NUSCENTRE FOR THE ARTS \_ presents

**NUS ARTS FESTIVAL 2022** 

### SHADES OF LIGHT(NESS)

# Blackout NUS Stage 18 - 19 March, UCC Theatre





### DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



A very warm welcome to **NUS Arts Festival 2022: Shades of Light(ness)** – which NUS Centre For the Arts is once again proud to present.

We live in a world grappling with uncertainty. Now, more than ever, society is challenged to look beyond black-and-white paradigms, and contend with the shades of grey in-between. This ever-expanding liminal space demands that we use a wider variety of cognitive "lenses" to bring focus and make sense of a multi-hued, multi-faceted world. In that regard, this year's festival theme is most apt, as is our multi-disciplinary creative approach which brings together student artists, professional arts practitioners, as well as leading researchers and thought leaders in NUS to explore how the arts can help us better appreciate and negotiate ambiguity.

To that end, we open the festival with NUS Dance Synergy's *Incandescent - A City That Never Sleeps*, a work that investigates the disappearance of stars in Singapore's night sky. In a city with one of the highest light pollution levels in the world, this work probes the effects of our contemporary urban lifestyle, asking if it embraces or disrupts the symbiotic relationship between the environment and our human bodies.

We also see this in works like *Bodhi - The Awakening* by NUS Indian Instrumental Ensemble. Directed by Cultural Medallion recipient T Sasitharan, the work fuses Indian classical music with theatrical elements, reflecting on the duality of light and darkness, and the transitions between light and darkness in the journey towards enlightenment.

Another work utilising the metaphor of light to explore ambiguity and uncertainty is *Blackout* by NUS Stage. Directed by award-winning theatre-maker Chong Tze Chien, this dark comedy looks at a man's odyssey through the fractured recesses of a dark, forgotten past, as he struggles to make sense of the conflicting stories about who he is.



In this edition of the Festival, we have been most fortunate to partner the College of Design and Engineering (CDE) for a series of thought-provoking and visually arresting installation works. *Somewhere in This Fog of Memory* explores the mind of a person living with dementia, putting the viewer in the place of someone constantly grappling with a slippery reality; *In Living Company* challenges the norms of our disposable economy, using light to show how discarded objects can give rise to new life. *A Close Eyecounter* - a collaboration with visual artist Ryf Zaini - uses simulated LiDAR technology in an interactive installation that questions how our physical vision determines what we can see, and how we take our natural quality of eyesight for granted.

Of course, NUS Arts Festival would not be possible without the hard work, courage and creativity of our students and artistic directors. Their passion, resilience, and creativity have really shone through during these dark and uncertain times.

We are also deeply grateful for the continued support from NUS creative partners, such as our long-standing partnership with the Department of Communications and New Media, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. We are also particularly privileged to extensively partner the College of Design and Engineering for the first time, and we believe that this fusion of the arts and engineering will be particularly illuminating.

Our thanks also for the continued support of our donors: Bowen Enterprises, Kewalram Chanrai Group, and RB Capital. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth for its Cultural Matching Fund. All these generous support has been invaluable in keeping ablaze our students' passion for the arts.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy **NUS Arts Festival 2022: Shades of Light(ness)** - may the many performances, installations, and films bring light into your life.

Sharon Tan
Director
NUS Centre For the Arts



Director, Blackout



In this time of a global health crisis, it is easy to be caught up in the fear of things beyond our control: of losing those we love, of sickness, of death, and of being abandoned and isolated.

Loneliness cuts deep. It is only human to reach out, to love and be loved. Are we who we are only in relation to others?

In *Blackout*, a tortured soul named Justin can no longer remember who he is; he is suffering from a coma undergoing purgatory inside his mind, burdened by an inexplicable feeling of loss and heartbreak. Left with only emotional imprints from fractured memories, he constructs fictional worlds and multiple realities to help him make sense of all the confusion and chaos within him. Every person he encounters in these delusions leads him closer to the truth of who he is.

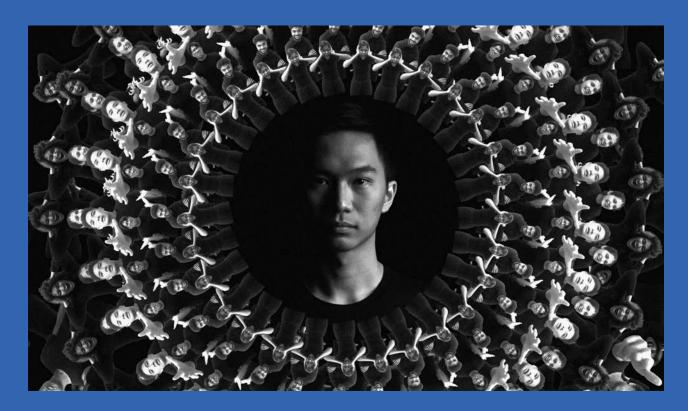
Thank you NUS Arts Festival for inviting NUS Stage to be part of the festival. Watching the members grow as they deepen their craft and tap into reserves of their emotional memories to create this play collectively has been a highly satisfying experience.

I hope the audience will enjoy the show, navigating the multiple realities from the surreal to the whimsical but always circling back to where the truth lies, somewhere in-between all the delusions and dreams in the centre, where Justin had first met and lost the love of his life.

Love comes with so many different terms and conditions but the love we have is not written in the past. It is now, in the present because the story of love that defines us is still intact and alive even when we are not still living.

Chong Tze Chien Director

### **SYNOPSIS**



Justin wakes up after blacking out, with no recollection of who he is. He encounters a gaggle of characters who attempt to help him uncover his real identity. Some say he is a triad boss with a loyal sidekick. Others say he is an international pop star. A few say "he" is a "she". A fish says... Justin talks to fish, apparently. Amidst these mind-bending journeys, a girl called Heather keeps showing up. She wants to break up with him in so many ways - over and over again. Could Justin still be in a coma, and having multiple nightmares? Wait - just who the hell is Justin?

Directed by Chong Tze Chien, *Blackout* is a trippy black comedy about a tortured soul, plagued by identity crises and heartbreak. An exploration of the self, love and loss, the play looks at the splintered world inside and outside of Justin's mind. As we dive deeper into Justin's past, the darkness that envelopes him reveals itself. Follow along as he attempts to walk out of a funk and find light at the end of the tunnel.

Advisory 16: Mature themes and strong language

### **Chong Tze Chien** *Principal Tutor, NUS Stage*



Tze Chien is a core member of The Finger Players and an award-winning playwright and director. For his many contributions to Singaporean Theatre, he was awarded the Young Artist Award by Singapore's National Arts Council in 2006.

At the national level, Tze Chien was the Creative Director of Singapore Pools' float and performance in Chingay Parade 2007 and 2008, co-conceptualist and writer for NDP 2016, Creative Director of *Island Adventures* for the National Museum of Singapore's Children's Season 2012, Artistic Director of The Arts House's 10th Anniversary in 2014, and the co-curator of *The Studios: Fifty*, a festival of 50 iconic Singapore Plays presented by the Esplanade in 2015.

As an arts educator, Tze Chien has been conducting workshops and masterclasses for tertiary institutions and schools in Singapore since 2001. He has taught at National University of Singapore, LASALLE College of the Arts, National Institute of Education and Nanyang Technological University. He was also a Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) Arts Presentation (Drama) Adjudicator for five years, and the Creative Director of SYF Concert 2019. He is currently a member of the Curriculum Development Advisory Committee (Theatre Programme) at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.



Liu Yong Huay Faith
Lighting Designer

Liu Yong Huay Faith trained at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in Lighting Design (2016), under the National Arts Council Arts Scholarship (Postgraduate). In September 2017, she co-founded 微 Wei Collective with theatre practitioner Neo Hai Bin. They were recently commissioned at the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2022 presenting *Being:* 息在, where she created set and lighting design.

She is interested in how breath is given to spaces, objects and bodies with light. She is honoured to have worked on theatre and dance productions in Singapore.

Portfolio: http://liuyonghuay.tumblr.com



Jing Ng Sound Designer

Awarded the National Arts Council Scholarship, Jing graduated with first class honours from Rose Bruford College (United Kingdom) specializing in Performance Sound. With over 10 years of practice, he aspires to provide a wholesome sonic experience for the audience— what, why and how you listen through a live performance.

www.jingngsound.com// www.soundcloud.com/jingsound





Ng Xin Ci Angel Nurse, Justine

Angel is a Singaporean composer who is currently studying in Yong Siew Toh Conservatory. As a composer, Xin Ci often incorporates concepts and techniques of other artforms into her works as she is highly interested in integrated arts. She believes it will help shape her identity and expression as an artist.



Ashie Singh
Justine

Ashie is a second-year Theatre major whose passion lies deep in the arts with her love for performance and expression. An aspiring actor and director, her dream is to, one day, direct and act in a magnum opus theatrical production and its film adaptation. This is one of Ashie's first NUS Stage performance for which she is extremely honoured and excited to share with the audience.



Lim Yi En Brenna Receptionist, Mother

Brenna is a first-year Life Sciences major who is growing her interest in theatre through NUS Stage. *Blackout* has taught her more about what goes on behind-the-scenes of the production process. She hopes that the audience will have a wonderful experience watching the show.





Chan Jun Jie Cyrus

Cyrus Chan Jun Jie is a second-year Political Science and Global Studies student who has always been enamored with stories. A chance encounter in JC led him to participate in a number of productions. Entering university with a desire to return to theatre, he joined Eusoff Hall's Drama Club and Dance Production, where he dabbled in directing. Now in his second year, Cyrus is eager to continue honing his craft and make more memories on the stage.



Loh Eunyce Heather

Eunyce is a first-year Psychology major who has finally decided to take her interest in theatre seriously after years and years of procrastination. With *Blackout* being her first performance, she hopes everyone will enjoy watching it as much as she did being a part of it.



Kwang Hao Yang Tony

Hao Yang is the Vice-President of NUS Stage, and believes in theater's transformative nature. He has had the privilege of performing with NUS Stage for *Shook*, under the guidance of Sean Tobin. Hao Yang hopes that *Blackout* will resonate with the audience.





Iliya Izzudin Tony

Iliya has been in several drama clubs since Secondary School where he found his passion for the stage. He joined Buds Youth Theatre in 2015 and is now dedicating his love for the stage with NUS Stage. He has also been in several productions such as *Shook* (2021, NUS Arts Festival), *Can't Get Enough Of* (2017, Asian Youth Festival and *Club Malam* (2016, Singapore Arts Festival).



Tan Guan Yu Isaac School Mate 1, Justin

Isaac loves acting and playing different characters on stage. Bitten by the acting bug in secondary school, Isaac has continued his passion for acting by joining NUS Stage. His previous works include *Shook* (2021, NUS Art's Festival) and *Exodus* (2017, Exodus).



Kang Wen Ying Jayden

Justin

Jayden is a first-year Business major whose uncontrollable laughter can be heard from miles away. He has always been bewitched by the magic of Theatre and is grateful to be part of NUS Stage. Hopelessly in love with the art form, he is thrilled to share this devilish joy of his with the audience of *Blackout*.



Lim Jia Ying Heather

Jia Ying is a first year Chemistry major with a love for singing and acting since young. An amalgamation of both gives musical theatre, of which she has taken part in a few productions including *Wizard of Oz, Little Shop of Horrors and Beauty and the Beast* during her secondary school days. After four years, Jia Ying is excited to return to the stage. Aside from theatre, Jia Ying has been a vocalist in many pop/rock bands and you may catch her singing under NUS Amplified.



Lim Joshua

Justin

Joshua Lim is a second-year Communications major who fell in love with theatre and music recently. An avid viewer of musical theatre and creating music, he hopes to perform in a musical one day! He has performed with NUS Stage under Sean Tobin in *Shook*, and is excited to do it again this year with Chong Tze Chien in *Blackout*.



Seow Hui Soong Joshua Gareth

Joshua Gareth Seow is an aspiring actor and second year Theatre Studies major who has been in a variety of productions including *Aladdin, Into the Woods*, and *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. He has performed with NUS Stage under Sean Tobin in *Shook*, is part of an improv collective called Improvper Conduct, and is the current President of NUS Stage, in 2021. He hopes you do not come to *Blackout* wearing sunglasses, as inevitably, the show may get dark at times.



Lian Kah Seng

Kah Seng is a first year Data Science and Analytics major who stumbled upon theatre when he was 13 and has always loved it since. He is very grateful to everyone who has supported him thus far, one way or another. He urges everyone watching *Blackout* to try to blink as little as possible because the show name is *Blackout* so you might miss out when it inevitably blacks out.



Karan Salve

Coming from a background of film acting, the process of acting itself is not foreign to Karan. However, diving into the world of theatre has still made him feel like a tourist entering a new country, and surprisingly settling down really quickly. Bonding with several like-minded individuals, and collaborating with multiple talented players of this project, he cannot wait to be a part of the amazing team that is going to ensure that the audience will be entertained.



Chia Yong Jie Kerwin
Doctor, School Mate 3

Kerwin is a second-year Nursing Major who enjoys musical theatre. He has performed with NUS Stage under Sean Tobin in *Shook*. He was part of Nanyang Polytechnic's Theatre Club - StageArts, graduated from Buds Youth Theatre Programme and performed with Voice Works. He is grateful to be guided and trained by Chong Tze Chien and hopes that the audience will find something memorable to take away from *Blackout*.





Tay Kai Wen Kevin
Narrator

Kevin is a second-year Theater Studies major and a Film Studies minor. Although he is relatively new to theater, he is excited to work on future productions with NUS Stage to widen his performing experience. *Blackout* will be his first ever stage performance!



Peh Yun Yuan Melissa Mother

Mel is a senior NUS Stage member who graduated from Young & W!ld's class of 2019. Currently a freelance theatre practitioner and writer, she has a vast appreciation for movement, literature, art and collaboration in all its forms. Mel's previous performances with NUS Stage include *Shook, A Disappearing Number, The Golden Record 2.0* and *The City Remembers*.



Muskaan Sachin Kalwani
Heather

Muskaan is a third-year History major, seasoned NUS Stage member, and avid procrastinator. She has been involved in theatre productions both in and out of school for the past 5 years, including the shows *Shook* and *Foreharbour Terminus* with NUS Stage in 2021. She is looking forward to another couple nights of madness with her fellow castmates in *Blackout*.





Shrinidhi Om Prakash Nurse, Heather

Shrinidhi is a first-year Material Sciences and Engineering major whose only acting experience is in front of her parents when her report card comes out. Despite having no acting credentials, she is very excited to participate in *Blackout* and hopes that audiences will have fun watching this production.



Hsu Wen Chi Nurse

Wenchi is currently a third-year Economics major. She has no prior experience in theatre but being in NUS Stage has helped her enjoy and appreciate the art of theatre. She deeply enjoys theatre and hopes that you too will share her joy and be in awe through this NUS Stage production. Sit back and enjoy this solid play!



Er Yuan Ren School Mate 2, Fish

Yuan Ren is a second-year Business Analytics major and this is his second live performance with NUS Stage. He is excited for this opportunity and looks forward to sharing this with you!



Merissa Tang
Production Stage Manager

Merissa is a technical theatre practitioner from Singapore, with a myriad of skills ranging in Stage/ Production Management to Lighting/ Projection systems and design. Her works include: 'Every Brilliant Thing' by The Finger Players (2022), ''En Route' (Singapore) by One Step at A Time Like This (Melbourne) x Singapore International Festival of Arts (2021), '#THEATRE (Singapore) by IN:DEX (2021), 'SURGE' (Melbourne) by Anouk Van Dijk (2020), and 'The Lesson: Community Tour' (Singapore) by Drama Box (2017).

Recipient of the National Arts Council (NAC) Scholarship (Singapore) in 2018, Merissa graduated with her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Design and Production) in 2021; at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. She continuously expands her theatrical knowledge in hopes of becoming a well-rounded production/ technical manager.

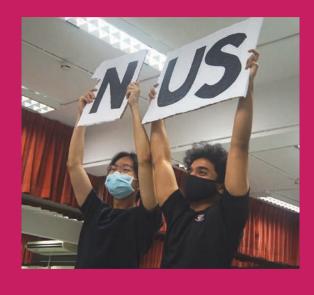


Ong Xue Min
Assistant Production Manager

Ong Xue Min is an artistic creator who dreams to make art happen. She co-founded the artistic collective "But Not Boring", which recently held a community arts residency at Republic Polytechnic and curated the exhibition "Flow" as part of Singapore Art Week 2022. She was also the producer for Bound Theatre's production of "Screen. Shot." for M1 Fringe Festival 2022.











### TELL US MORE ABOUT HOW YOU DEVELOPED YOUR CHARACTER?

#### HEAR FROM THE ACTORS WHO PLAY JUSTIN/JUSTINE.

To better characterise Justine, I needed to fully understand the environment she is in and link my personal experiences to it. Therefore, I analysed each related scene and found different ways to draw out a clear emotional trajectory. Next, I needed to figure out how Justine views and feels about each character she is related to. This is to create a system of thinking unique to me and the character Justine.

- Angel

role as I felt the need to portray a different side of them while maintaining a smooth transition between the other Justins/Justines. Keeping that in mind while developing the character for this scene, I viewed him as a toxic boyfriend who is too emotionally immature and insecure to be in a relationship. By being more paranoid and impulsive, the intention was to exaggerate the internal turmoil within stin to contrast the chaotic events surrounding him from the previous scene. - Jayden

Justin/Justine is an interesting

Justine exists in many of us. Her want to love and be loved. So to develop her character, I needed to look within and in the people around. Her vulnerability, insecurity and anxiety is an amalgamation of them; us, and a story I created for her. Observing people, music and creating goals for her character has led to what you see today. As such, I hope that in some way or the other, when you will see her, you will truly see her and understand Justine.

- Ashie

For Justin, I really tried to think about what key memories, moments, and images you might remember if you suddenly woke up without most of your memory. Justin is constantly questioning what is real and what isn't, but at the same time I tried to make him desperate to latch onto things that might be real.

- Joshua

I developed my character by watching romantic scenes on television and channeling it into all that winking, flirting and canoodling action on stage.

- Isaac

### WHAT WAS THE HARDEST PROCESS FOR YOU IN CREATING THIS PERFORMANCE?

#### HEAR FROM THE ACTORS WHO PLAY HEATHER.

Gaining the confidence to play Heather in scenes where she's in a position of power over Justin was quite tough, but absolutely rewarding when I got the hang of it.

- Eunyce

Making sense of the plot and who I am and what my relationship to Justin/Justine is in relation to the other Justins/Justines and Heathers. At the same time, providing nuance and depth to my character and her motivations beyond just being the person who breaks Justine's heart and causes her to jump.

- Muskaan



The hardest part was visualising the character's life, beyond the scene. We were tasked with using the inside-out method, where we draw from the environment in which our character dwells in and how they interact with their environment to enhance our performance. I thought about the conditions Heather grew up in, and how they might affect her actions in this play. This exercise was really hard for me as I had to combine my own life into Heather's experiences. - Shrinidhi

motivations of my character, especially when their ethical/moral values are extremely different from my own. Understanding the motivations for this character required a mental creation of a new set of principles, one that is separate from my own, so that I could empathize with why their choices are as such.

The hardest part was understanding the

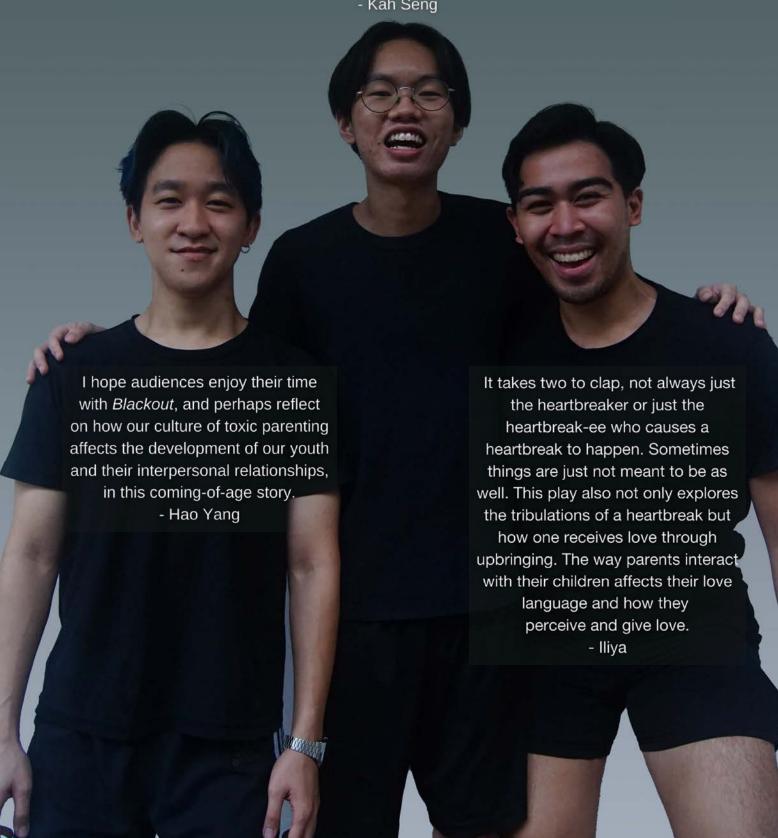
- Jia Ying

### WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE AUDIENCE TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS PLAY?

#### HEAR FROM THE ACTORS WHO PLAY TONY.

One thing I wish the audience can take away from the play is the importance of interpersonal relationships. Heartbreaks happen all the time and when we're going through it, sometimes your best friends are who we rely on.

- Kah Seng



### WHAT DO YOU RESONATE MOST WITH IN THIS PLAY?

#### HEAR FROM THE ACTORS WHO PLAY THE DOCTOR.



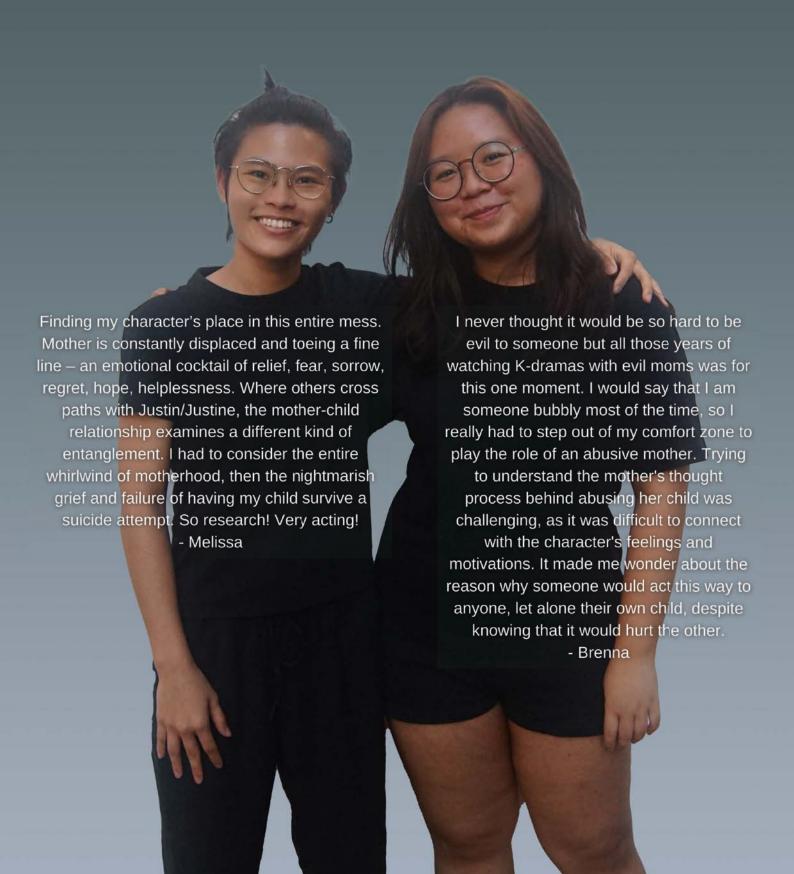
### WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE AUDIENCE TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS PLAY?

#### HEAR FROM THE ACTORS WHO PLAY THE FISH.



### WHAT WAS THE HARDEST PROCESS FOR YOU IN CREATING THIS PERFORMANCE?

#### HEAR FROM THE ACTORS WHO PLAY THE MOTHER.



### WHAT DO YOU RESONATE MOST WITH IN THIS PLAY?

#### HEAR FROM THE ACTORS WHO PLAY THE NURSE.

It is so relatable when the nurses resort to violence when facing any altercation with Justin. It reminds me of how human, or how me, it is to get upset over any minor inconvenience.

- Eunyce

"I'm under your spell." The rather seductive and bewitching nature of this character resonates closely to a side of me that rarely gets a chance to shine.

- Angel

I feel like the nurse dancing all by herself to Justin Bieber and not caring about anything else is something I would do in real life.

- Shrinidhi

Fantasy? Horror? Our wildest imagination? A dream?
Reality? This play that switches between reality and a dreamlike state really brings forth the many states that an individual can be in! The scenarios and conversations in this play is one that happens very often in real life.

- Wen Chi



### **CREDITS**

**Director:** Chong Tze Chien

Scriptwriter: Chong Tze Chien

Co-devised by NUS Stage Members

**Lighting Designer:** Liu Yong Huay

Sound Designer: Jing Ng

Sound Associates: Ryan Ng

Tan Qiang Qian

Lim Ming Ying

Sound Operator No 1/A1: Haniel Pang

**Production Stage Manager:** Merissa Tang

**Assistant Production Manager:** Ong Xue Min

Assistant Stage Managers: Sarah Victoria Ramakrishnan

Wong Pei Xian

Producer: Jobina Tan

Assistant to Producer: Eleanor Ee



### **NUS STAGE**



Founded previously as Varsity Drama in 2006, and later renamed in 2008, NUS Stage has long been dedicated to the nurturing of talents on stage who aspire to tell the untold stories of our generation and who keenly explore the underlying social issues through thought-provoking tales of human drama. We are strongly committed to training actors, nurturing playwrights and grooming production teams who push creative boundaries and produce high quality, artistic content that engages its audiences.

Recent productions include *Shook* directed by Sean Tobin for the NUS Arts Festival 2021, *Complicité's A Disappearing Number*, for NUS Arts Festival 2019, *The Golden Record* for NUS Arts Festival 2017: Brave New Worlds, which commemorated the 40th anniversary of the historical launch of the Voyager 1 space probe and *The Golden Record 2.0* directed and written by Edith Podesta together with journalist Corrie Tan.

NUS Stage is a member of NUS Centre For the Arts and one of 20 co-curricular arts activity groups (CCA) distinguished as Arts Excellence Groups in NUS.

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 21/22**



**President:** Joshua Seow

Vice President & Welfare: Kwang Hao Yang

Secretary/Treasurer: Muskaan Sachin Kalwani

Marketing Head: Iliya Izzudin

Logistics: Kerwin Chia



### **ABOUT NUS ARTS FESTIVAL**

The NUS Arts Festival was first staged in 1998, primarily as a showcase of student talents. As part of NUS' centenary celebrations in 2006, the Festival was relaunched and expanded to incorporate faculty and practising local and international artists alongside the be best student performers.

NUS Arts Festival is the largest arts event on campus, presented each year in March with collaborative practice is at the heart of its programming.

Working with local and international practitioners, our student artists are encouraged to avail themselves to the content-rich environment within the University, grounding their work in deep knowledge and using it as the basis of the development process.

Each edition of the Festival is crafted with a core theme that responds to contemporary issues and facilitates the integration of research and learning as part of the artistic process, in addition to showcasing performances with mass appeal.

Now in its second decade, the NUS Arts Festival draws artists and collaborators from across campus and around the world. It is known for conceptually challenging pieces that speak to both the creative and academic output of NUS.

#### nusartsfestival.com

Follow us on social media @nuscfa #nusartsfestival

### **NUS CENTRE FOR THE ARTS**

NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA) comprises the NUS Museum and NUS Baba House; the University Cultural Centre, a world class performing arts centre; and a Talent Development and Programming unit that oversees 20 student arts excellence groups in music, dance, theatre and film. On campus and beyond, we take pride in providing the opportunities for the appreciation of the arts.

We seek to champion creative possibilities inspire and strong communities through programming, exhibitions, workshops and outreach such as the university's flagship arts event, the NUS Arts Festival Singapore's longest running arts outreach programme, the ExxonMobil Campus Concerts.





## UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE

As a high-grade, flexible performance venue nestled in the grounds of a premier university, the University Cultural Centre is a consistently sought-after venue. It operates year-round, hosting key University events, external bookings and CFA's own programming. The Hall and Theatre have hosted numerous political and cultural leaders, thinkers and well-known artists and musicians.

In late 2017, the UCC underwent an extensive renovation to ensure that it continues to be operationally and environmentally efficient and offers a high standard of service.

To enquire about hosting an event at the UCC, please contact the Venues <u>Team (uccvenues@nus.edu.sg)</u>.



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