

NUS CENTRE FOR THE ARTS presents:

NUS ARTS FESTIVAL 2022

SHADES OF LIGHT(NESS)

Thanmai

NUS Indian Dance

27 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



A WORD FROM NUS INDIAN DANCE



Vanakkam! Namaskar! Hello!

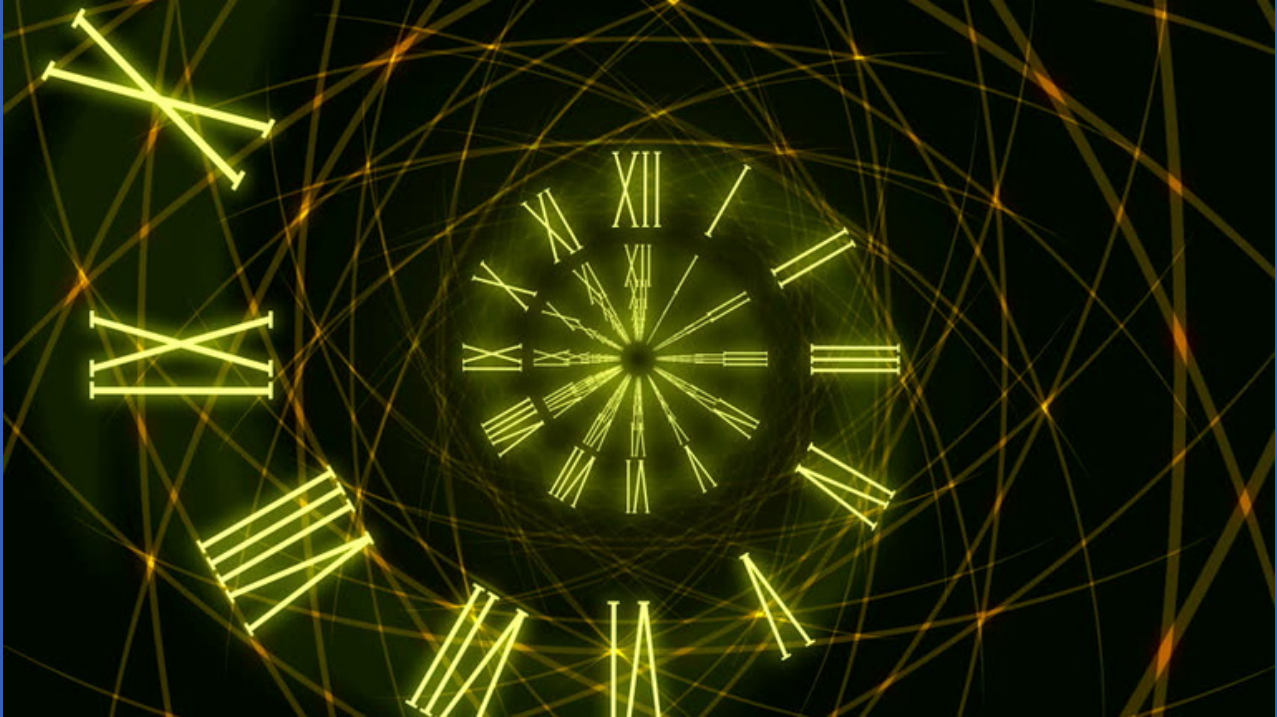
A very warm welcome to our show ***Thanmai***!

Thanmai has been an exciting project that has been in progress since December 2021. Our late Artistic Director, Mrs. Santha Bhaskar, worked tirelessly with the dancers to convey the message behind the show. This performance is very dear to our heart since it is one of the last choreography gifted to us by our beloved teacher. We are honored to present this as a gift to you as we celebrate the light and legacy of her life in dance together.

Through our programme this evening, we wish to take you, our dear audience, on a journey through science, literature, visual art & spirituality, exploring different interpretations of light and energy.

We wish you a pleasant evening!

SYNOPSIS



Thanmai is a contemporary Bharatanatyam performance by NUS Indian Dance, depicting the search for light, a seemingly intangible element that plays a very tangible role in our lives.

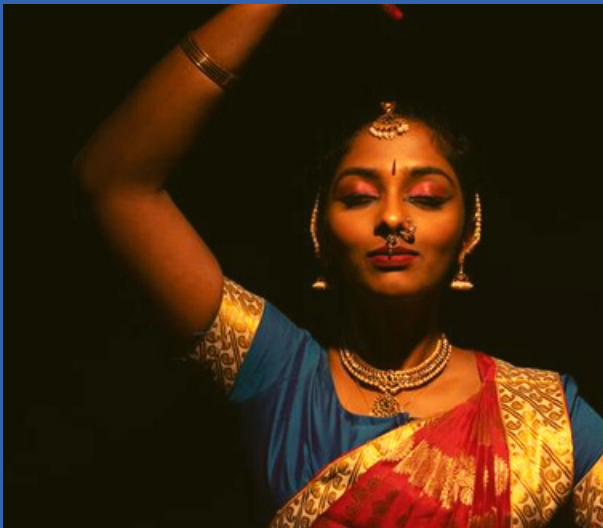
In the vast wheel of creation, everything is a wheel in itself. Light is energy. Energy which travels in waves, in regular, modulated patterns - like the cycle of seasons which come and go. And with each season, come countless moments of time. It is in these moments, that we find meaning, which shines light on what is significant; connecting with nature, the universe, and ultimately ourselves, as we experience a kind of ecstasy or enlightenment. Thanmai is a journey to reflect on the metaphysical and physical qualities of light and what it means to us as humans.

In a unique collaboration with visual artist Joshua Yang, electronic music producer Mario Vanegas and composer-musician Dr Ghanavenothan Retnam and the set and lighting design by Alberto Wileo, dancers will take audiences on a journey of time and space, through the beautiful language of Bharatnatyam, to express the power and beauty of Light.

THANMAI

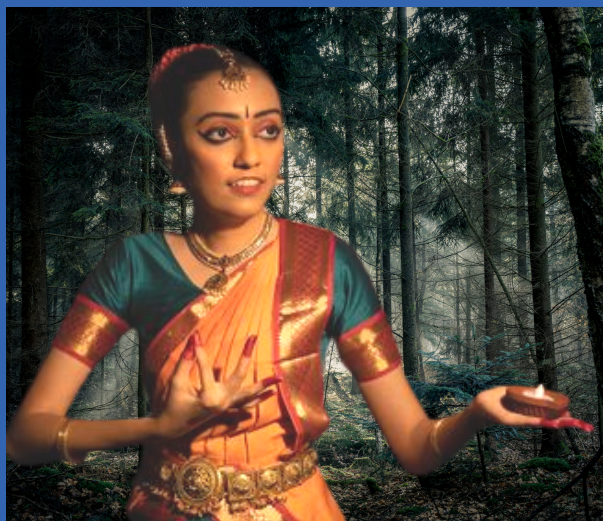
"Everything is energy and that's all there is to it. Match the frequency of the reality you want and you cannot help but get that reality. It can be no other way."

- Albert Einstein



Light

As the physical body is 'consumed' by light, so too is the spirit of the performer. The dissolution of the body into light brings together visible light and inner light.



Forest of Time

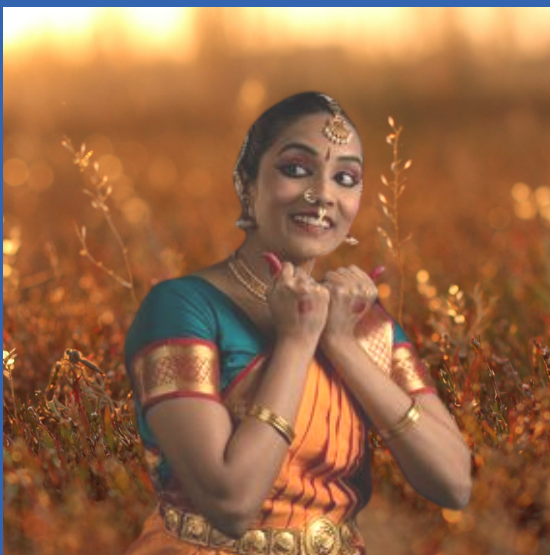
Inspired by Mahakavi Bharathiyar's poem 'Kaalamaam Vanathil', **Forest of Time** celebrates Shakti, the primordial cosmic energy that gives life and light to all things.



In 1905, Albert Einstein challenged the universally-held belief that light, whether from the sun or from artificial sources, originated at a source, spread out evenly and continuously through all the space accessible to it, and propagated from place to place as electromagnetic crests and troughs or in other words, a wave. Instead, he proposed that Light was not a wave but a set of particles. "...when a light ray is spreading from a point, the energy is not distributed continuously over ever-increasing spaces, but consists of a finite number of energy quanta (particles) that are localized in points in space, move without dividing, and can be absorbed or generated only as a whole"

He later elaborated in 1938 that the theories were "two contradictory pictures of reality; separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do". Light is both a wave and a particle.

We look at the cycles of the seasons as ever-widening circles like waves, modulated by Time and Light. Yet within each season, experiences, sensations and emotions - particles of human existence, each shining, dark or somewhere inbetween - gives each moment meaning.



Greeshma

Greeshma captures the feelings, emotions and the beauty of the summer season.

The intensity of Light brings heat and discomfort but finding refreshment through nature's provision and connecting with others brings joy!



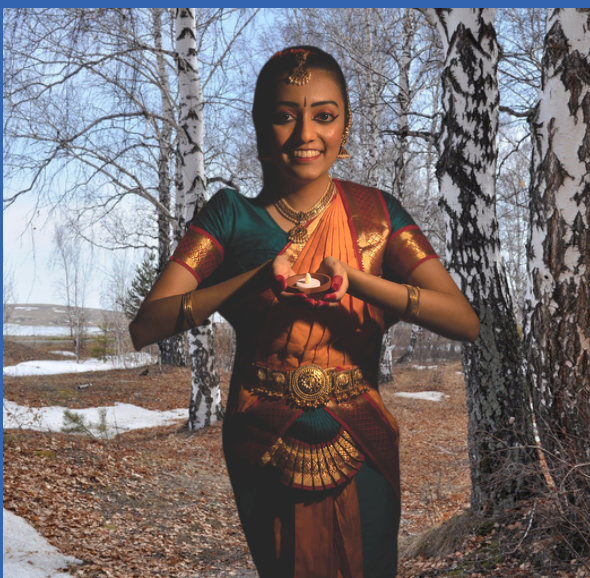
Varsha

Varsha or rain brings welcome relief in seasons of warm weather. Expressing utter delight as the heavens open with a downpour of blessing as the clouds kiss the skies, man and nature - forests and the animals - celebrate life.



Sarath

Throughout **Sarath** or Autumn, the leaves on trees turn into rich shades of gold and copper. It is the season for harvest and celebration when man's hard work is rewarded with crops and fruits. The days become shorter as there is less sunlight. **Sarath** expresses the beauty in a time of transition.



Hemantha

Hemantha brings you in its movement of the seasons from autumn to the beginning of the winter. It's perfect weather! Dancers are seen enjoying the chilly weather and bracing for winter season.



Sisira Part 1

As **Sisira** or winter begins in earnest, snow falls on the mountains, fields and plains, enveloping everything in a shimmering blanket of white. For two friends who meet on a snowy mountain, this becomes their wondrous playground as they play carefree in the snow.



Sisira Part 2

Winter brings long dark nights and the extreme cold without the warmth of the natural light. Yet, the warmth of friendship shared near a fire keep us bright and happy in this unbearably cold and dark season.



Vasantha

Vasantha or Spring bursts forth afresh as the world wakes from its winter slumber. Evoking pleasures of the senses in the the colorful flowers with the rich scents and the happy buzzing of bees, dancers convey the joy of spring when light and life returns.



Realisation of Moments

Based on awardwinning poet Alvin Pang's "There is A Moment", *Realisation of Moments* acknowledges that Time brings change and there is a need to make peace with it.

The liveliness of this peace suggests that it is not stoic endurance of change but with courage of spirit and a trust that light will always prevail that we can continue our dance around the sun.



Radiance

Thanmai is a word with multifacted meanings - "Oneness" "Union" "Connection" "Ecstasy". It is the Finale of Finales that Man has sought that is symbolised in Light, the light within each one of us.

As we journeyed together through the seasons this evening, we hope that Thanmai has given you a spark of light and may you carry that seed of radiance till we meet again.

IN REHEARSAL



Practices with Teacher, Runme Shaw CFA Studios

IN REHEARSAL



Coaching with Teacher Meena, Runme Shaw CFA Studios

REMEMBERING TEACHER



REMEMBERING TEACHER



Best Production - Tan Ean Kiam Awards 2019



After Kaala Chakra/ NUS Arts Festival 2021

REMEMBERING TEACHER



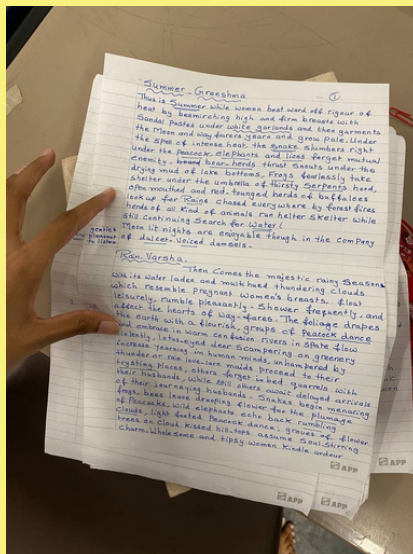
Sambhavna / NUS Arts Festival 2017



Maya Yatra / 40th Anniversary of NUS Indian Dance (2018)



During Kaala Chakra/ NUS Arts Festival 2021



Mrs Bhaskars' Notes for Thanmai (2022)



Dhi/ NUS Arts Festival 2020



Mrs Santha Bhaskar

Artistic Director / Choreographer



Mrs Santha Bhaskar is the Artistic Director of Bhaskar's Arts Academy and the Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer of NUS Indian Dance, a close-knit community of dancers which she formed in National University of Singapore since 1977.

A versatile choreographer, she has staged productions from dance dramas to contemporary and experimental works in Indian classical dance, reflecting Singapore's unique cross-cultural identity as well as interdisciplinary work bridging the gap between the arts and sciences through Bharatanatyam. Her innovation is seen in productions such as *Butterfly Lovers* (1958), *Shakuntala of the Mahabharata* (2002), *Vibrations* (2007), *Sambhavna* (2016, 2017) and *28* (2018)

Mrs Bhaskar has received accolades for her contributions including the Cultural Medallion in 1990, the Public Service Star in 2016, and the Meritorious Service Medal in 2021.



Madam Ambujah Thiru

Choreographer



Madam Ambujah Thiru was introduced to the sacred art of Bharatanatyam by Kavitha Daran, a student of Mr & Mrs Bhaskar. She continued her journey with Mrs Santha Bhaskar at Nrityalaya Aesthetics Society and presented her Arangetram in 1993 and joined the teaching faculty soon after. Her training continued and culminated in her solo shows Nayika (2000) and Maatha (2002).

As a choreographer, Ambujah staged her first major choreographic production Thirukuttrala Kuravanji in 2008. She also restaged Mrs Santha Bhaskar's Ramayana in 2012. With Bhairavi in 2014, Ambujah reached new heights as a choreographer.

Dr Ghanavenothan Retnam

Flautist, Music Composer & Music Director



Ghanavenothan Retnam with his unflinching devotion for Indian classical music has carved a niche in the arts scenario in Singapore. Son of Sri R. Retnam a pioneer musician of Singapore, he had his tutelage under Pandit M. Ramalingam who nurtured his passion for playing the flute. This prolific and high calibre flautist has conducted Twelve Flute arangetrams, a first of its kind in Singapore.

For his outstanding contributions to the field of arts, he created history by being the first Singaporean Indian artiste to be awarded the prestigious Singapore's "Young Artist Award" for music. He was also awarded a "Lifetime Achievement and Humanitarian Medallion" by the world peace and harmony organization, New York-USA. He received the reputed title "Sangitha Kala Bhushana" and recently awarded the honorary Doctorate from the International Tamil University.

CREATIVE TEAM



Mario Vanegas

Music Director



Mario Vanegas is a musician and producer from California. He was immersed into the arts from a young age by his grandparents and his mother. He started as a guitarist playing playing electric, classical and flamenco when he was 13. At 18, he began his exploration into electronic music and music production eventually studying at LASALLE College of the the Arts. He is now based in New York.



Joshua Yang

Visual Artist



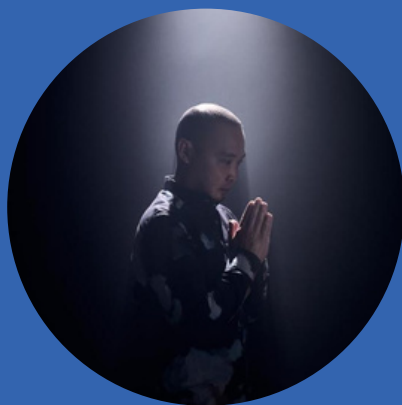
Joshua Yang has been drawing since he could grip a crayon. His works range from single-continuous line drawings to multi-layered paintings made with a limited palette of two pigment. His recent projects include long walks with his dog in the ever-decreasing wilderness of the garden city while listening to audiobooks on hard-boiled detectives or science fiction involving time travel. Yang is one of the founding members of the art collective, vertical submarine, which explores popular perceptions through multi-disciplinary art, such as paintings, drawings and mixed media installations with their quirky, tongue-in-cheek humour.

Yang has won numerous awards including first prize in the UOB Painting of the Year (Abstract category) 2005 and The President's Young Talents Award 2009 among others. He is most noted for his site-specific and time-based line drawings.



Alberta Wileo

Lighting and Set Designer



Alberta is a freelance lighting designer and theatre artist. Over the past 18 years, he has designed for many professional performing arts companies in Singapore – including Arts Fission, Action Theatre, Singapore Repertory Theatre, Singapore Symphony Orchestra and more – as well as around the world from Malaysia to Indonesia, Japan, France and the USA.



OUR COMPANY



**Aparajita
Hariharan**

Dancer/ Emcee



**Himani
Dharshini Vetrivelan**

Dancer



**Jeyadurga
Sola Rajan**

Dancer



**Karunya
Narayanamurthy**

Dancer



**Karthika
Murugesan**

Dancer

OUR COMPANY



**Preshita
Pandi**
Dancer



**Roshani
Venkatesh**
Dancer



**Senthil
Thamilselvi**
Dancer



**Vidhyabharathi
Somasundaram**
Dancer



**Arjavi
Bahety**
Dancer



**Deepa
Arul**
Dancer



CREDITS

Artistic Director & Choreographer:	Mrs. Santha Bhaskar
Choreographer:	Mdm Ambujah Thiru
Visual Artist:	Joshua Yang
Music & Sound Design:	Mario Vanegas Dr Ghanavenothan Retnam
Lighting & Set Design:	Alberta Wileo
Multimedia Design:	Kaykay Nizam
Production Stage Manager:	Lee Xinzhi Gigi
Assistant Stage Manager:	Jeremiah Lim Zhi Zhong
Photography:	Jingkai Kuang
Videography:	Pak Pictures
CFA Group Manager:	Rachel Nip Oi Ting

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NUS Indian Dance would like to express their deep gratitude to Ms Meenakshy Bhaskar for her kind assistance in coaching and overseeing the production. Special thanks to the staff of Bhaskar's Arts Academy for their support. Heartfelt thanks to our local and international vendors for their support in purchase of props and costumes.

NUS INDIAN DANCE



Established in 1977, NUS Indian Dance is a group of highly committed dancers guided by its Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer Mrs Santha Bhaskar, a pioneer in the Indian cultural dance scene and Cultural Medallion recipient.

NUS Indian Dance pursues excellence in the Indian classical dance form Bharatanatyam through rigorous training aimed to hone dance skills and develop a deeper sense of self-confidence and cultural identity.

Recent productions include *Kaala Chakra*, for NUS Arts Festival 2021, a work-in-progress presentation that explores the varying passage of Time and *Dhi*, a digital production about self-discovery to seek answers from pressing internal conflicts.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 21/22



P Anu Priya
President



Senthil Thamilselvi
Vice President



Vishruti Ranjan
Treasurer & Secretary



Jeyadurga Sola Rajan
Dance Captain



Mrithika Om Prakash
Marketing Head



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

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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).



SPECIAL THANKS

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