

NUS CENTRE FOR THE ARTS presents:

NUS ARTS FESTIVAL 2022

# SHADES OF LIGHT(NESS)

## Bodhi

NUS Indian

Instrumental Ensemble

18 & 19 March, UCC Dance Studio





# 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**



# MESSAGE FROM NAWAZ MIRAJKAR

Music Director, *Bodhi – The Awakening*



I believe that Art can be a comforting ray of light in times of darkness. "Bodhi - The Awakening" pays tribute to the soul's voyage from darkness to light: From the initial yearning of the spirit to overcome the mind's turmoil in "Dapana", to the salutation to the power of light in "Suryanamaskar" and ultimately to the realisation of the inner light in "Antarjyothi".

Coming from a respected lineage of musicians from India, I was raised to honour Mother Nature as the most patient of teachers. Just as she draws upon the nourishing light of the sun, so can our spirit as it seeks to attain the ultimately reality. I have always been fascinated by the juxtaposition between light and darkness, and it has inspired my compositions. I hope that today's performance demonstrates that music and light are not abstract concepts that we cannot grasp; they are very tangible if one is receptive. In 'Bodhi' we use both Western and Eastern elements of music to replicate the beautiful omnipresence and omnipotence of light.

This concert is a very special one for us as it is the first 'live' show that the NUS Indian Ensemble is presenting since the pandemic began. It is also the first time that we are incorporating theatre into our performance. These young artists are an amazing group. As their Music Director, I could not be prouder of their dedication and effort in making this event a reality in the face of significant logistical challenges during this time.

I strongly believe in the power of music and art to unite and uplift - to make us feel like we are a part of something bigger. We invite you to join us in becoming an instrument of this divine light that we hope spreads throughout our world. Enjoy the show!



# MESSAGE FROM T SASITHARAN

Director, *Bodhi – The Awakening*

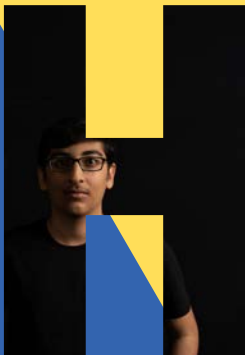


The Awakening; a turning of the tide, when the human body-mind complex re-connects with an eternally abiding presence of the cosmos. This is a universal trope in literature and the whole gamut of performing arts - theatre, dance and music.

It is a recurring theme, in all cultures spanning the globe, the motif of the unending human search for the final truth, the highest meaning we are permitted to know and apprehend. Nobody knows exactly what it is, but we have all known, since time immemorial, that it is, and that we must seek it out. There can be no doubt that Music is the perfect language, the perfect grammar, the perfect art form to capture, contain and express this quest.

The Orchestra you will listen to tonight is the principal protagonist of the work, the Hero if you will. The actor-performers who intermittently inhabit the space in front of the Orchestra are kinetic and kinaesthetic extensions of the music, of the sound that emanates from the beyond. They are not on stage, in the foreground, to demonstrate the sonority from behind, or to illustrate it or to accompany it.

They are front of stage to embody it; provide it momentarily the outline of human form imbued with recognisable emotion, yearning and desire. Why? So that you too may identify, connect and, if we are very lucky, resonate with the meaning(s) the music carries. We hope you will enjoy experiencing this totality of music and action, as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you. Thank You!



*Bodhi – The Awakening* is a post-modern devised music-theatre production created by **NUS Indian Instrumental Ensemble** depicting the journey of finding the light within.

# SYNOPSIS



According to Indian Philosophy, the theme of Light is synonymous with realisation and enlightenment. The process is viewed as both a dichotomy between light and darkness as well as a gradient representing the journey towards this enlightenment. The duality in this process is what *Bodhi - The Awakening* brings to light.

*Bodhi* incorporates Indian Classical Music, theatrical elements in storytelling, and movement to depict the journey of enlightenment through the discovery of a person's inner light. This production takes you on a journey with music compositions representing various moods and tones together with movement and text to reflect on the dual nature and transitions between light and darkness in a person's journey towards enlightenment. As the first iteration of this production, *Bodhi - The Awakening* is a work-in-progress presentation by **NUS Indian Instrumental Ensemble** under the guidance of Music Director, Nawaz Mirajkar and directed by T Sasitharan.

A confluence of Indian Classical Music and Theatre, *Bodhi - The Awakening* presents the duality of light and darkness and the transition between light and darkness through the eyes of a persona.

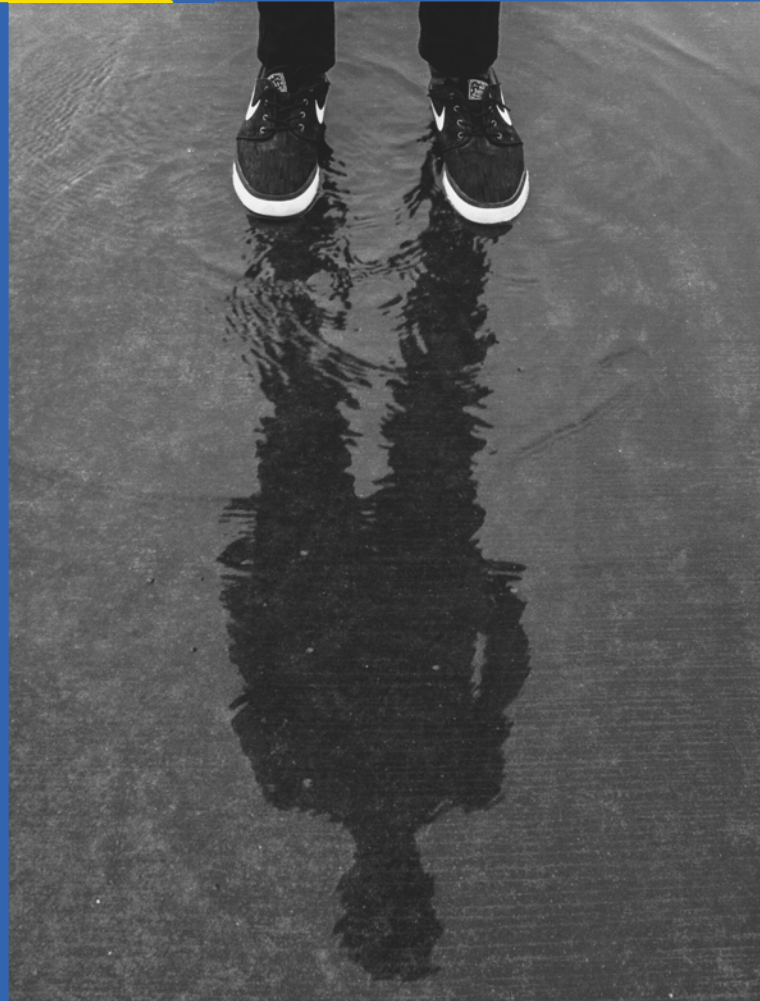


# BODHI – THE AWAKENING

## Darpana

**Composer: Nawaz Mirajkar**

The road to enlightenment begins with the realisation of darkness. In this piece we explore the chaotic nature of the inner mind and the turmoil one faces that propels them to undertake the pursuit of inner light, through the rhythmic and melodic exchanges between the various instruments which symbolise the conflicting thought processes one regularly faces in life.



## Nalinam

**Composer: Lazar T Sebastine**

The desire for permanent bliss is what drives the chase for enlightenment. Without understanding the true nature of our inner light, all happiness is merely transient, and our outward joys are corrupted with inner sorrows. In this piece we highlight this duality through the use of a subtle heaviness in a generally upbeat tune.



## Suryanamaskar

**Composer: Nawaz Mirajkar**

Leaving the cave of ignorance allows us to be illuminated by the light of wisdom, and we can truly understand and see the world around us. We must combat the monsters of our mind to see our path to enlightenment clearly. We have not yet attained the inner light, but it is now within our reach. We accept its power and offer our salutations through this sombre yet soulful piece.



## Sangamam

**Composers:**

**Ashwin Seetharaman,  
Charan Jaiganesh,  
Sandhya Ramachandran,  
Shantanu Modak**

Only when we experience all the human emotions and understand them as part of the human experience, do we grow towards attaining enlightenment. In this piece we illustrate this with the exchange of two ragas, one Hindustani and one Carnatic, through a myriad of genres such as Blues, Boogie-Woogie, Rock and Sufi.



## Antarjyothi

**Composer: Nawaz Mijarkar**

Having searched hard within ourselves, we finally attain the light within. Enlightenment results in permanent bliss and we become at peace with ourselves. We are no longer concerned with trivialities as we start to see the bigger picture in life, and we see the world around us with new energy. The journey has come to an end, or has it?



# CREATIVE TEAM

## Nawaz Mirajkar *Music Director*



Born in Pune, India, Nawaz Mirajkar hails from a proud lineage of musicians, playing the table at seven, under the tutelage of his father Ustad Mohammad Hanif KhanMirajkar.

Nawaz joined the Temple of Fine Arts as Head of Percussion in 1996. He is an adjunct SOTA faculty member in the Music department. Since 2000, he has been the Artistic Director of NUS Indian Instrumental Ensemble. His practice has expanded into contemporary fusion music inspired by Western, Oriental and Indian elements in hopes of elevating the art of the tabla and percussions that can appeal to the youth and traditionalists.

# CREATIVE TEAM

## **T Sasitharan** *Director*



T Sasitharan (Sasi) established TTRP with Kuo Pao Kun in 2000 and was The Substation's Artistic Director (1996-2000). He was a critic and arts editor with The Straits Times publishing articles on Singapore's art and culture. He holds a Masters of Arts in Philosophy and taught philosophy in NUS. For more than 30 years, Sasi has been active as an actor, director and dramaturg and received the Cultural Medallion in 2012.

Sasi has lectured internationally and served on the Boards of institutions including The Substation, National Arts Council, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore International Foundation, and the Asian Arts Network.

# CREATIVE TEAM

## **Lewin Bernard** *Script Advisor*



Singapore-based theatre director and scriptwriter Lewin Bernard sets to reimagine the art of storytelling by stretching the conventions of theatre, visuals and different performative genres through his art direction, embracing and collaborating with different cultures and disciplines.

Since 2007, Lewin has collaborated and learned from various artists from UK, Argentina, Italy, Japan and Singapore to shape his authentic style of storytelling. To date, Lewin has directed over 40 productions, from musicals to original works.



# STUDENT COMPOSERS

Sangamam brings out the complementary and contrasting features of many different genres from Carnatic and Hindustani classical music to blues, sufi, and rock genres, by using two seemingly different but closely linked raags- Kalavathi and Abhogi.

Even though Kalavathi and Abhogi sound and feel very different, they are related to a concept called Graha bheda - treating the note PA in raag Kalavathi as the tonic or SA gives rise to the ragam Abhogi. It was exciting to play around with this relation between the raags and use it to show their confluence, or 'Sangamam'.

Starting in Kalavathi, this music composition offers the question "Kaisi hui mulakat hamari" ('How did we meet?'), to which the lyrics set in Abhogi respond "Isai perunkadalil naamum sangamam" ('We met in the ocean of music'). We hope you have enjoyed meeting in this ocean of music with us!



Ashwin Seetharaman



Charan Jaiganesh



Shantanu Modak



Sandhya Ramachandran



# WRITING TEAM



**Lewin Bernard**  
Script Advisor



**Ashwin  
Seetharaman**



**Anushka Prakash**



**Jev Akshay Jeevan**



**G Lakshmanan**



# OUR MUSICIANS

Abhishek Balaji - Tabla & Cajon  
Anushka Prakash - Violin & Vocals  
Aparna Giri Shankar - Vocals  
Ashwin Seetharaman - Keyboard  
Charan Jaiganesh - Mridangam  
Deethya Ganesh - Vocals  
Divyadarshini Thiru - Veena  
G Lakshmanan - Tabla  
Jev Akshay Jeevan - Vocals  
Meenakshy Jyothish - Vocals  
Neha Lakshmanan - Violin & Vocals  
Preetashini D/O Nagarajah - Veena  
Sandhya Ramachandran - Violin  
Savitha Srinivasan - Vocals  
Shalini Seshadri - Violin  
Shantanu Modak - Keyboard  
Sukrut Gondhalekar - Vocals  
Swarali Parasnis - Vocals  
Vaishnavi Ramanathan - Vocals  
Vedisha V. Roopun - Sitar  
Viasar Malavar - Violin  
Vignesh Sankar Iyer - Vocals

# OUR CAST



Maruvada Sai  
Shreekari



Rishabh Garg



Sahil Arora

# NUS INDIAN INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE



Through the practice and performance of music that has its roots deep within Indian culture, the NUS Indian Instrumental Ensemble (IIE) provides an open and inclusive environment to stage cultural dialogues with a diverse range of genres across the world.

Since its founding in 1987, IIE has explored a variety of themes that form the basis of traditional Indian music ranging from the evolution of music in the Indians sub-continent to religion and socio-political dialogues in the South Asian region.

IIE is made up primarily of four musical sections – percussion, plucked strings, violin, keys and vocals – with members also proficient in other instruments such as the flute and ukulele. This range of instruments allows IIE to perform music that is representative of the ethnic diversity within India, from the Hindustani music of North India to the Carnatic music of South India. The Ensemble hopes to continue to champion the traditional art form within the context of world music through grounding themselves in the pure rudiments of Indian music while experimenting and exploring how the old and the new, blending Eastern and Western instrumentation and influences, a bold new sound can be brought forth that reflects the vibrant identity of modern Asian youth today.



# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 21/22



**Shalini Seshadri**  
President



**Vignesh Sankar Iyer**  
Vice President



**Vaishnavi Ramanathan**  
Secretary and Treasurer



**Divyadarshini  
Thirugnanasambandan**  
Publicity & Marketing Head



**Shantanu Modak**  
Logistics & Production Head



# CREDITS

**Music Director:**

Nawaz Mirajkar

**Director:**

T Sasitharan

**Deputy Stage Manager:**

Chong Wee Nee

**Assistant Stage Manager:**

Venkata Subramanian Amirtha Tulasi

**Production Coordinator:**

Mohammad Mazlan Bin Jusmal

**Costumes:**

Divyadarshini Thiruganasambandan

**Logistics & Production Management:**

Shantanu Modak

Vignesh Sankar Iyer

**Marketing & Publicity:**

Divyadarshini Thirugnanasambandan

**Photographer (Publicity):**

TET photography

**Videographer:**

Kevin Yeong

**CFA Group Managers:**

Rachel Nip

Sing Moh Li

**Creative Team (Music):**

Ashwin Seetharaman

Charan Jaiganesh

Sandhya Ramachandran

Shantanu Modak



# PLUCKED STRINGS



# VIOLINISTS





# KEYBOARDISTS



# PERCUSSIONS



# VOCALISTS



# VOCALISTS











# 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 best student performers.

NUS Arts Festival is the largest arts event on campus, presented each year in March with collaborative practice 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](http://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 and inspire strong communities through programming, exhibitions, workshops and outreach such as the university's flagship arts event, the NUS Arts Festival and 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 Team ([uccvenues@nus.edu.sg](mailto:uccvenues@nus.edu.sg)).**



# SPECIAL THANKS

## Donors



宝运企业（私人）有限公司  
BOWEN ENTERPRISES (PTE) LTD



Kewalram  
Chanrai Group

## Supporters

CULTURAL  
MATCHING  
FUND

RB CAPITAL

## Creative Partners

### College of Design and Engineering

Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Engineering Design and Innovation Centre

### Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Communications and New Media

## Supporting Partners

Centre for Quantum Technologies

### College of Design and Engineering

Department of Architecture

### Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Geography

School of Computing

Yale-NUS College



**PRESENTED BY**

