powerful possibilities of a university-level festival show blending professional discipline, youthful vigour and academic depth. These include the mentoring of *wo(men)*’s undergrad playwright, Faith Ng by Huzir Sulaiman, Checkpoint Theatre’s co-founder and artistic director, as well as understudies in acting and production from NUS Stage (an NUS Centre For the Arts student theatre group). Both Claire Wong and Huzir Sulaiman have served as tutors of NUS Stage since last year, underlining Checkpoint’s commitment towards nurturing the next generation of theatre talents and practitioners.

Please see Annex 3 for a Q&A with *wo(men)*’s playwright, Faith Ng.

2. **Emerging Choreographers II – The Second Company**

Commissioned by CFA, and featuring dancers from T.H.E Second Dance Company, *T.H.E Emerging Choreographers II* explores Asian themes via works by three young choreographers - Foo Yun Ying, Lee Mun Wai (both members of T.H.E) and Lee Ren Xin (member of T.H.E Second Dance Company). The youth wing of the dynamic T.H.E Dance Company, T.H.E Second Dance Company was started by T.H.E’s artistic director Kuik Swee Boon to train and groom young, talented dancers aged 16 to 23. *T.H.E. Emerging Choreographers II* is CFA’s second commission from Kuik, whose work was part of the memorable double bill *Variance*, which opened NAF 2009. Three dancers from CFA, two alumni and an undergrad, were privileged to be selected after auditions.

3. **The Rain Came Down Like Pearls the Night I Died by Mark Chan**

Mark Chan, one of Singapore’s premier composers and singer/multiinstrumentalist/poet and painter, makes his first foray into storytelling. Playing narrator, Chan will be accompanied by singers Jacintha, Gani Karim and Denise Tan, with Belinda Foo on keyboard, Leslie Tan on cello and Joe Jeyaveeran on percussions.

4. *Come Closer: A Forum Theatre Workshop by Li Xie*

Recipient of the 2005 NAC Young Artist Award, Li Xie returns to NAF for a second year – this time with a focus on the elderly in Singapore. Via forum theatre, *Come Closer* engages participants and audiences on their real thoughts and opinions on the topic of aging, a critical issue in Asian society today.

5. *Anweshana: The search for Nalanda by NUS Indian Dance*

This partnership with Asian Civilizations Museum (ACM) and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) examines Nalanda, one of the world's first global universities that flourished in AD 7th Century India. Bringing together thousands of students from all corners of Asia, the excavation of Nalanda revealed a unique symbol of Asian cultural heritage which is still relevant today.

Nurturing the next generation of arts audiences and artists is not new to CFA. Since CFA's establishment in 1993, CFA student arts groups have steadily benefitted from professional artistic guidance of its now 80 tutors, dedicated spaces for rehearsals and performances, as well as CFA's support in providing performance opportunities, technical expertise and others.

Says NUS President Prof Tan Chorh Chuan: "I am delighted that this year's NAF continues to explore interesting interfaces between the arts and academia, across genres and disciplines, and this time, with a focus on Asia. This will help stimulate new thinking and insights that can only contribute further to both the arts and research in the region."

Ms Christine Khor, Director, CFA elaborates; "Besides presenting quality productions by merging the talent of local artists and students, CFA looks long-term in contributing to the arts and research. Professional local artists, NUS students and academics – all three bring unique skills to the test. Through the arts platform, our students gain lifelong experiences and skills, the local and campus arts are revitalised with young energy and ideas, while NUS research is applied and interpreted in original new ways."

Besides the abovementioned arts performances, NAF 2010 also has a wide selection of free and economically shows ranging from music to film screenings to visual arts, surrounding Asian issues relevant to today's man on the street.

Asia Alive - NUS Arts Festival 2010

5 – 21 March 2010 over 3 weekends (Fridays – Sundays) featuring over 40 events.

University Cultural Centre and other on-campus venues at National University of Singapore

Email: nusartsfestival@nus.edu.sg

Website: www.nusartsfestival.com

Please see annexes for more information:

Annex 1: About NAF 2010 - Event info and unique points of selected shows

Annex 2: A Q&A with Faith Ng (Playwright of *wo(men)*)

Annex 3: Selected Festival images available in high-resolution

Annex 4: About NUS Centre For the Arts

Please note that the cast and theatrical set of NAF Opening Show – wo(men)– is available for media interviews or media photo shoots at the University Cultural Centre from 1 Feb to 28 Feb 2010. Kindly inquire for hours where this is possible outside of rehearsal times.

Annex 1 : Festival Information (Highlights)

About NUS Arts Festival (NAF)

Begun in 2006, NAF is an annual flagship arts festival presented by NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA). Carrying an arts and education emphasis, NAF synergises NUS talents and industry professionals to showcase the rich cultural university landscape to the NUS community and beyond. Leveraging on the university's diverse academic resources, NAF also encourages collaborative works-in-progress, enhancing artistic opportunities for the campus community and local arts scene.

NAF 2010 has a total of 48 shows, comprising 25 paid shows and 23 free shows.

Show info and unique points



Festival Opening Show - wo(men)

Jointly produced by Checkpoint Theatre and NUS Stage

5 & 6 Mar, 8pm & 6 Mar, 3pm

UCC Theatre

\$28 & \$19

Advisory: Mature content (for 13 years and above)

wo(men) is jointly produced by NUS Stage (an English theatre group under NUS Centre For the Arts) and Checkpoint Theatre, under a CFA supported professional theatre mentorship and laboratory programme.

Unique points

- Dual role of the artists and production designers in *wo(men)* - to not just be professionals but also mentors to a university theatre group. Possible angle could be whether it is the responsibility of arts practitioners to also to nurture new talents and the next generation of audiences.
- Mentorship of undergrad playwright by Huzir Sulaiman. The play is an intimate portrayal of the complexities of family relationships, exploring the tension between the past versus the present and memory versus reality. A typical modern Singapore family struggling to communicate across generations and the mix of languages and dialect that they use.
- Director, Claire Wong, says: "The play has a seemingly simple narrative, and is set in a not uncommon Singaporean home. But its simplicity belies a rich complexity. It's a slice of life. And ultimately life is never simple. That's the challenge and the joy in staging this work."
- Part of NUS Stage, 23 year old business undergrad Samuel Chee is a lighting understudy at *wo(men)*. He enthuses: "To light up the story and paint it with colours and feelings; wouldn't it be a fantastic accomplishment to learn such skills? To do so, we've got to have practical experience, to learn from the professionals. And being in NUS Stage enables this unique learning experience for us willing students!". Other understudies from NUS Stage come from diverse backgrounds such as the arts, business, engineering, science and law.

Note: Director's and actors' bios as well as more perspectives from students are available upon request

Festival Highlights



T.H.E Second Dance Company - The Emerging Choreographers II

18 Mar, 3pm, \$16 & \$11 (matinee)

19 Mar, 8pm, \$21 & \$16

UCC Theatre

Unique points

- Kuik's laboratory method towards developing the Singapore dance choreography talent
 - Perspectives of NUS undergraduate and alumni dancers involved in the production
- Perspectives of the young choreographers as the next generation of dance makers. E.g. Lee Mun Wai who is showcased in the show. He is a founding member of T.H.E Dance Company, which was founded in 2008 by artistic director Kuik Swee Boon who is a former principal dancer with the Compañia Nacional de Danza (Spain) and the Singapore Dance Theatre.

THE RAIN CAME DOWN LIKE PEARLS *the Night I Died...*

The New Musical - Sing & Tell - (Singing & Narrative)

Music, Lyrics and Libretto/book: Mark Chan

12 & 13 Mar, 8pm, UCC Dance Studio

\$15 & \$5 (For tickets, visit www.nusartsfestival.com)

Unique points

- One of Singapore's premier composers, noted for his unique blend of Eastern and Western sounds.
- Chan is also a recording artist, singer, instrumentalist, poet and painter who created a diverse oeuvre encompassing seven solo albums under various labels, theatrical works, TV shows as well as live performances from chamber opera, to Chinese instrumental and contemporary dance.
- He received critical acclaim for the score of Chinese silent film *Little Toys*, which found relevance even five years after its composition when he performed it for the 2007 Shanghai International Arts Festival.
- Witness Mark Chan's transformation into word smith with his first literary work-in-progress. Both narrator and vocalist, Mark and friends weave a tragic love story that spans half a century from pre-war Singapore in 1938.



Anweshana: The search for Nalanda

NUS Indian Dance

5 Mar, 8pm, UCC Dance Studio

\$8 (For tickets, visit www.nusartsfestival.com)

Unique points

- Deeper artistic messages and re-interpretation of historical and cultural research via the various art forms
- Incorporating modern viewpoints using a traditional art form on a historical yet relevant topic



The Ethics of Progress
Unlimited Theatre (UK)

21 Mar, 3pm & 8pm, UCC Theatre
 \$28 & \$19

Co-presented with Centre For Quantum Technologies

- Looks at the world as it might be in the near future and takes the audience on a mind melting, jargon free tour of leading edge quantum physics, taking in teleportation, superpositions and entanglement theory.

- Artistic Director Jon Spooner explains his life-altering conversations with Professor Vlatko Vedral, who specialises in quantum information science at the Centre for Quantum Technologies, NUS and University of Oxford.
 Co-produced by Oxford Playhouse and Leeds Met Studio Theatre in 2008
- Local response and perspectives to the issues will be raised through a panel discussion with Jon Spooner and Singapore theatre practitioners.

Works in Progress



B
Kiran Kumar

6 & 7 Mar, 8pm, UCC Theatre Green Room
 \$8 (For tickets, visit www.nusartsfestival.com)

- This work by the talented alumni Kiran Kumar looks at entertainment, performance, performer and spectator.
- Kumar explores the perception that “serious” and “entertaining” are mutually exclusive.



Come Closer: A Forum Theatre Workshop
by Li Xie

Workshop: 15 - 19 Mar, 7pm - 10pm, 20 Mar, 2pm – 8pm
 Presentation : 20 Mar, 8pm, UCC Dance Studio

Free admission for 20 Mar presentation
 (Limited to 50 pax. Register at nusartsfestival@nus.edu.sg)

- Through image making, games, exercises and discussions, this workshop encourages participants to explore the issues as a collective community.

- Participants present an interactive and thought-provoking play which is a platform for audiences to share their perspectives and solutions. Material may be used for a possible full-length production in future.
- The workshop will focus on the theme of ageing, as perceived in the Asian context.

Films Screenings

Short Films from Asia

5 Mar, 8pm, UCC Hall

\$11

Co-presented with the Asian Film Archive, in conjunction with its 5th Anniversary celebrations

Butterflies Have No Memories

by Lav Diaz

2009 | 42 min | Tagalog

A Letter for Uncle Boonmee

by Apichatpong Weerasethakul

2009 | 18 min | Thai

Lost In The Mountain (CheopcheopSanjung)

by Hong Sang-soo

2009 | 32 min | Korean

Block B

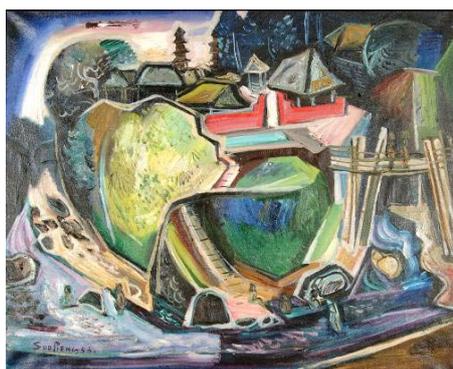
by Christopher Chong

2008 | 20 min | Tamil

Everyday Everyday

by Tan Chui Mui

2008 | 18 min | Mandarin



Visual Arts

Cheong Soo Pieng

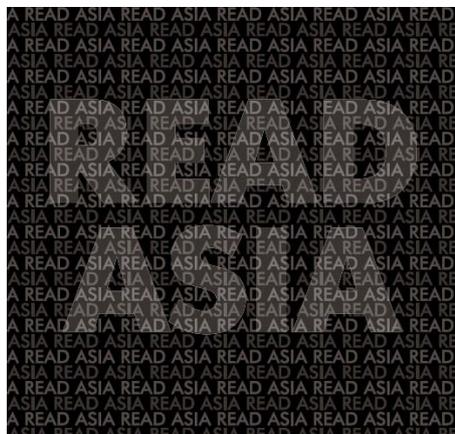
5 Mar - 31 July

SEA Gallery & NX Gallery, NUS Museum

Free Admission

Exhibition Opening: 5 March 2010, 6.30pm, NUS Museum

- An exhibition of works of one of Singapore's most influential artists, the late Cheong Soo Pieng.
- The first exhibition on Cheong Soo Pieng since his last solo exhibition 19 years ago.
- Emphasises on the archival and is presented to facilitate future research and projects on aspects of Cheong's practice and his influence on later generations of artists.
- A collaboration between NUS Museum and The National Art Gallery, Singapore. Sponsored by Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple.



READ ASIA - Book Initiative Capsule

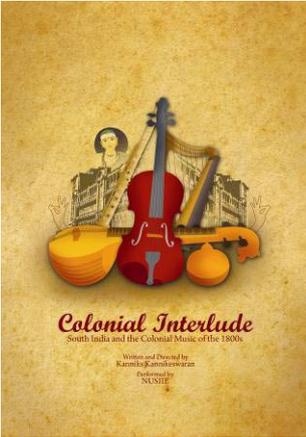
5 - 21 Mar, UCC Foyer

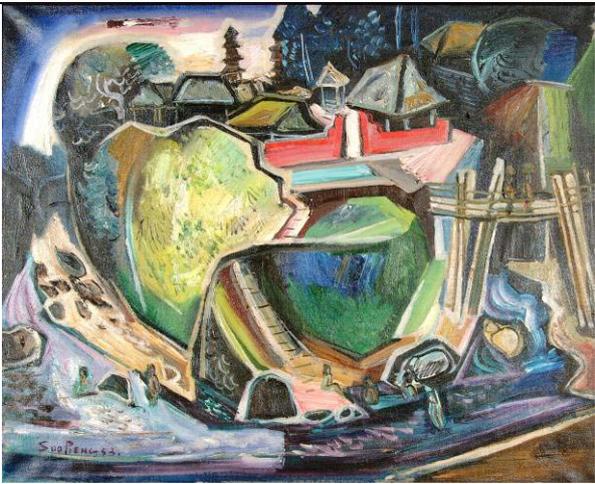
Free Admission

- A prototype mobile library and lab that promotes the culture of reading, with new themes featured each week.
- Design and content are driven by evolving concepts of Asia as a literary imagination referencing colonial, modern and contemporary writings by Western, Asian and Singapore writers.
- In collaboration with the Industrial Design Programme at the Dept of Architecture, Dept of English Language and Literature and Central Library, NUS.

Annex 2: Selected Festival Images

Kindly contact us for high-resolution images or a wider selection of images.

<p>NAF Opening Show – wo(men)</p>	<p>Emerging Choreographers II – The Second Dance Company</p>
	 <p>Image credit: Photography by Tan Ngiap Heng</p>
<p>Come Closer by Li Xie (Forum Theatre)</p>	<p>Unveilings – Terpsichore 2010</p>
 <p>Image credit: Kenneth Ong, Twenty4Frames Photography</p>	
<p>Colonial Interlude</p>	<p>B (Kiran Kumar)</p>
	

<p>Drought by Sherman Ong (Film by NUS alumni)</p>  <p>Image Credit: Tan Hai Han</p>	<p>Cheong Soo Pieng exhibition</p>  <p>Image credit: Cheong Soo Pieng, <i>Brook</i>, 1953, oil on canvas, NUS Museum collection.</p>
<p>Festival logo</p>	
	

Annex 3: A Q&A with Faith Ng

1. When did you begin creative writing?

I have always been writing, since I was little. Since my first year of university, I took every creative writing module offered, and I haven't stopped since.

2. What draws you to playwriting over other forms of writing? Do you also write poems or fiction?

What I enjoy about playwriting is the thrill of watching what you write come to life on stage. And everyone, from the actors to the director, comes together and breathes life into the text. I write poems and fiction as well. But I think whatever form of writing there is, it is simply good to write.

3. In the Short and Sweet Festival 2009, your play *Not With A Bang But A Whimper*, was a physical piece about domestic abuse. Similarly, *wo(men)* deals with family ties, lies and secrets. What draws you to the theme of family?

Family plays an extremely huge and important part in everybody's lives. They can make our good days and our bad days; they contribute to making us who we are, how we interact with people, who we friend and even who we are attracted to. And yet it is something so private as well. We don't really talk about family, unless it is to those who are very very close to us.

4. What was the most rewarding experience that playwriting has given you till date?

Having a bunch of marvellous and encouraging fellow playwrights, and spending the day (and night) with them reading each other's works out loud, critiquing and talking and gossiping and laughing together at the house of my playwriting mentor, Huzir Sulaiman and his wife, Claire Wong.

5. Any words for your fellow aspiring playwrights?

This is quite hard to answer, since I still feel that I'm an aspiring playwright myself. But I think that it is important to never, never, never give up. And to always, keep on writing. No one else can or will write the way you do, with the same words, and the same style, and the exact same voice.

6. How did *wo(men)* come about?

It was written for an NUS theatre module (Advanced Playwriting), under Huzir Sulaiman. It came about when I was lying on the bed with my twin sister. I told her that I had this idea, of a teenage girl who runs away from home and returns a couple of years later. She asked me what was the first line that girl would say. I said, "'What's for dinner?' as if she's never left at all." My sister replied, "No. She'd say to her mother, 'Wah lao eh, still haven't die yet arh.'"

Annex 4: About NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA)

Established in 1993, NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA) is a multifaceted arts organisation that nurtures triple arts – performing, visual and literary – on campus and beyond. CFA's three main functions are in the areas of management, programmes and education. As the creative cradle of the University, CFA manages 23 student and alumni groups in music, dance, theatre, visual arts, filmmaking and production.

Apart from talent management, CFA also manages the major arts facilities on campus: University Cultural Centre (UCC) and CFA Studios. CFA's forte also includes its skill in programming campus based performances for a wide audience, to inject vitality into campus life.

CFA's performing arts programmes can be categorised into these major platforms:

- **NUS Arts Festival:** With the best campus talents and professional acts, this festival has something for everyone in the campus' laidback milieu.
- **ExxonMobil Campus Concerts:** A free concert series, showcasing both student and established talents – sponsored by ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd since 1986.
- **Ones to Watch:** This platform introduces young, talented, vibrant performers who engage and inspire youth. The year 2007 saw the first performance of this series – a recital by worldclass American violinist, Rachel Barton Pine. 2008 saw the Flinders Quartet and in 2009, The Catz Quintet.

CFA also organises events such as poetry readings and film screenings, education programming such as instrumental music courses and examinations.

Located within UCC, NUS Museum, an institution of CFA, currently houses several major permanent collections such as the Lee Kong Chian Collection, the South and Southeast Asian Collection, the Ng Eng Teng Collection and the Straits Chinese Collection at Baba House (157 Neil Road). It is committed to ensuring the collections of the University are accurately interpreted, effectively displayed, carefully preserved, and actively promoted for the enjoyment and benefit of the NUS community as well as the wider Singapore community and foreign visitors.

For more information, visit www.nus.edu.sg/cfa.

Media Enquiries

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