

## **PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Youth Theatre with a Social Conscience – Disability in Singapore**

**M1 Peer Pleasure Youth Theatre Festival** by ArtsWok Collaborative, in collaboration with Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay will be having its last iteration this year after a wonderful run of five years presenting original plays, with M1 ceasing its support as titular donor for most of its sponsored festivals. This does not mean a definitive end for Peer Pleasure programmes: as the presenter, it is a crucial moment for us to hit pause and re-evaluate how we may do youth development work in a different format.

While the last year coincides with the unprecedented circumstances of Covid-19, the team has decided to keep the festival running in the digital realm, making *M1 Peer Pleasure* one of the few productions still going on. The festival will be going out in a meaningful and special way:

Already in the early stages, the situation influenced the title of the festival commission, *What If*, reflective of the uncertainty of the everyday. We already have a different perspective from what we had at the beginning of the year. With this paradigm shift, the festival invites us further into different modes of thinking, and to consider the perspectives of people in our society who have had to live with a different perspective even before this. This year, the festival is focusing on the issue of Disability.

*How may we think out of the box?* Together with you, through the festival pieces, we will ask:

*How do differently-abled people live in Singapore?*

*Who and where are they? Where are their voices and stories in our everyday?*

*In a country that prizes efficiency, productivity and material success, can people with disabilities have a place in our economy, schools and community?*

Artistic Director Jean Ng has said: *"Since embarking on the research process for our festival, more issues and complexities have been excavated. We met different disabled communities with diverse sensitivities, concerns and perspectives."* Among these people, the festival team has met many talented artists who have disabilities. **This year, we would like to encourage more opportunities in mainstream platforms, such as theatre, to be given to disabled artists, for they have a heartfelt desire to create, collaborate and perform.**

Director of *What If* Okorn-Kuo Jing Hong shares: *"For me, I'm not working with a group of people with disabilities. For me, I'm working with a group of people who have a non-mainstream perspective. So in that sense, I want to move beyond the comfort zone and see if there's any way to move perspectives and expression towards something different from what we're used to."*

*What If* will explore what it means to be human, through four different performances. Due to the current circumstances, the festival has been provided with conditions to think out of the blackbox of traditional theatre. The team is diverse and alongside the cast, who each have a disability, five theatre designers have been included in the devising process, blurring the lines between actor, designer, director. Set and visual designer Timothy Trung Hua, whose involvement is part of his final year project for his Diploma in Visual Communication at Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Design, comments on this unique arrangement: *"There is no script, no plan, and no safety net for me to develop on something from the very start. This has pushed me to start thinking outside the box where it doesn't just have to be limited to design and visuals only."* Timothy is deaf, and has said this does not hinder his dream to create designs to support and communicate with people.

And to bring these performances online and in real time, we have New Media Director Lim Shengen, who will be *"offering technical expertise to ensure that the aesthetic affect of traditional theatre is conveyed well on a digital platform, and through that, engender new experiences and new aesthetics for audiences through What If."* The four different performances will feature a mixture of pre-recorded and live performance, with some elements of audience participation for all of the performances.

Original plays ***The Other People*** and ***If These Wheels Could Speak***, devised and read by students from Dunman High School and Tanjong Katong Girls' School respectively will also be screened online. After a 1.5 year-long journey to learn more about disability in Singapore through research and meeting people who live with disabilities, these students chose to focus on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

and cerebral palsy respectively. A connection made with Stephanie Esther Fam, one of the actors of *What If*, inspired the students of Tanjong Katong Girls' School to make the heroine of their play a girl with cerebral palsy. Due to the schools' Drama Clubs not being able to meet for months, students have not been able to rehearse their plays and will be presenting them as staged readings instead.

In addition to these, multi-sensory interactive theatre piece ***Riley's Rain*** created and performed by Republic Polytechnic, and devised and directed by Gloria Tan and Samantha Bounaparte, expands the horizons of sensory theatre by facilitating through video performance an interactive, sensory experience for children and their caregivers. Specially designed for children and young persons with autism spectrum disorder and sensory sensitivities, a craft kit to facilitate the tactility of the performance will be sent out to a limited number of audience members, while remaining audiences can download the kit online for self-assembling, allowing them to have a sensory-friendly experience.

Producer of *M1 Peer Pleasure*, and Executive Director of ArtsWok Collaborative, Ngiam Su-Lin shares: *"It has been a real privilege presenting this annual youth theatre festival and to interact with many young people who have so much desire to create, express, connect and make a difference through their theatre-making. They are a force, and voice that needs to continue being engaged, and encouraged, especially in these extremely dynamic and challenging times. It is their creativity, imagination and courage that will lead society forward."*

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

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**M1 Peer Pleasure Youth Theatre Festival**

Presented by ArtsWok Collaborative

In Collaboration with Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay

Artistic Director, Jean Ng

Title Donor: M1 Limited

Website: <https://peerpleasure.org>

Facebook: [www.fb.com/ppfestival](http://www.fb.com/ppfestival)

*M1 Peer Pleasure* is an annual youth theatre festival with a social conscience. It is a unique platform that mentors youths aged 13-25 in the craft of theatre-making, providing opportunities for them to collaborate with peers to stage productions with important social issues, and performed for all ages.

This year, we are exploring the experience of Disability in Singapore:

How do differently-abled people live in Singapore?

Who and where are they? Where are their voices and stories in our everyday?

In a country that prizes efficiency, productivity and material success, can people with disabilities have a place in our economy, schools and community?

Can we create space for each other?

Can we ask uncomfortable questions?

Can we be politically incorrect?

Can we overcome our fears and anxieties?

Can we support each other?

Can we think out of the box?

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## Annexe 1a **FESTIVAL PLAYS**

Original plays devised and staged read by youths that went through a 1.5 years research and creation process; a sensory story-telling experience designed for audiences with autism spectrum disorder and sensory sensitivities; as well as a festival commission co-created by a multidisciplinary group of performers, designers and directors.

### **A staged reading of** **If These Wheels Could Speak...**

**Devised and performed by:**  
**Tanjong Katong Girls' School**  
**Directed by: Nur Sahirrah Safit**

**15-year-old Natasha is an aspiring poet; life is a horizon where her words can take flight.**

But to the rest of the world, Natasha is "wheelchair girl", "special treatment", or "bad karma". Many people assume many things about her, about cerebral palsy.

If she could speak her mind in a fantasy world, what would she say?

When will society stop talking at her wheelchair? When will society start talking to her?

**Premieres on Wed 5 August, 8pm**

**Followed by a 30 mins post-show dialogue at 8.45pm**

**Duration: 75 mins**

**Venue: Facebook Live: [facebook.com/ppfestival](https://www.facebook.com/ppfestival)**

**Free-of-charge**

**For schools only**

**Thursday 6 August, 3pm**

**A private screening followed by a post-show dialogue**

**Duration: 75 mins**

**Venue: Zoom**

**Accessibility:**

**Subtitling and live notetaking will be provided for audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing**

## **A staged reading of *The Other People***

**Devised and performed by:  
Dunman High School  
Directed by: Chio Su Ping**

What is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), who has it?

How does a family raise a teenager with ADHD? How does this condition affect the lives of everybody living under one roof?

By drawing on first-hand accounts of parents and siblings of people with ADHD, this play revolves around the complex and often difficult relationships between family members, where the line between taking care of yourself and loving your family - even when they are difficult to love - is often blurred or breached.

**Premieres on Wed 12 August, 8pm**

**Followed by a 30 mins post-show dialogue at 8.45pm**

**Duration: 75 mins**

**Venue: Facebook Live: [facebook.com/ppfestival](https://www.facebook.com/ppfestival)**

**Free-of-charge**

For schools only

Thursday 13 August, 3pm  
A private screening followed by a post-show dialogue

Duration: 75 mins

Venue: Zoom

Accessibility:

Subtitling and live notetaking will be provided for audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing

## **Riley's Rain**

**Devised and created by:**

**Gloria Tan and Samantha Bounaparte**

**Created and performed by:**

**Republic Polytechnic, Diploma in Arts  
and Theatre Management & Operation  
Theatre Interest Group**

**Video editing:**

**Republic Polytechnic, Diploma in Media  
Production and Design**

Riley the Raindrop is lost and needs help! Who can she go to for help and what will she find out along the way? Join Riley and her friends on a sensory windy adventure as she searches for the Great Downpour!

An activity kit incorporating sensory and interactive elements has been specially designed to include audiences on the autism spectrum, as well as those with sensory sensitivities, to enrich the story experience from home.

Instructions on how to assemble your very own activity kit, using commonly found items at home will be shared later at [www.peerpleasure.org](http://www.peerpleasure.org).

**Premieres on Fri 7 August, 4.30 pm**

**Duration: 35 mins**

**15 mins for pre-show craft activity,  
20 mins to watch the performance on  
video**

**Venue: YouTube: [tinyurl.com/  
AWCyoutube](https://tinyurl.com/AWCyoutube)**

**AWCyoutube**

**Free-of-charge**

**Accessibility:**

Suitable for audiences (typically developing children between 3-5 years) on the autism spectrum and those with sensory sensitivities.

## **What If**

**Director:** Okorn-Kuo Jing Hong

**Assistant Director:** Tan Beng Tian

**New Media Director:** Lim Shengen

**Visual Design Mentor:** Ong Guat Teng

**Performers:** Stephanie Esther Fam, Muhammad Hidayat Rahmatullah Mohamad Yaakob, Shawn Tan, Tung Ka Wai, Wan Wai Yee

**Designers:** Timothy Hua, Faith Liu Yong Huay, Moes Mulyadi, Ng Sze Min, Oliver Piong Wei Bin

A new media experience co-created by a multidisciplinary group of performers, designers and directors. Amid a pandemic, where time and space are warped, and how we exist and connect feels alienating, *What If* explores being human.

*Presenting to you 4 original works that will each be accompanied by a short animation. Audience participation is welcomed in all shows.*

## **Frozen. Broken. Poof!**

**Director:** Okorn-Kuo Jing Hong

**Assistant Director:** Tan Beng Tian

**Writer:** Tung Ka Wai

**Performers:** Stephanie Esther Fam, Muhammad Hidayat Rahmatullah Mohamad Yaakob, Shawn Tan, Tung Ka Wai, Wan Wai Yee

**Visual designer:** Moes Mulyadi

How do we preserve our social rituals during the pandemic, despite the unreliability of technology heightened by the strangeness of being present while physically absent? Join five friends as they endeavour to celebrate a friend's birthday in the virtual realm.

*Accessible to audiences who are blind or vision-impaired and the deaf or hard of hearing.*

Tuesday 4

August, 8pm

Duration: 90 mins including a post-show dialogue

Venue: Zoom



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**Visual director: Ong Guat Teng**

**Writers: Tung Ka Wai, Timothy Hua**

**Animators: Putri Qurratu'aini Binte Yusri, Timothy Hua**

A story of a circle finding its place in a world of sound, as told through animation. Can this story be told in silence?

*A visual experience accessible to audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing. Not accessible for the blind or vision-impaired.*

Saturday 8 August,  
8pm

Duration: 65 mins  
including a post-  
show dialogue

Venue: Zoom

### **Fetching Sanctuary**

**Sound Artist: Ng Sze Min**

**Collaborator: Muhammad Hidayat Rahmatullah Mohamad Yaakob**

In the time of Covid-19, two Singaporeans connect after reading an account by a nurse in New York. Witness and participate in an exchange between a blind person and a sound artist, where sound becomes the connector through which empathy is found.

*An audio experience accessible to audiences who are blind or vision-impaired. Not accessible for the deaf or hard of hearing.*

Tuesday 11 August,  
8pm

Duration: 75 mins  
including a post-  
show dialogue

Venue: Zoom

**Stained****Director: Okorn-Kuo Jing Hong****Writer: Stephanie Esther Fam****Visual director: Lim Shengen****Videographers: Oliver Piong Wei Bin, Moes Mulyadi****Sound designer: Ng Sze Min**

The complex relationship struggles between a parent and child, explored through a poetic journey of text, sound and imagery, and presented in two ways: a visual experience and an audio experience.

*Accessible to those who are blind or vision-impaired and the deaf or hard of hearing. Audiences without accessibility needs will be able to choose between a mainly visual or purely audio experience, subject to availability.*

Saturday 15  
August, 8pm

Duration: 85 mins  
including a post-  
show dialogue

Venue: Zoom

**Shorts: What If Aliens****Director: Faith Liu Yong Huay****Illustrator: Shawn Tan****Voice coach: Tan Beng Tian**

*What If Aliens* is a series of stop-motion animation where 5 aliens, Stitch, Jelly, Thumb, Faraway and Mee have been sent on a mission in outer space to maintain the balance. This whimsical adventure will unfold over the 4 original shows.

*Pre-show kits will be provided for audiences who are blind or vision-impaired. Closed captioning will be provided for audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing.*

## Tickets for *What If* available on SISTIC

### Ticketing Information:

\$5 per ticket for each show (excluding \$0.50 SISTIC booking fee)

Buy now at: <https://www.sistic.com.sg/events/zlm1pp2020>

### 10% discount:

Applicable to PAssion card members and Esplanade&Me Black and White cardholders

### Accessibility:

Audiences who are blind or vision-impaired may make their ticket bookings through Ting Yu at [connect@artswok.org](mailto:connect@artswok.org) or message her at 9785 7685

**All other programmes in the festival are free-of-charge.**

**Please donate generously to help us recover the loss of income from ticket sales, as well as to cover other festival costs, here: [tinyurl.com/supportPPfestival](https://tinyurl.com/supportPPfestival)**

## Annexe 1b ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

### Dialogue with the creators of *Riley's Rain*

Engage with the creators, Gloria Tan and Samantha Bounaparte, as they share approaches to designing a sensory world by breaking down the multi-sensory aspects of story-telling and the considerations that go into crafting a narrative.

Saturday 15 August, 2.30pm

Duration: 60 mins

Venue: Zoom

Register now: [tinyurl.com/  
dialoguewithgloandsam](https://tinyurl.com/dialoguewithgloandsam)

Free-of-charge

### Community Dialogue on *What If*

Engage with the performers, designers and directors, as they discuss the artistic processes, insights and challenges faced in creating *What If*.

Sunday 16 August, 4pm

Duration: 90 mins

Venue: Zoom

Register now: [tinyurl.com/whatifdialogue](https://tinyurl.com/whatifdialogue)

Free-of-charge

#### Accessibility:

Subtitling and live notetaking will be provided for audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing

## **Annexe 2 PROFILES**

### **About ArtsWok Collaborative Presenters**

The work of ArtsWok Collaborative focuses on arts connecting communities by harnessing the power of the arts to create dialogue, invite social participation and build bridges across difference.

ArtsWok Collaborative works with multidisciplinary teams to design and implement innovative community-based arts programmes such as *Both Sides, Now*, an immersive arts experience that invites conversations about end-of-life issues, as well as *IPS Prism*, a civic-engagement piece which looked at governance in Singapore. In 2015, it launched the inaugural annual youth theatre festival *Peer Pleasure*, a platform for creative and open exchanges with young people through drama and dialogue. It developed and continues to facilitate *The Greenhouse Sessions*, a field-building initiative that catalyses learning through a community of practice as well as *The Greenhouse Lab*, an action-learning programme revolving around arts-based community development. It also conducts and shares research that builds legitimacy for the arts-based community development field. Our case studies and articles can be found on our website.

ArtsWok Collaborative Limited is a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant 2018 to 2020.

<http://www.artswok.org> | <http://www.fb.com/ArtsWok>

### **About Jean Ng Artistic Director**

Jean graduated from the Jacques Lecoq International School of Theatre in Paris, France. As a professional theatre actress, director and educator, she has collaborated with many of Singapore's leading theatre companies including The Necessary Stage, Theatreworks, The Theatre Practice, The Finger Players and Cake Theatrical Productions.

Jean was one of the pioneer teachers at the Theatre Training and Research Programme (now Intercultural Theatre Institute), a professional actor-training course founded by the late Kuo Pao Kun. She is passionately involved in youth and community theatre and has worked with the Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) for the past 16 years. Jean has also previously served on the Executive Committee of the Singapore Drama Educators Association.

## **About Creative Team of What If**

### **Okorn-Kuo Jing Hong**

#### **Director**

Jing Hong started training in Classical Ballet with Goh Lay Kuan. Between 2006 and 2008, she trained with Phillip Zarrilli at Exeter University (UK) with support from the Singapore National Arts Council. As a Director and Choreographer, her works are mostly physical or movement-based. As a performer, she performs in styles ranging from dance to drama. As a teacher, she teaches her style of psycho-physical approach to performance.

She has directed productions in Singapore, Austria and Taiwan, with notable productions such as *The Ordinary and The Unspectacular* (2018) and *Play Play* (2016), by The Theatre Practice in Singapore. *The Day Before I Am Born* was presented by Forum Stadtpark in Graz, Austria in 2018. Presently, Jing Hong is based in Austria and is interested in the application of actor-training and theatre-making to senior communities.

### **Tan Beng Tian**

#### **Assistant Director**

Tan Beng Tian is an independent Theatre Practitioner. In 1994, she left for Fujian, China, to undertake an intensive course on traditional hand puppetry from renowned late puppet master Li Bofen. She is a recipient of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Singapore Foundation Culture Award 2005 for her excellent work in promoting puppetry in Singapore. In 2018, she won the Straits Times Life Theatre Awards for Best Supporting Actress. As a designer, builder, performer, director and coach, she collaborates actively with companies both locally and overseas.

**Lim Shengen**  
**New Media Director**

Lim Shengen is a multidisciplinary artist, entrepreneur and educator currently pushing for New Media Art in Singapore. His work seeks new presentations of traditional methods, touching on issues in contemporary media art and culture, and has been exhibited locally and internationally in museums, festivals and art centres. Trained in Fine Arts in LASALLE College of the Arts, he also spent some time in the Graduate School of Culture Technology in Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) as a scientist and researcher with Interactive Media Lab and Experience Lab. He is a member of The Artist Village (Singapore), Daejeon Arts Collective (Daejeon, South Korea), Axis of culture (Transpacific arts collective).

**Stephanie Esther Fam**  
**Performer**

Stephanie defines Art as "an ongoing expanse of multifaceted expression". With this deep-rooted belief, she uses her innate flair with words to create original works of poetry that reflect her lived experiences, thoughts and viewpoints that would otherwise lie dormant. Her decade-long experience on the public speaking platform of Toastmasters International allows her to encourage, motivate and inspire live audiences through meticulously crafted speeches. She recently ventured into theatre-making, and was cast in *And Suddenly I Disappear: The Singapore 'd' Monologues* in 2018, the first disability-led theatre project created between the UK and Singapore theatre. She strives to be a voice advocating for disability-led practices within the artistic community.

**Muhammad Hidayat Rahmatullah Mohamad Yaakob**  
**Performer**

Hidayat is a guide at *Dialogue In the Dark* (DiD). His passion for performing arts started when his manager invited him to be a part of a Cajon ensemble for their annual *Concert In the Dark*, back in 2014. It made him happy, that he could in a small way, make the audiences enjoy themselves. He was also the voice actor of a play that was created by DiD in 2017, and was given the opportunity to perform at Esplanade last year as part of the Red Dot programme during the National Day week. Hidayat is also para-athlete on the national team and plays a competitive ball sport for the blind called goalball.

**Shawn Tan**  
**Performer**

Shawn is a self-taught dancer who enjoys spending his free time learning the latest K-pop moves. His most recent dance credits include *What Simon Didn't Say* in 2019 and *A Green Dot* in 2018 by contemporary dance group, A Little Raw Company. Shawn was also featured in works by internationally-acclaimed artists such as the French choreographer, Mr Jerome Bel. Also a pioneer member of Very Special Theatrics, led by Mr R Chandran, Shawn has taken on lead acting roles in their adaptation of *Peter and the Wolf* as well as the original work, *My Home Is Not A Shell*, conceptualised in collaboration with No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability from Australia and presented at the True Colours Festival 2018.

**Tung Ka Wai**  
**Performer**

Ka Wai holds a Master of Fine Arts (Playwriting) from Taipei National University of the Arts and a Bachelor of Arts with Honours (Chinese Studies) from National University of Singapore. His recent theatre projects include *Because it's Fun* (The Fool Theatre), *A Grinder's Diary* (a work-in-progress by Access Path Productions and Pitapat Theatre), *The 'd' Monologues: A Lecture-Performance by Kaite O'Reilly* (Access Path Productions) and *Eve of the Wedding Day* (a skit by Singapore Chinese Orchestra and Capital 958). He also teaches Chinese at local language centres and is the drama instructor for Nanyang Junior College, Chinese Cultural Society.

**Wan Wai Yee**  
**Performer**

Wai Yee is a talented and experienced singer who has been performing since 1995. Her repertoire consist mainly of popular music and Broadway musical songs and has sung for private events like weddings, parties and corporate functions. She has also done musicals and voiceovers, performed at The Purple Symphony concert, and recently started storytelling too. In 2019, she underwent her first vocal examination in musical theatre grade 5 given by the London College Of Music for which she earned a distinction. She is currently in her third year of a scholarship funded by the Purple Symphony Award Training Program, learning vocal techniques.