# Pulau Rindu

30 Apr
– 3 May
2026

NAFA
Studio
Theatre

# Programme Booklet

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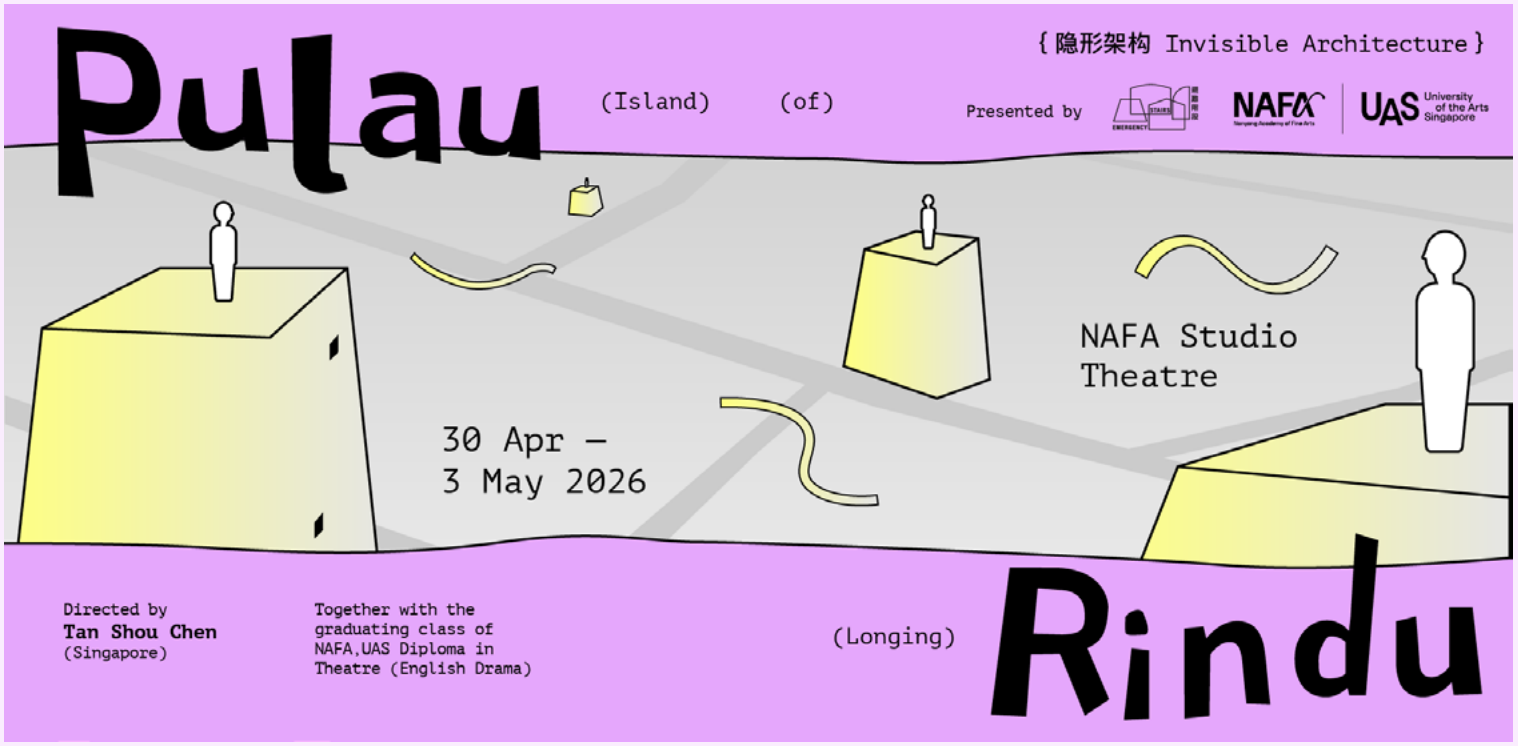
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# *Pulau Rindu*

Date of show:
30 April – 3 May, 2026

Time:
Thu-Sat, 8pm;
Sat & Sun, 3pm

Venue:
NAFA Studio Theatre

Language:
English

Duration:
Approx. 70 minutes
without intermission

Emergency Stairs will pledge **one-third** (33.3%) of the total net box office proceeds from our upcoming season in late April and early May—featuring *Backstage Protocol* and *Pulau Rindu* — to the

SINGAPORE FRINGE FESTIVAL

# PROJECT INTRODUCTION
# CURATORIAL THEME:
# INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURES

The annual Industry Project is more than a conventional graduation showcase; it is the culmination of a long-term partnership between Emergency Stairs and NAFA, dedicated to embedding experimental and subversive contemporary theatre practices into the core of artistic pedagogy. We believe that training is not just about mastering rules, but about a fearless provocation of the unknown.

In Industry Project 2026, graduating students from the NAFA Diploma in Theatre (English & Mandarin) present two original devised works—*Pulau Rindu*, directed by Tan Shou Chen (Singapore), and *Backstage Protocol*, directed by Selena Lu (Shanghai)—under the guidance of Artistic Director Liu Xiaoyi.

This year, we map the “Invisible Architectures” that define our existence. The two productions form a dialogue between reason and emotion: one traverses the fluid, ephemeral landscapes of the city, building “soft architectures” out of memory and longing; the other dissects the rigid, unseen “hard architectures” of the institution, questioning privilege and agency within the system. One unfolds as a poetic meditation, while the other proceeds as a rigorous social inquiry. Together, they reveal the students’ journey to locate their own coordinates and artistic agency amidst the invisible structures of the world and the institution.

# SYNOPSIS

A city is and is not its buildings. It is and is not the memory of a street corner, of people passing through. It is and is not the hum of lives that covers the walls, like concrete or dirt, layering one atop the other until they become indistinguishable over time.

The stage is a space of possibility and the performers are its architects. Twelve lives converge to build a fleeting city that exists only when seen. Inspired by Italo Calvino's masterwork Invisible Cities, Singaporean theatremaker Tan Shou Chen presents his latest creation, Pulau Rindu, collaboratively devised by twelve young theatre performers.

"What makes a city? The buildings we see—or the memories and visions we embody? Who are the ones building our city?"

Emergency Stairs invites the audience into a profound meditation on memory and loss, constructing impossible cities within the theatre.

** This work incorporates two found texts, they are "Some Cities" by Pooja Nansi and "Renovation" by Edwin Thumboo.*

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE BY TAN SHOU CHEN

Welcome.

The context of *Pulau Rindu* is framed as an "Industry Project". The transition from learning into practice is a profound moment for the artist. As they venture out of the formality of study into the classroom of life, they test their training, and examine what they hold as truth.

In working with this community of NAFA students, I too am interrogating my own training and doctrine. What do I want to transmit? What should end with me? And, what can I say that I won't be able to in another setting?

To achieve this, our process started with Italo Calvino's seminal work *Invisible Cities*. If you have read the book, great, if you have not, it is not paramount to watching this work either.

In theatre, the act of doing and watching are both one. Someone watches someone doing something. The doer knows that the watcher is watching. The watcher in turn knows they too are being watched by the doer. In the experience of this alchemic multi-state of doing, being watched and watching -all at the same time- theatre is made.

I invite you to watch the intangibles that make up the cities we build.

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE BY TAN SHOU CHEN

We excavated the ephemeral that cannot be captured in any urban planning document: how the inhabitants of such a space acts; and how they act builds that same space; how the space creates a past, and how it creates the future.

We rooted our process in a collection of experiences. Excavating stories with deep listening, drawing from our immediate surroundings - Singapore could not be ignored - building the heart of our cities with text, body and soul.

Thank you NAFA and Emergency Stairs for creating this space for industry and training to intersect.



# CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM

Director:
Tan Shou Chen

Artistic Director/
Producer:
Liu Xiaoyi

Co-Producer/
Graphic Designer:
Huang Suhuai

Production
Manager:
Victoria Anna Wong

Stage Managers:
Voon Yueqi

Lighting Designer:
Emanorwatty Saleh

Sound Designer:
Meng Jiaoyang
(Intern)

Video Designer:
Zhu Xuanru (Intern)

Project Coordinator:
Ho Yan Xi (Intern)

Production
Assistant:
Nurul Hanna Daud

Performers:
Athirah
Xueya
Gio
Jovan Chiang
Julien Kerk
Mohamed Khalifah
Soumya
Nisha Kaur
Khalisa Khairullah
Priyanka
Ruqaiyah
Zorian Seah

# CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM



Director
## Tan Shou Chen

Tan Shou Chen is a theatre director whose work moves between the intimate and the epic — finding the human pulse in between the traverse of time and space. With over two decades as both performer and director, Shou Chen brings a rare double fluency to the stage: an actor's ear, and a director's eye.

Highlights of his directorial works include:

Theatre: *The Last Gardener* (The Theatre Practice, 2024); Ng Yi-Sheng's *Desert Blooms - The Dawn of Queer Singapore Theatre* (Centre 42, 2024); Caryl Churchill's *Love and Information* (SMU Arts Festival, 2023); Joel Tan's *Mosaic* (Esplanade Studios, Singtel Waterfront, 2023); Tony Perez's *On North Diversion Road* (SMU Arts Festival, 2021); Joel Tan's *A Bird Calls You to Moscow* (2020),*13.13.13*, (Theatreworks SG, part of the international company's 2018 season); *Open Waters* (Bangkok Theatre Festival 2017, NAC Creation Grant), *MEDEA* (The Substation's Director's Lab, 2014); *Now Then Again* by Penny Penniston (NUS Arts Festival 2016).

Opera: Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*; Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (2024) Henry Purcell's *Dido* (2023); George Friederich Handel's *Alcina* (2021), and *Orestes* by Ifigenia (Singapore International Festival of the Arts, 2019).

www.shouchen.net



Artistic Director / Producer
## Liu Xiaoyi

Liu Xiaoyi is an artist, curator, educator, and cultural strategist based in Singapore. He is the Artistic Director of the theatre collective Emergency Stairs and is widely regarded as one of the leading figures in contemporary experimental theatre and intercultural exchange in Asia. Over the past two decades, Liu has consistently pushed the boundaries of theatrical form while building long-term, cross-border platforms for independent artists. His work is situated at the intersection of artistic practice and cultural systems, exploring the dynamic relationships between art, society, technology, and education. As a curator and educator, he has launched numerous platforms such as Southernmost, Emergency Camp, The Peripheral Experiment, and Emergency Academy, which have become important hubs for artistic dialogue across Asia.Liu is the recipient of several major awards, including the "Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal", Singapore's "Young Artist Award", and Asia Weekly's "Global Outstanding Young Leader Award". Since 2023, he has been the artist-in-residence at Linjiang New District in Jiangsu, China. In 2024, he was appointed Fellow (Artistic Exchange) at the Faculty of Performing Arts, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), University of the Arts Singapore, and in 2025 he was invited as Guest Professor at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen, Germany.

# CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM



Co-Producer/
Graphic Designer
**Huang Suhuai**

Huang Suhuai is a multidisciplinary artist-curator whose practice traverses visual art, theatre, and socially engaged art. Her work explores themes of identity, memory, and the relationship between the body and everydayness. This investigation takes form through drawing, mixed-media installations, experimental theatre, and participatory practices. She is the founder of Plain Studio and currently serves as Executive Director of Emergency Stairs, where she continues to expand her artistic research through curatorial projects and cross-disciplinary collaborations. Her recent initiatives include the cross-media theatre production *Seahigh*, the community arts programme *River Initiatives*, and the interdisciplinary lab *InterFlux*.

www.huang-suhuai.com



Lighting Designer:
**Emanorwatty Saleh**

Ema began her theatre journey in 1992 and made her professional debut as a lighting designer in 1997. She later earned a Bachelor of Arts in Technical Theatre Arts from LASALLE College of the Arts in 2007, before taking a brief hiatus for motherhood. Working across diverse cultural and linguistic communities, she believes theatre transcends language and ethnic boundaries. Upon returning, she developed a distinctive "street style" approach — embracing exploration, experimentation, and unpredictability, and continues to expand her practice, particularly in digital design. Over the past three years, Ema has collaborated as a lighting designer with Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts(NAFA), working closely with different cohorts, directors, lecturers, and collaborators, alongside Emergency Stairs. This ongoing journey has been deeply meaningful and nurturing, shaping her artistic growth while supporting and mentoring emerging theatre-makers.



Sound Designer:
**Meng Jiaoyang**

Meng Jiaoyang, born in Shanghai in 2001, currently resides in Singapore. He is engaged in theatre performance, photography, and theatre sound design. He has participated in the 1st to 3rd editions of the Emergency Camp hosted by Emergency Stairs; Li Xie's Meyerhold Method performance workshops. Jiaoyang believes imagination determines the depth of character development. In his creative process, he reflects on how human circumstances, mental states, and perspectives influence choices, seeking pathways through life's challenges. An avid photography enthusiast, he excels at capturing the unique chemistry that emerges from the interplay of people's movements and expressions.

(ig @kid5a7mnesia)

# CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM



Zhu Xuanru graduated with a diploma in Design Communication and Experience from Lasalle College of the Arts. She is dedicated to exploring the fusion and symbiosis of various theatrical elements. Having grown up and studied in a multicultural environment, she maintains a sustained creative interest in the interplay of language, identity and narrative styles within the theatre. She hopes to continue refining her craft by capturing authentic and subtle moments, using spatial and visual composition as her creative medium.

Video Designer:
**Zhu Xuanru**



## Athirah

Athirah is a final-year student in the Diploma in English Theatre at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). She is a part-time theatre kid and a full-time Letterboxd user. Before NAFA, she was an engineering student who found her passion in the art of theatre after feeling lost from graduating with knowledge that didn't fit her. Having tackled a wide range of different roles, such as Presley from *The Pitchfork Disney*, Sorin from *The Seagull*, Mrs. Linde from *A Doll's House*, and one of her favourites, Viola from *Twelfth Night*, prepared her to be adaptable and not tied down to a single character trope. Other than dabbling in dance outside of school hours, she's currently channeling her inner Ken-ergy to take on a variety of roles for the future stages she'll be on in her upcoming theatre journey.



## Xueya

Xueya has been involved in performance from a young age despite maintaining a long-standing, slightly ironic relationship with stage fright. What began as a hesitant step onto the stage gradually evolved into a deeper fascination with theatre, particularly after being introduced to the world of production. Working behind the scenes sparked her curiosity in how stories are constructed and brought vividly to life.

Her credits include Desdemona in *Othello*, Nina in *The Seagull*, Helene in *Ghosts*, and Shen Te in *The Good People of Szechwan*, where she has developed a fondness for emotionally intricate and psychologically layered characters (the more complicated, the better).

She hopes to continue creating experimental works and step into the musical theatre space someday.



## Gio Teresa

The theatre scene is an industry that fascinates Gio, inspiring her to enrol in Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), pursuing a Diploma in Theatre (English Drama). As a graduating student, the three years in NAFA have shaped her to be a well-rounded performer. Gio discovers herself as she undergoes the programme, finally finding her own voice in this world. Gio is proud of all the roles she has portrayed, but... she also has her favorites: Portia in *Merchant of Venice*, Mother in *Boom*, and Regina in *Ghosts*. Through *Pulau Rindu*, Gio wants to deliver what it means to long for a place, a person, a memory, and everything in between - welcoming the audience on this journey. Gio is uncertain of what the future will hold, but she is certain of one thing: her classmates are the "pulau" that she will "rindu".



## Jovan Chiang

Jovan Chiang is an actor who is a graduating student of the Diploma in Theatre (English Drama) at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). His ever-evolving interest in theatre started from a young age, joining his primary and secondary school's drama club and involving himself with theatre, films, and commercials. Some notable stage credits include "Boon" in *Boom*, "Trigorin" in *The Seagull*, "Pastor Manders" in *Ghosts*, "Bassanio" in *The Merchant of Venice* and "Kent" in *Reasons to Be Pretty*. Jovan has also taken part in the Asian Youth Theatre Festival (AYTF) in 2024 at Chiang Mai, Thailand, organised by Buds Theatre, as part of the ensemble in a devised piece titled *Our Kampung*. Jovan intends to tell Singaporean stories through theatre and to continue his exploration in this art form in hopes of being a prodigy Chinese boy in Singapore.



## Julien Kerk

Julien Kerk is a multipassionate artist who has dabbled in acting, singing, Butoh, and pole dance. They are continuously exploring modes of art and movement, and seek to nurture their fledgling practice into something embodied, sensual, and absurd. Their journey in NAFA's Diploma in English Theatre has brought them through the roles of Oswald in *Ghosts* by Henrik Ibsen, Shen Te/Shui Ta in *The Good Woman of Setzuan* by Bertolt Brecht, Ismene in *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh, and Pupil in *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco, among many others. Their favourite responses to their performances have been the likes of "weird but good" and "I was scared". Now they arrive alongside their classmates at *Pulau Rindu* (Island of Longing) by Tan Shou Chen. Soon, Julien will step off the island and slither into the waters… and hopes you will join them in their voyage.



## Mohamed Khalifah

Mohamed Khalifah is a final-year Diploma in Theatre (English Drama) student at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). Khalifah has had his toe dipped in theatre since his days in ITE, starting from a drama CCA, ITE Theatrical Ensemble. The passion has only grown since then, and he is constantly working to expand his knowledge of theatre. His roles in NAFA include "Lim Chong Boon" in *Everything But The Brain*, "Othello" in *Othello*, and several roles in *The Good Woman of Szechwan*. Outside of NAFA, he has played multiple roles in *Merlion The Musical* by Stella Kon and *A Million Tiny Plays* About Singapore by Andrew J Mowatt. He has also had his directorial debut with *Normal* by Faith Ng, performed by NAFA StageWorks, a theatre CCA founded by him and his classmates. He has also been awarded the NAC Arts Scholarship in 2025. Khalifah aspires to be an all-rounded theatre practitioner.



## Soumya

Soumya Murugesan is a final-year Diploma in Theatre (English Drama) student at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). Her journey in performance began in her ITE theatrical ensemble, where she first discovered her passion for theater, which has continued to flourish throughout her time at NAFA.

Soumya has demonstrated her versatility through a diverse range of roles, including Steph in *Reasons to Be Pretty*, Snow White in *Another Story Told – Evil Queen*, Fate in *Absence*, and Helen in *Jane Eyre*.

Through each role, she demonstrates a deep commitment to portraying complex characters with authenticity and emotional depth. Beyond performing, she has expanded her artistic practice into directing, most notably with her production of Oleanna.

Soumya envisions a future in theatre where she moves between educator, director, performer, and more, creating spaces where stories come alive, voices are empowered, and connections are deeply felt. Through her work, she hopes to create meaningful experiences that resonate far beyond the stage.



## Nisha Kaur

Nisha believes that on stage, her body becomes the canvas, and art is able to flow through her, which is a gift. It feeds her soul and allows her to be vulnerable. She falls in love with her characters and is privileged to play them, to give them a voice, and bring them to life. She loves taking the time to understand them as truthfully as possible and do justice to them. Each character leaves an imprint on her. She hopes to make an audience feel and affect them in ways that stay with them. Theatre has also taught her it is important to stand up for the things you believe in. She hopes to find beauty in her contradictions and constantly explore and grow as an actor. Apart from acting, she hopes to one day write and direct meaningful work. Notable credits include “Miss Julie” in Miss Julie, “Shen Te” in The Good Woman of Setzuan, “Rosalind” in As You Like It.

Her dream is to one day live in a loft with a golden retriever named Pluto.



## Khalisa Khairullah

Khalisa Khairullah is a small girl with big dreams and ambitions. She has always found theatre to be comfortable and a playful place. People often ask me, why English Theatre? I would answer because my late grandmother introduced me to this wonderful world. “Acting fills up gaps and spots of emptiness that allows me to express emotions that I fear.”

Some notable credits include “Phenomenal Woman” by Maya Angelou, a poem that really speaks to her as a feminist. “Nina” seagull, “Stella” streetcar named desire, “Olivia” Twelfth Night, “Helena” A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and “Steph” in Reasons to Be Pretty. Khalisa has also taken part in the Asian Youth Theatre Festival (AYTF) at Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 2024, organised by Buds Theatre, as part of a devised ensemble piece titled Our Kampung. Khalisa questions the line between tradition and Western and how that influences her works



## Priyanka

Priyanka is a graduating student of the Diploma in English Theatre. What started as a silly interest in storytelling and the joy she found from entertaining somehow escalated into doing it on stage, just with blocking, better lighting, and the occasional existential crisis.

She is drawn to the messiness of human behaviour, enjoying the process of dissecting and rebuilding characters from the inside out, especially when it's the kind she can't explain in real life but fully understands it's a character's problem. Her notable credits include Nora in *A Doll's House*, Oliver in *Lemons Lemons Lemons*, and Phoebe and Celia in *As You Like It*, showcasing her range across emotionally driven and playful work.

Priyanka has dyed her hair thirteen times throughout her training—creative expression, or just a tendency to spiral, depending on the day. She hopes to continue telling stories that challenge, unsettle, and stay with people.



## Ruqaiyah

If you ever wanna know what goes on in the mind of a four-pinned, 3 brooched girl, well… you've come to the right place. Ruqaiyah is someone you meet out of thin air. Air, not hair, okay? She is elegant, refined, until you get to meet her 6 other personalities. She can be spontaneous, loud, curious, but once she's tired, she can and WILL sit in her little bubble and go non-verbal for a while.

I would say some of her best work was playing Blanche from A Streetcar Named Desire in her final assessment in Year 1, where she had to put up a fake Southern accent and doll herself up with a blue dress and a fancy suitcase. Ooh, and also Melk, at the end of Year 2, where we had to devise an original piece straight from the back of our minds. Wow… those were the times.

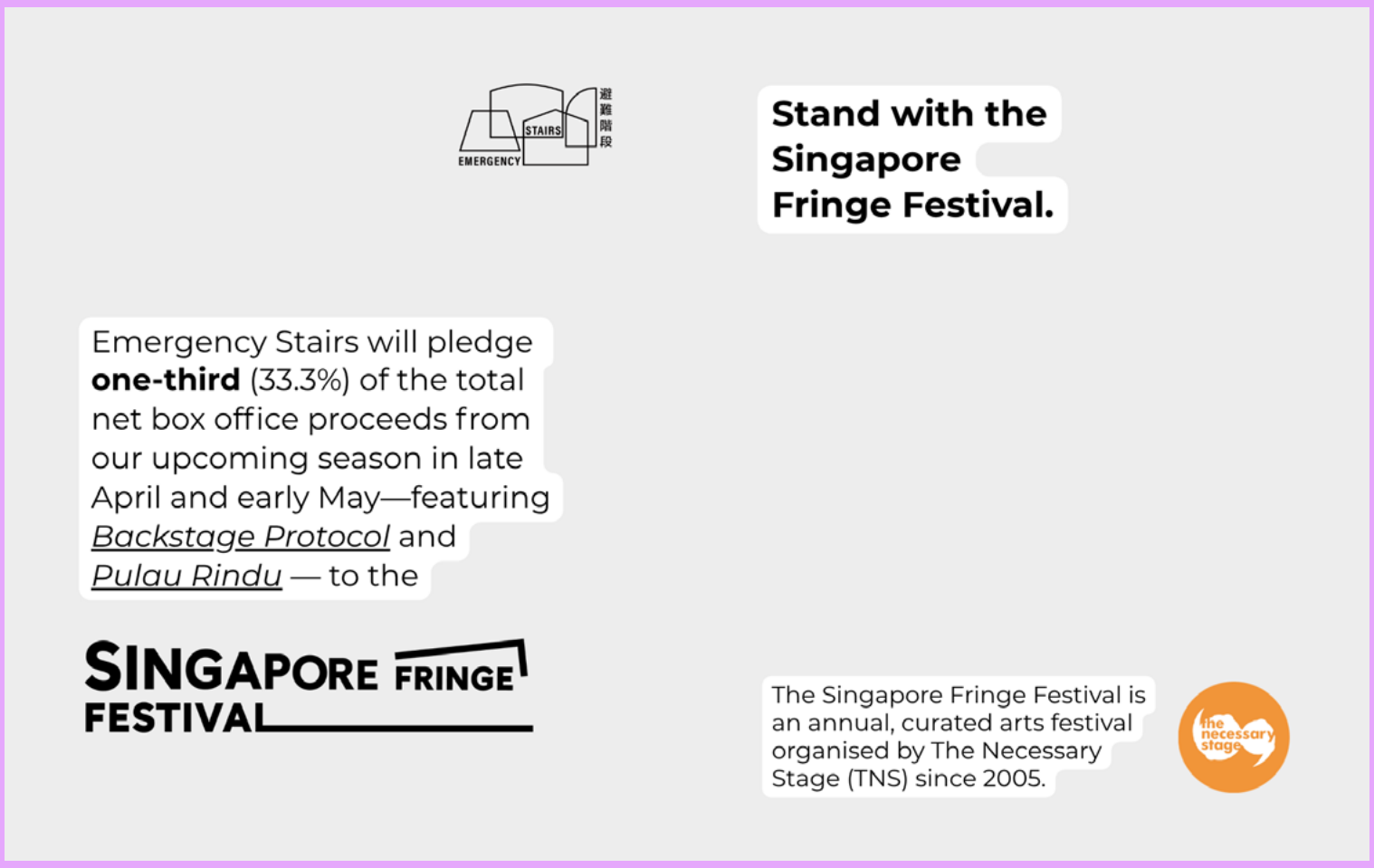


## Zorian Seah

Zorian is an actor and graduating student of the Diploma in Theatre (English Drama) at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). Originally, he dreamt of inventing a radioactive spider, granting him Spider-Man's powers. When he realised that that wasn't possible, he decided to become an actor instead, hoping that he might one day land the role of Spider-Man. Some of Zorian's notable roles include the Corpse in *Boom*, Little Chaski in *Run, Little Chaski*! An Inka Trail Adventure at Punggol Regional Library and being a cast member of the 24-Hour Playwriting Competition Dramatised Reading hosted by T:>Works. When not acting, Zorian can be found emceeing or hosting events. Notable events include NAFA's 2025 and 2026 Open House, the University of the Arts (UAS) 2026 Open House and NAFA's 2026 Spring Alumni Reunion.

In his free time, he studies for his dream role by collecting comics and action figures.






## A City Without a Fringe is a Disgrace

By Liu Xiaoyi

The true cultural measure of a city is not the number of glossy, shimmering theatres it builds. It is whether it allows the voices in the shadows, on the margins, and in the laboratories to grow wild.

The spirit of the Fringe is, by nature, both a supplement and an offence to the “centre.” It traces its lineage to the

# STAND WITH THE SINGAPORE FRINGE FESTIVAL

uninvited artists on the streets of Edinburgh—a constant reminder that the most primal cultural energy rarely thrives under the mainstream spotlight. Instead, it lives in the cracks: the undefined, the untamed, and the interstitial.

For a city like Singapore—a place that prizes precision and order—the "margin" is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Singapore should be more than an efficient port. It must be a laboratory for friction and contestation. If "Cultural Hub" is to be more than a hollow slogan, it must be a platform that genuinely connects independent artists from across the globe. A city without a Fringe is a disgrace.

Since its inception, Emergency Stairs has lived on the margins. We are advocates of the experimental and practitioners of exchange. We know exactly how gruelling it is to create in the absence of institutional and commercial safety nets. But we also know that it is precisely this hardship that sharpens the edge of art.

We believe this: to do what is difficult is the most essential act of culture, and to do what is dangerous is the safest strategy for creation. When an artist—or a festival—no longer feels the weight of a threat, when the work ceases to be a "dangerous" exploration, art begins to wither.

Therefore, we have decided on a small but resolute action: Emergency Stairs will pledge one-third (33.3%) of the total net box office proceeds from our upcoming season in late April and early May—featuring *Backstage Protocol* and *Pulau Rindu*, co-presented with NAFA—to the Singapore Fringe Festival.

While this is not a massive sum, it carries two fundamental intentions:

First, it is an act of industry solidarity. The Fringe is an indispensable laboratory for contemporary art in Singapore. As an arts group that has long benefited from this ecosystem, we believe that giving back is an instinct for survival. We must ensure that the ecosystem supporting us all continues to breathe.

Second, it is a lesson for students. I want our students and the next generation of artists to see that we are not just creators working in isolation; we are part of a larger community. We have a responsibility to uphold and protect one another.

Finally, I call upon every audience member, every peer, and everyone who cares about the cultural future of Singapore: Stand with the Singapore Fringe Festival. To protect the Fringe is to protect the spirit of the city; it is to safeguard the right of every creator to challenge the boundary.

Without the Fringe, there is no true cultural evolution. Without the margins, the centre remains empty.

# ABOUT EMERGENCY STAIRS

Emergency Stairs is a Singapore-based international experimental arts group.

Since its founding in 2017, Emergency Stairs has quickly established itself as one of the representative experimental arts groups in Singapore, and is regularly invited to perform and exchange in more than 30 cities around the world.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Liu Xiaoyi, Emergency Stairs has created a body of works that challenges the existing boundaries of theatre making. The company has also devoted itself to the development of cross-media art forms and cross-cultural art environments by initiating international exchanges, the cultivating of cultural leadership among artists, and promoting arts research and arts criticism.

Emergency Stairs endeavours to be a leading cultural institution in the region.

For more info: https://emergencystairs.org/

# INTO CAMPUS 入学试验

