

Biographies of Artists

The Necessary Stage

Formed in 1987 by our current Artistic Director Alvin Tan, The Necessary Stage (TNS) is a non-profit theatre company with charity status. Our mission is to create challenging, indigenous and innovative theatre that touches the heart and mind. TNS is a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant FY2014-FY2016, and is also the organiser of the annual M1 Singapore Fringe Festival.

For its Main Season, TNS produces an average of two plays a year at our black box and other venues. The plays are original, mostly devised pieces created in a collaborative process that is based on research, improvisation before scripting, and input from all members of the production. We are also committed to international exchange and networking between Singapore and other countries, through staging the company's plays abroad, inviting foreign works to be presented by the company in Singapore, through dialogues, workshops and training opportunities as well as creative collaborations leading to interdisciplinary productions. Our Theatre for Youth and Community branch actively engages young people, senior citizens and different communities in Singapore through workshops and process-based drama programmes that focus on personal development.

2015 sees The Necessary Stage (TNS) celebrating its 28th year of creating challenging, innovative and indigenous theatre that touches the heart and mind. Having presented more than 100 original plays in Singapore and abroad, TNS remains focused on breaking new ground in original local content and intercultural exploration. The company has also curated and presented the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival since 2005, with the tenth edition in 2014 achieving record-breaking attendances of 93% house for ticketed productions. TNS has also been unwavering in its efforts to nurture new talents and local content, through platforms such as the Theatre for Youth Ensemble, Playwright's Cove, commissions at the Fringe Festival and most recently, Theatre for Seniors.

www.necessary.org

Director – Alvin Tan

Alvin is the Founder and Artistic Director of The Necessary Stage since 1987. One of the leading proponents of devising theatre in Singapore, Alvin has directed more than 70 plays which have been staged locally and at international festivals. He has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and served as a member of the curatorial panel for TransLab, an initiative created by the Australian Council for the Arts to promote intercultural theatre and performance. In 2010, Alvin was conferred the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture, in recognition of his significant contribution to the arts. Alvin was most recently awarded Best Director at the 2011 Life! Theatre Awards for *Model Citizens* by The Necessary Stage.

Alvin has also been actively involved in civil society and public initiatives, amongst which include *Bird People in Tanglin Halt*, an intradisciplinary project on the dilemmas of urban heritage and biodiversity, for which he is the Artistic Director of the theatre component. In 2012, Alvin was also commissioned by the National Library Board as Artistic Director of a time-travelling exhibition on the life and works of Singapore poet Edwin Thumboo. Alvin sits on the Singapore50 Committee, established to coordinate nationwide celebrations for Singapore's 50th birthday in 2015. Alvin is also a Board Member of the National Arts Council, Singapore (from 1 September 2013 – 31 August 2015). Most recently in 2014, Alvin was invited to be on the Syllabus Development Committee for the Arts Education branch of Ministry of Education, to design a drama syllabus at 'O' level for implementation in 2017 in schools.

Playwright – Haresh Sharma

Haresh is the Resident Playwright of The Necessary Stage. To date, he has written more than 100 plays. His play, *Off Centre*, was selected by the Ministry of Education as a Literature text for 'N' and 'O' Levels, and republished by The Necessary Stage in 2006. In 2008, Ethos Books published *Interlogue: Studies in Singapore Literature, Vol. 6*, written by Prof David Birch and edited by A/P Kirpal Singh, which presented an extensive investigation of Haresh's work over the past 20 years up to 2007. A collection of Haresh's plays have been translated into Mandarin and published by Global Publishing with the title 「哈里斯·沙玛剧作选」.

Haresh was awarded Best Original Script for *Fundamentally Happy*, *Good People* and *Gemuk Girls* during the 2007, 2008 and 2009 Life! Theatre Awards respectively. In 2010, The Necessary Stage has also published the above-mentioned plays in the collection entitled *Trilogy*. In 2011 and 2012, two collections of short plays by Haresh entitled *Shorts 1* and *Shorts 2* as well as a collection entitled *Plays for Schools* have been published. 2013 saw the publication of a new collection of Haresh's plays on medical-related issues entitled *Don't Forget to Remember Me*, launched at the Singapore Writers Festival. Most recently in 2014, Haresh's play *Best Of* has been published by The Necessary Stage. The play has been staged four times to rave reviews in Singapore and Malaysia. Haresh was also the first non-American to be awarded the prestigious Goldberg Master Playwright by New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2011.

Performer – Sharda Harrison

Sharda Harrison is an actor currently residing in Singapore. She graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts with a BA (Hons) degree in Acting in 2009. In 2008, she won the Best Actress Award at the annual Short+Sweet play competition for her role in the play *How do you like me? How do you want me now?* In 2009, she was invited by Elizabeth de Roza to collaborate on a reworked version of *Curry Devil* at the Transit Women on the Periphery festival at Odin Teatret in Denmark. Her recent works are *The Kanjoos* with HuM Theatre, *Dream Country – a lost monologue* for the 2012 Singapore Arts Festival, *Crossings*, *Mobile 2: Flat Cities* and *Poor Thing* by The Necessary Stage, *Decimal Points 5.1* by Cake Theatrical Productions, *The Crucible* by Toy Factory and *The House of Bernarda Alba* by WILD RICE. Sharda has also appeared on screen, including hosting the children's programme *Oktolive* and performed in the dance film *Once Upon A Dance* commissioned for the 2012 Singapore Arts Festival by Freestate productions.

Performer – Bani Haykal

Bani Haykal experiments with text + music.

His work stretches across various disciplines including installation, poetry and theatre, often investigating cultural and socio-political climates coupled with perceptual and behavioural affects. As a soloist, he works primarily with acoustic instruments, both traditional and/or hacked, and his studies revolve around narratives, structured improvisation and spoken word. He is also a member of B-Quartet amongst other musical outfits.

An Associate Artist with The Substation, Haykal has collaborated, exhibited, performed and toured internationally, as an artist and a musician, participating in festivals including Media/Art Kitchen (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Japan), M1 Singapore Fringe Festival and da:ns festival (Singapore) among others.

Performer – Edith Podesta

Edith is a graduate of both National Institute of Dramatic Art's (NIDA) Acting and Movement Studies courses, who works as an actor, director, choreographer, writer and teacher. While in Singapore she has appeared on stage in *LIV* directed by Nelson Chia for the 2009 Singapore Arts Festival, *A Note Went Off In My Head* directed by Oliver Chong for Esplanade's The Studios 2011, *Dream Country- a lost monologue* directed by Marion D'Cruz for the 2012 Singapore Arts Festival, and *Serendipity* directed by Philip Tan as part of *Decimal Points: First Station* (SeptFest 2013). She was recently awarded Best Actress at the 14th Life! Theatre Awards for Cake Theatrical Production's *Illogic* directed by Natalie Henedige.

Performer – Ethel Yap

Ethel is an alumna of NUS Theatre Studies (2011) and London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Masters in Musical Theatre, 2012). Her recent stage credits include Platform 65's *Rites and Regulations* for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Yellow Chair Productions' *The Last Five Years*, WILD RICE's *Jack and the Beansprout*, Toy Factory's *Romeo and Juliet*, The Theatre Practice's *If There're Seasons* and Our Company's *Dear Nora*. Her TV credits include OKTO's *After School*, Toggle's *What Do Men Want?* and Channel 5's *Code of Law*.

Production Designer – Mohd Fared Bin Jainal

Fared graduated with a Master in Arts (Design) from Open University/LASALLE College of the Arts and is a recipient of the Goh Chok Tong Youth Promise Award. Fared has collaborated extensively with various theatre and arts groups as a director, performer, visual artist and set designer. In 2010, he was selected for a residency at the prestigious La Mama International in Spoleto, Umbria, Italy. Fared is an Associate Artistic Director of bilingual theatre company Teater Ekamatra and teaches at School of the Arts (SOTA). He has been searching for fresh narratives of Singapore and the Malay Archipelago from oft-forgotten and submerged perspectives.