A decorative border with a repeating floral motif in a muted purple color, framing the entire page. The border is composed of small, stylized flower-like shapes arranged in a continuous line.

“AND WHEN OLD WORDS  
DIE OUT ON THE TONGUE,  
NEW MELODIES BREAK FORTH  
FROM THE HEART;  
AND WHERE THE OLD TRACKS  
ARE LOST, NEW COUNTRY IS  
REVEALED WITH ITS WONDERS.”

---

Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*

# Will you fight for freedom knowing the inevitable loss ahead?

A mother pins her hopes upon her son, unknowingly hindering his own dreams. A teacher struggles to accept her protégé whose ambitions steer her away from tradition. A writer drawn to his muse faces the reality of their unresolved chapter.

These relationships collide in The Necessary Stage's *Gitanjali [I feel the earth move]*, a brand new interdisciplinary and intercultural production inspired by the writings of Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore.

Directed by Alvin Tan and written by Haresh Sharma, this groundbreaking production features movement by French-Laotian choreographer-dancer Olé Khamchanla, Jereh Leong and Raka Maitra, a renowned Odissi classical/contemporary dancer, and vocals by Hindustani singer Namita Mehta.

Also starring Vasantham Star's Ebi Shankara and Life! Theatre Awards nominees Sharda Harrison and Padma Sagaram, with set design by Wong Chee Wai and lighting design by Adrian Tan. They will be accompanied by interdisciplinary sound artist Bani Haykal and multimedia artist Brian Gothong Tan.

## Dates

Fri, 26 Sept & Sat, 27 Sept 2014, 8pm  
Sat, 27 Sept & Sun, 28 Sept 2014, 3pm

## Venue

SOTA [School of the Arts]  
Drama Theatre

## CREATIVE TEAM AND CAST

### Playwright

Haresh Sharma

### Director

Alvin Tan

### Assistant Director

Felipe Cervera

### Dramaturg

Charlene Rajendran

### Starring

Bani Haykal  
Sharda Harrison  
Olé Khamchanla  
Jereh Leong  
Raka Maitra  
Namita Mehta  
Padma Sagaram  
Ebi Shankara

## DRAMATURGICAL TEAM

### Research Assistants

A Yagnya  
Sim Yan Ying  
Bernice Lee  
Christopher Fok

## PRODUCTION TEAM

### Production Stage Managers

Jason Ng  
Azyyati Binte Alias

### Sound Engineer

Soundwave Industries

### Multimedia Operator

Yusri Sapari

### Wardrobe Mistress

Lim Zhiying

### Voice Over Talents

Timothy Chow  
Christopher Fok  
Bani Haykal  
Namita Mehta  
Kamini Ramachandran  
Ebi Shankara

### Multimedia Designer

Brian Gothong Tan

### Lighting Designer

Adrian Tan

### Set Designer

Wong Chee Wai

### Photographer

Tan Ngiap Heng

### Make-up Artist

Haslina Ismail

### Translator

Chan Sze Wei

### Crew

Abdul Ameer Bin  
Syed Abdul Ghani  
Ayda Noor  
Samuel Tan

## ...and the earth moved

### INTRODUCTION

*Gitanjali* [*I feel the earth move*] is about the dilemma of Savitri, an Indian traditional dance teacher, whose obligation to carry on the heritage handed down to her by her father is smashed when her chosen disciple opts to leave the dance academy to pursue her journey in Vancouver.

What happens when traditional practice has no host to carry it forward, as practitioners become indifferent to the canon and want to forge new practices?

Priya, the dance disciple, has other plans. She knows what she doesn't want but only has a sketch of what she wants—enough to prompt her to leave India, propelling her out of Savitri's shadow into the unknown in search of her story. It was only upon meeting Jeremy, a contemporary dancer, in Vancouver that her vision took flight.

Priya's traditional practice finds new expression cross-pollinating with Jeremy's contemporary dance, a possibility that would have been completely eclipsed if she had remained with Savitri. Is this transgression, disrespect, disloyalty, betrayal or her right? For whom do we live our lives?

Nandini, on the other hand, leaves a passionate relationship in search of someone whom her diplomat father would ethnically approve of—a sensible thing to do for a loving father.

The family unit, relied upon to sustain the pursuit of the capitalistic dream, empowers individuals, making mobility for self-actualisation the norm. With globalisation, diversity is here to stay. The choice palette expands, we and our centres move,

and new hybridised worlds emerge, outdating the nation state. But this global world is not without contestations, discomforts, negotiations, adaptation, misrepresentations, acceptance, rejection, re-negotiations, and revisions. Just more intense.

As Galileo's discovery led to exposing the truth that the earth moves round the sun, the "[I feel the earth move]" part of our *Gitanjali* title also denotes the dangers of determinacy. Even great thinkers fall victim to closed circuits of thinking. How then do we approach truths put forth by the authorities of science, politics and economics? Encountering Tagore through *Gitanjali* [*I feel the earth move*] made me reflect more on the notion of poetic vision.

Tagore's poetic vision may not be empirically proven but it continues to inspire the imagination and fuels one's faith to look beyond what exists. Yet that is what matters and endures.

Interdisciplinary practice challenges the artists to move away from their established practices. To learn anew our discipline through the lenses of another, and to learn of the other discipline through our own practice, is indeed a shift away from our comfort zones. Then, to witness what possibilities and social dynamics emerge when composing the work is empowering because it makes one confront one's practice, to re-know it well enough so that we are not compromising but are engaged in a series of creative negotiations.

Mutual respect becomes a fundamental ingredient in such interactions. But so is robust debate. The thing is, each interdisciplinary project will have its own peculiarities, artistic personalities and resources, and will therefore have its own set of operating principles and rules. That makes such projects rare, vulnerable and fragile.

THE GITANJALI  
PROCESS:  
A GLIMPSE

Before Phase 1 began, Olé (choreographer) met up with Sharda (theatre actor), Jerih (contemporary dancer), Raka (Indian traditional dancer) and Bani (sound artist) for a three-hour workshop to ascertain artistic synergy. There was. So we moved to the next step. Olé resides in France and all other Singaporean artists have varied work schedules, making planning rehearsals a nightmare. But we were able to use the limitation to our advantage.

Olé couldn't attend Phase 1. So we worked with Bani to pin down the first draft of the sound score. Bani then left town for a residency during Phase 2, which Olé was able to attend. So we dedicated Phase 2 to choreography, using Bani's recorded sounds.

Since it is a new work, drafting the full runs gave Haresh and the directors the chance to glimpse the "full" play, which was great for improvement purposes. The designers were also able to evolve their designs collaboratively.

Namita, the classical Hindustani vocalist, joined us in Phase 3. Bani and Namita met thrice before Phase 3 and began to find a working relationship. During rehearsals, time was allocated for their creation process, just as the choreographer needed time with the performers.

For Phase 3, the interaction of the disciplines began to intensify. Bani revised his sounds and music in response to Olé's evolving choreography, the dancers' moves and Namita's singing. Olé's choreography needed some adjustments from Namita's singing. Bani's music and Namita's singing in turn inspired the performers' delivery. Likewise, the ways in which the scenes develop from the directors, actors, multimedia and

lighting designers further affect Bani's music and Namita's singing. As they are performed live, these changes will continue till and during the run of the show.

Once, as Olé was revising the epilogue, he called out multimedia, lights, sound and set cues whilst dancing in it. Then Haresh cued Namita to sing. Namita, already at her station, paused the activity and enquired: What is happening here? How long shall I sing? She then conferred with Bani and Ebi as she explored the latter singing with her. In the meantime, Olé started to detail his dance moves at another part of the room. Many rehearsals comprised such fragmented sessions, responding to the needs of the scene. Some were for training whilst others were for exploring interaction possibilities.

For Namita's creation process, I realised that it was important for her to know the song's duration and her emotional response to the scene as both factors affect her delivery. Olé, after completing the design of his dance moves, requested for Namita to quicken the pace of the song towards the end of it, such that the epilogue ended in a sort of a frenzied dance.

Once all the processes were addressed, we got back to composing the second draft. When the cue came, Namita sang the song, Bani played his music, Ebi accompanied Namita and Olé danced to the climax of the song.

Throughout the process, we had to be patient with one another—sometimes working separately on our own, sometimes in small groups, and sometimes as a whole company when we were ready to bring all the elements together. We had to care for our respective parts and then for the larger whole.

Pursuing the new inevitably involves some form of transgression. So do we honour tradition by preserving it as it is, or is modernising it (keeping it relevant) a more meaningful tribute?

Yet, before anything, we have different personalities, working styles, working relationships and schedules to negotiate. From the outset these challenges could already be discouraging. But if practitioners want it enough, we would embark with faith and mutual respect, creating the rules as we go along.

For *Gitanjali [I feel the earth move]*, we invited Dr. Charlene Rajendran to dramaturg the process. Part of her job scope was to observe and comment on how the disciplines interact throughout the work.

A team was set up to support her task. Thanks to Yagnya, Yan Ying, Christopher and Bernice for intensely taking detailed notes of all that happened in the rehearsal room for all three phases. Charlene had access to these notes and we would have occasional dramaturgical meetings to fuel Haresh's rewrites.

Special thanks to Sze Wei, the dancer-translator for Olé, without whom it would not have been so smooth. Thanks to Felipe for training and directing the cast with me. And thanks as well to our whole production team that pulled everything together on schedule so artists could co-create in conducive environments.

Learning from and coaching one another was such a steep learning curve as we were doing that whilst composing a new work. But there is something about exploring the interaction of the different disciplines to achieve an artistic outcome that stimulates the imagination, which drives the work that makes

all the challenges worth the while.

Yet, this is not TNS's first interdisciplinary work. We have worked with Brian and Bani in several productions. Although *Gitanjali [I feel the earth move]* has its fair set of challenges, the collaborators are experts in their fields, open and with highly intuitive faculties, so that processing this ambitious work has been more inspiring than difficult.

As we explore intercultural and interdisciplinary approaches, we uncover and discover the complexity of our practice. We are aware of the obstacles and the challenges we face, but we are also aware that we have to overcome them, and we can only do so if we keep at it.

Singapore is indeed the playground for such a practice as we have been brought up in an environment of difference. We must quickly come to recognise that it is our strength and our potential, and that we have to fight to celebrate it. As Tagore has propounded:

**“I have always felt and said accordingly,  
that the great gift of freedom can never  
come to a people through charity.  
We must win it before we can own it.”**

Alvin Tan  
Artistic Director  
The Necessary Stage

Where the mind is without fear  
 and the head is held high;  
 Where knowledge is free;  
 Where the world has not been  
 broken up into fragments  
 by narrow domestic walls;  
 Where words come out  
 from the depth of truth;  
 Into that heaven of freedom,  
 my Father, let my country awake.

— Rabindranath Tagore; *Gitanjali* 35

As Shankara recites poetry from Tagore's *Gitanjali* at the behest of Savithri, his mother, we see her being garlanded, and dancers shaping the space around her. His words, like flowers, adorn the stage. Her movements, like words, define her world. And every action, image, sound, and space is filled with the poetry of theatre. This interdisciplinary performance persuades its audiences to listen to pictures and view every sound, tasting the movements and smelling the words. It creates a journey of multiple senses, to tell a story across intertwining times and spaces.

When the worlds of Tagore and Kadambari intersect with those of Savitri, Shankara, Nandini, Priya and Jeremy, life unfolds in unpredictable segments that meld and collide into one

another. Echoes of the past linger in the everyday movements of today. Traditions, even when broken and bent, persist in the bodies and breaths of the present, such that when Priya carries her repository of classical dance to a distant land, it is transformed and transposed, but not destroyed. It does not simply disappear. In the play, these intercultural negotiations are played across several boundaries that become porous and allow for one story feed into another. This casts performers in a plurality that pushes audiences to review their culture, identity, subjectivity and society, all the time revising and revisiting the lines of separation and connection.

In the making of a devised performance, the work of negotiation and listening is immense—especially when incorporating the varied demands of a classical literary text, traditional performance forms, contemporary dance, experimental soundscape, multi-media technology, and the varied imaginations of performers who stem from wide ranging histories of theatre, culture, politics and artistic training. It entails being able to trust the process and believe in the purpose, even when it remains unclear what the outcome will be. It requires generosity of spirit, critical responsiveness, tenacity and patience, artistry and curiosity, hope and heart—amid lengthy improvisations and rehearsals that pull and push the performer to generate material, learn new vocabularies, take risks and keep playing.

Through the highs and lows of different phases, many questions arise about what matters in a performance like this, and how to make it meaningful and clear without losing complexity or reducing it to a sense of whimsy. The story is rich with layers, and each character creates particular textures and tones in the composite of their tensions, struggles, joys and dreams. Occasionally something mysterious, that cannot be rationalised, creeps onto stage. And its resonance is deep.

Making the task of embodying and enacting all these spheres—without overloading the stage and depleting the audience—is a challenge that both excites, and exhausts, the resources of the team.

Yet these are the joys of a dramaturg. Engaging in pursuits of thoughtful yet difficult approaches to artistry, through reflective and reflexive processes. Interrogating ideas critically, while enjoying their sheer sensuousness, and being acutely attentive to the delights and demands of performance and play. Working through the multiple layers of artistic exploration that have enriched the rehearsal floor, such that the utterances, movements, sounds and silences are discussed and deepened, even if not always explicitly so. Joining in the dance of ideas by opening up further options for engagement and exploration, intersection and interruption.

In *Gitanjali [I feel the earth move]*, a transient yet transcendent sense of community has been ever present. I have had the pleasure of collaborating with artists who are acutely aware, imaginative, diligent, analytical and spontaneous, thus producing material that is rich, nuanced, mischievous, bold

**“It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune”**

— Rabindranath Tagore; *Gitanjali* 12

and warm. It has also been a luxury to work with a team of innovative researchers, willing and able to document, comment and reflect on rehearsals. This contributes to a larger aim to review The Necessary Stage's devising process that builds on more than two decades of experimentation and experience. The work continues, and we hope the poetry lingers.

My deepest thanks to Alvin and Haresh for the invitation, inclusion and inspiration. My heartiest congratulations to the performers who continue to move the earth—on stage and off!

Charlene Rajendran  
Dramaturg  
*Gitanjali [I feel the earth move]*

ON  
RABINDRANATH  
TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was born in Calcutta, West Bengal, into an affluent and prominent family. He was a renowned writer in modern Indian literature and a strong advocate for the independence of India. In the eyes of the world, he embodied India's spiritual heritage, and for India he became an outstanding literary institution.

Tagore published *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)*, about divine and human love, in 1910 and later translated it into English himself in 1912. The publication led to the establishment of his reputation as a writer in the West, and he subsequently won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. Tagore was awarded a knighthood two years later, but he surrendered the title in 1919 as a protest against British imperialist policies in India.

As a well-respected reformer and a critic of colonialism, Tagore had a major influence over Gandhi and the founders of modern India. Despite being a friend and a supporter of Gandhi, he openly disagreed with Gandhi's philosophy of non-cooperation. Instead, Tagore emphasized the dangers of nationalistic ideals and highlighted the importance of building a "unity consciousness"—the need for a change in world political thought based on transnational values and ideas.

The first meeting Tagore had with Albert Einstein took place in the latter's residence in 1930. During their conversation, Tagore argued that Truth is not independent of Man, to which Einstein replied, "If there is a reality independent of man, there is also a truth relative to this reality."

Tagore wrote successfully in several literary genres, including poems, plays, short stories, novels, musical dramas, dance dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries, and two autobiographies. Some of his greatest works include *Gora (Fair-Faced)* and *Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World)*,

which were published in 1910 and 1916 respectively. Tagore also left the world numerous drawings, paintings and songs that he composed.

Tagore had always regarded his sister-in-law, Kadambari Devi, as his muse, strongest critique and the most profound female influence on his youth. He would read out aloud to Kadambari, who loved to engage in literature with her auditory rather than visual senses. While Kadambari was known to be Tagore's most treasured companion in his journey as an aspiring writer, she was also a caretaker of his everyday, corporeal needs with her lovingly cooked dishes. Four months after Tagore's marriage to Mrinalini Devi in late 1883, Kadambari committed suicide. Despite her premature death, she continued to be a motivation for Tagore's writing throughout his life.

Odissi dance is one of the six recognised classical dance forms in India. Originated from the temples of Odisha, it has a strong foundation in religion and philosophy. The temple maidens or Devadasis played the most significant role in popularising this art, as they would frequently perform it before the lord as a form of prayer or ritual. The dance is chiefly performed to pay homage to the infinite love of Lord Krishna and Radha.

## ON ODISSI DANCE

Odissi dance was highly regarded by both the nobility and commoners before the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, the social position of dancers began to decline thereafter. The British colonial period also caused Odissi dance to teeter on near-extinction.

Independence caused a major shift in official attitudes toward Indian dance. Dance increasingly became recognised as a means to build and define India's national identity. Patronage increased and the few remaining Odissi dancers were offered employment. This resulted in the massive job of reconstructing



the dance, which involved combing through ancient texts and closely examining the dance poses represented in sculptures throughout the various temples.

#### ON HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Hindustani music of northern India is one of the two main sub-genres of Indian classical music, with the other sub-genre being Carnatic music. Hindustani music is a tradition that dates back to the Vedic times around 1000 BC, and further developed circa the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Persian performance practices, historical Vedic philosophy and ancient Hindu religious and folk music were major factors in influencing Hindustani music. Its contemporary roots were established primarily in India but also in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Hindustani music continued to flourish over several centuries, developing a deep-seated and diverse tradition.

Northern India shares with the south the use of *ragas* (melodic frameworks for improvisation and composition), the rhythmic principles of *tala* (cyclic metric patterns sometimes of great complexity), and the practice of non-metric, rhythmically “free” improvisation. While vocal music plays a vital role, instrumental music is at times regarded as more important in Hindustani music.

Hindustani classical music has nine *rasas*, or nine basic emotions, which help to evoke particular emotions or moods. They are love, humor, pathos, anger, terror, disgust, heroism, serenity and wonder. The *raga* is aesthetically rendered in such a way that they create a specific mood and flavour.

*Tala* also has a very special role in binding music. It is a fixed time cycle for each composition and repeats after the completion of each cycle. *Raga*, *tala* and the infinite *shruti* (or microtones) can together create a variety of feelings which can touch the innermost emotions of the audience.

PHOTO CREDIT: Tan Ngiap Heng



*Krishna Kali Ami Tarei Boli*

---

Krishnakali I have named her  
Village folks call her the dark one

On a cloudy day I did see  
The dark lass on a stretch of green  
Her doe eyes so deep and dusky  
A scarf she had not around her  
Her tresses tumbled down her back  
A dark one? As dark as she may be  
Doe eyes so dusky I have seen

Seeing the sky darken with clouds  
Moo they did two black cows  
With a hurried and hassled gait  
Came the dark lass from her cottage  
A frown clouding her brows she gazed  
Pausing to hear the clouds rumble  
A dark one? As dark as she may be  
Doe eyes so dusky I have seen

A sudden breeze came from the east  
Rippled a wave across the fields  
I stood on a dyke all alone

No one else for miles around  
Did eyes meet, I know so does she  
A dark one? As dark as she may be  
Doe eyes so dusky I have seen

In such a way do clouds so dense  
Darken the horizons in May  
In such a way do shadows dark  
Caress the forests in July  
In such a way on rain swept nights  
A sudden delight fills the heart  
A dark one? As dark as she may be  
Doe eyes so dusky I have seen

Krishnakali I have named her  
Let others call her what they may  
I saw her at Moynapara  
Her doe eyes so deep and dusky  
Her face uncovered, locks astray  
Time she had not to feel abashed  
A dark one? As dark as she may be  
Doe eyes so dusky I have seen

*Eso Shyamolo Sundoro*

---

Come, O the beautiful green  
(of the rainy season)  
Bring your nectar-like companionship,  
which removes the heat and the thirst  
The one separated from you is looking at the  
sky intently

Come, O the beautiful green  
(of the rainy season)

He has laid down and spread out  
his distressed heart  
On the way inside the dark groves,  
under the moist shade  
His eyes are playing the sad tunes of  
separation

Come, O the beautiful green  
(of the rainy season)

Nature has woven the garland of sprouts of the  
bakula plants (in preparation of your arrival)  
On the courtyard, the flute is playing the tunes  
of this great union  
Now you bring your cymbals (of rain drops)  
It will now play with the rhythm  
of the restless dance (of the rains)

The bracelets of nature will now jingle  
(with the rains)  
The anklets of nature will now jingle  
with the sound *runu, runu, runu*

Come, O the beautiful green  
(of the rainy season)  
Bring your nectar-like companionship, which  
removes the heat and the thirst  
The one separated from you is looking  
at the sky intently

*Tobu Mone Rekho*

---

Even so, remember me  
Even if far away I stray  
Remember me.

If old love gets slowly buried  
Under the strands of a new love's mesh  
Even so remember me.

Even if I am just near  
And yet you cannot see me  
I become like a shadow  
Shrouded in doubt  
Remember me.

If tears well up  
And cloud your eyes  
If suddenly one day  
The games come to a halt  
On a lovely night  
Even so remember me

If suddenly one day  
All work gets obstructed  
On an autumn morning  
Even so remember me

If, remembering me  
Tears do not well up  
In the corner of your eye  
Even so remember me

Remember me  
even so remember me

*Albela Sajan Aayo Ri*

---

The besotted beloved has come  
The besotted beloved has come  
My soul has found an immense joy

The besotted beloved has come

The besotted

The besotted beloved has come  
Draw on the doorstep, sing happy songs  
The whole world is in jubilation  
The besotted beloved has come

The besotted beloved has come

*Bhenge More Ghorer Chabi*

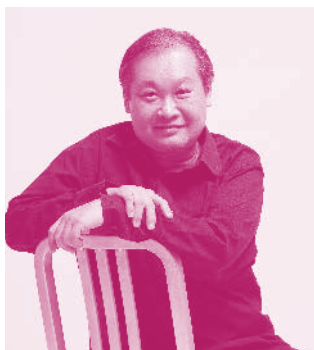
---

Who will break the locks of my house  
and take me from hence?  
In your absence my lonely days do not pass

Maybe the night is over,  
Maybe it is the light of the sun  
That is slowly spreading across the sky;  
I can see the road before me,  
will your carriage never stop at my door?

All the stars in the sky  
Shine on eternally  
Till dawn they seem to sit in waiting  
by the side of the street  
Only at your sight will the light  
now diffuse beyond the waters

In the morning the wayfarers came  
With much clamour  
And did they not go away singing?  
Maybe flowers have bloomed and notes  
have been strung on the lute of the sun



**Alvin Tan**  
Director

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 the National Arts Council, Singapore (from 1 September 2013 to 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.

PHOTO CREDIT: Tan Ngaiap Heng







**Haresh Sharma**  
Playwright

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 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* were 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 plays *Best Of* (staged four times to rave reviews in Singapore and Malaysia) and *Eclipse* (staged in both Singapore and Scotland) were published. Haresh is 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. He will also be one of the writers featured at the inaugural Singapore Literature Festival in New York in October 2014

PHOTO CREDIT: Tan Ngaiap Heng



**Felipe Cervera**  
Assistant Director

Felipe Cervera is a theatre maker and scholar. His work as an actor, director and researcher has been shown in several countries in

America, Europe, Middle East, and Asia. In Singapore, his pieces, *Imam Hussein* and *The Mountain* were featured at the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival in 2012 and 2014 respectively. He co-leads The Art of Strangers, a creative collective interested in developing editorial and performance projects through innovative collaborations. Currently, he is interested in science fiction.

**Charlene Rajendran**  
Dramaturg

Charlene Rajendran has been working in the theatre since she was a teenager, and cannot imagine life without it. She believes in making

space for ideas, playing with multiple possibilities and imagining options that emerge through collaboration and artistry. While developing arts-based dialogic pedagogies to deepen critical and aesthetic thinking, she interrogates issues of culture and identity. She has been director, performer, writer and dramaturg in a range of projects, and currently teaches at the Nanyang Technological University.

**Tan Ngiap Heng**  
Photographer

Although trained in Engineering, Tan Ngiap Heng has been a photographer for over ten years. He has shot weddings and

corporate portraits. However, it is his love of dance that started his journey into photography. He has won an International Photography Award, and has works featured in Communication Arts and Photo District News. Aside from several group and solo exhibitions in Singapore, including the prestigious Month of Photography, he exhibited work in Fotoseptiembre USA as well. He also teaches photography in Singapore.

**Bani Haykal**  
Sound Artist

Bani Haykal experiments with text + music.

His work stretches across various disciplines, often investigating cultural and socio-political climates coupled with perceptual affects. He works primarily with acoustic instruments, both traditional and/or hacked, and his studies revolve around narratives and structured improvisation. An Associate Artist with The Substation, Haykal has exhibited, performed and toured internationally, as an artist and a musician, participating in festivals including Media/Art Kitchen (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines), da:ns Festival and the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival among others.

**Olé Khamchanla**  
Choreographer and Dancer

Dancer and co-choreographer of A'CORPS Company from 1997 to 2011, Olé Khamchanla now runs his own company, KHAM Cie,

founded in 2011. Born in Laos, he discovered hip hop dance in 1990 and went on to study hip hop, capoeira, contemporary dance, and Butoh.

At A'CORPS Company, Olé established his own choreographic language. In 2006, he travelled to Laos and Thailand to learn their traditional dance forms. Since then, Olé has continued to enrich his dance vocabulary through engagements in Asia and Europe.

In 2010, Olé created the first international dance festival in Laos, Fang Mae Khong (Listen to the Mekong).



**Namita Mehta***Vocalist*

Dr. Namita Mehta was born and brought up in Delhi. She holds a PhD in Classical Hindustani Vocals from the University of Delhi. She

studied under renowned gurus such as Shri Sudhanshu Bahuguna, Pt. Jagdish Mohan and the late Shrimati Shanti Sharma. She is presently taking lessons from Dr. Sandhya Kathavate a renowned Hindustani vocalist.

Though Namita Mehta does not adhere with religious strictness to the confines of any particular gharana of music, the supporting frame of her musical structure on which she works is that of the Agra Gharana.

**Raka Maitra***Choreographer and Dancer*

Raka Maitra has garnered a name for herself as a dancer who defies categories of classical or contemporary. She is a disciple of Odissi

dancers Smt. Madhavi Mudgal and Smt. Daksha Mashruwala, who were disciples of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, the visionary proponent of Odissi. Raka was awarded the Shringarmani in India, a national level award for Odissi. She has also undergone intensive studies in Serraikeella Chhau under Guru Sashadhar Acharya. Raka has been active in Singapore's art scene since 2004 and was an Associate Artist of The Substation Singapore from 2007-2011.

Through her critically acclaimed works developed in Singapore, such as *Stray Birds*, *Boundaries... Dreams... Beyond*, *In Mira*, *Circular Ruins*, *Variations of a Theme* and *The Hungry Stones*, Raka has won laurels and appreciation from various quarters on local as well as international levels. These artistic works have helped educate the international audience about Singapore's burgeoning artistic scene.

PHOTO CREDIT: Tan Ngiap Heng



**Ebi Shankara***Performer*

Ebi Shankara graduated from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 2008 with a Diploma and a First Class Honours Degree in Acting in 2012.

He began his involvement in theatre with W!ld Rice in *Cinderellah!*, then joined Buds Theatre and The Young Company of Singapore Repertory Theatre. Shankara's commercial fame came in 2007 when he won Mediacorp's *Vasantham Star*. His other works include W!ld Rice's *Oi! Sleeping Beauty*, Pangdemonium's *The Full Monty*, Alia Bano's *Shades*, Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond The Horizon*, *Sophocles Antigone*, *Othello*, Michael Chiang's *Army Daze: The Musical* and *High Class*.

Shankara is also the Artistic Director of Ravindran Drama Group.

**Jereh Leong***Performer and Dancer*

Jereh Leong graduated from SEAD (Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance). He participated in the school's dance company

Bodhi Project, touring to London, Vienna and Slovenia. Back in Singapore, he worked on a solo for the Fireball Festival at The Substation under local dance company ECNAD. Together with his collective, he jointly produced *Loop Theory*, gaining recognition under The Substation's SeptFest. In 2011 he collaborated with French choreographer Olé Khamchanla to premiere *Focus* at Les Hivernales, Avignon, winning the special prize in the choreographic competition Reconnaissance in Grenoble, France. He has since toured the piece in France as well as Singapore's Esplanade's Raw series and the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2014.

PHOTO CREDIT: Tan Ngaiap Heng



**Padma Sagaram**  
Performer

Padma is from The Necessary Stage's senior wing, Theatre for Seniors, and has been actively involved since 2008 in their stage productions after completing a three-year workshop in theatre practice.

She has performed in campaigns promoting active aging for seniors commissioned by the Health Promotion and National Library Boards. She was a participant in *Spell #7's Open House O Marina* and one of LASALLE's production by BA (Hons) graduating students. She has acted in a number of short films for Ngee Ann Polytechnic and Chapman University projects and for local television productions.

Padma was also part of The Necessary Stage's main season production *October* which was nominated for Best Ensemble for the Life! Theatre Awards in 2012.

**Sharda Harrison**  
Performer

Sharda Harrison is an actress 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 award for Best Actress at the annual Short + Sweet short 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* at the Periphery Festival in Odin Teatret, Denmark.

Her recent works are *Dream Country* for the 2012 Singapore Arts Festival, *Crossings*, *Mobile 2: Flat Cities* and *Poor Thing* with The Necessary Stage, *Decimal Points 5.1* by Cake Theatre, *The Crucible* by Toy Factory and most recently, *The House of Bernarda Alba* by W!ld Rice. Sharda has been nominated for Best Supporting Actress at the 2013 and 2014 Life! Theatre Awards.

PHOTO CREDIT: Tan Ngiap Heng



**Brian Gothong Tan**  
Multimedia Designer

A Shell-NAC scholar, Brian graduated from California Institute of the Arts and is best known for his works in film, theatre and installation art. As a director, he has been involved in films such as *Lucky 7*, *Pleasure Factory* and *Invisible Children* which have toured internationally and won numerous awards. He has been involved in many significant projects such as the Shanghai World Expo, National Day Parade 2009 and 2011, as well as the inaugural Youth Olympic Games, for which he was the Multimedia Director. He was recently conferred the Young Artist Award in 2012.

**Adrian Tan**  
Lighting Designer

Lighting Designer Adrian Tan's works spread across all genres of the performing arts from contemporary dance to ballet and from musical theatre to opera.

Having designed for most major theatre and dance companies in Singapore, his recent designs include Dream Academy's *Company The Musical* (Nominee, Production of the Year, Life! Theatre Awards 2013), *Broadway Beng*, *Kumar*, *Crazy Christmas*, *Happy Ever Laughter* (2012 & 2014) and *The Hossan Leong Show*. For W!ld Rice, Adrian has designed for *Cooling Off Day* (Nominee, Production of the Year, Life! Theatre Awards 2012) and *Cook A Pot Of Curry*. He has also designed Singapore Lyric Opera's *Così fan Tutte* and the upcoming production of *The Merry Widow*.

Adrian was also behind *A Cage Goes In Search of a Bird* for A GROUP OF PEOPLE, which was nominated for Best Lighting Design at the 2011 Life! Theatre Awards and was awarded the Production of the Year.

*Gitanjali [I feel the earth move]* marks Adrian's first collaboration with The Necessary Stage.

**Wong Chee Wai**  
Set Designer

Chee Wai is a full-time freelance set designer. He has designed and worked with various performing arts companies in Singapore. Some of his recent works are Blank Space Theatre's *RED*, W!ld Rice's *The House of Bernada Alba* and *Cook a Pot of Curry*, ART (A Huayi 2014 festival commission), Checkpoint Theatre's *Atomic Jaya*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Macau Arts Festival 2013) and Sing Theatre's *8 Women*.

His set design for *12 Angry Men* (A Huayi 2013 festival commission) was nominated and won Best Set Design at The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards 2014.

Chee Wai's design for *A Tinted Edge* and *Titoudao* (2000) was also nominated for Best Production Design in DBS Life! Theatre Awards 2000, for which *Titoudao* won Best Production Design.



## About The Necessary Stage

Arts Council's Major Grant FY2014-FY2016, and is also the organiser of the annual M1 Singapore Fringe Festival. 2014 sees TNS celebrating its 27th 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.

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 the staging of 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 intercultural and interdisciplinary productions.

TNS 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 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, Theatre for Seniors, and most recently, The Orange Playground (TOP). TOP is TNS' newest initiative in creative research and development, providing artists with an exploratory environment where risks can be freely taken within and with the creative process.

For more information, visit [www.necessary.org](http://www.necessary.org)

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



# the orange playground

Created by Artistic Director Alvin Tan, The Orange Playground (TOP) is The Necessary Stage's newest initiative in creative research and development. We seek to collaborate with artists in an exploratory environment where risks can be freely taken within and with the creative process. TOP will provide opportunities for free, ad-hoc collaborative "jamming" and play with new emerging and existing talents.

Join our mailing list for the latest updates.

Get in touch with:  
Edlyn Ng  
[edlyn@necessary.org](mailto:edlyn@necessary.org)  
(65) 6440 8115

# Acknowledgements

The Necessary Stage would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to:

## SPH Foundation

Elisabeth de Rothschild

Benson Puah

Rita Elaine Silver

Soundwave Industries

Udaya Soundari

The Tagore Society  
(Singapore)

## AVC Pte Ltd

All our beneficiaries of the  
Triangle Project

Members of the print,  
broadcast and online press for  
their continued support

All our volunteers and interns  
who are always willing to go  
beyond their call of duty

and all who have lent their kind support in one form or another  
but whose names we were not able to include at the time of printing.

*Gitanjali [I feel the earth move]* depicts fictitious events,  
and any resemblance between the characters therein to actual persons,  
either living or dead, is purely coincidental.

## Organised by



## Supported by

a.r.t.s.fund



## Community Partners

SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS  
FOUNDATION



## Official TV Network



## Official Magazine

Connecting & Inspiring Indians Worldwide  
**INDIA SE**  
THE MAGAZINE FOR GLOBAL INDIANS

## Please Support Us

---

All donations to The Necessary Stage Ltd will qualify for a 2.5 times tax deduction, and from 1 Nov 2013 will also be eligible for the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth's new Cultural Matching Fund that provides a dollar-for-dollar match for cash donations to arts and heritage charities.

Find out more at [www.necessary.org](http://www.necessary.org) or email [admin@necessary.org](mailto:admin@necessary.org). Help us champion our cause to create challenging, indigenous and innovative theatre that touches the heart and mind!