

Media Release
For Immediate Release

THIRD EDITION OF STORYFEST: INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING FESTIVAL SINGAPORE INVITES AUDIENCES TO MAKE BELIEVE



Singapore, 23 April 2019 - StoryFest: International Storytelling Festival Singapore will be returning for its third edition from 21 to 24 June 2019, to once again showcase the best in artistic and applied storytelling in Singapore and from around the world. Presented by The Storytelling Centre Limited and The Arts House, StoryFest 2019 will be celebrating the theme of “Make Believe”, creating the spark for audiences to activate their imagination through storytelling, and encouraging them to actively create their own meaning through the stories told. StoryFest 2019 will feature a variety of local commissions and international performances, applied storytelling workshops and free, interactive programmes that are suitable for both adult and family audiences.

Creative Producer of StoryFest, **Kamini Ramachandran**, says: “There’s no time like the present to open our hearts and minds to understanding the people and cultures around us through their stories. Storytelling is the oldest form of communication that speaks directly to the hearts and minds of all people. Let’s fly away on the wings of ‘Make Believe’ and see the world through these stories.”

Returning to and taking ownership of our stories and roots

StoryFest 2019 encourages audiences to take ownership of their roots with this year’s local commissions, **The Singapore Showcase: *Make Believe***, and **The Young Storyteller’s Showcase: *The Wings of Love***.

The Singapore Showcase: *Make Believe* features six local storytellers from different professional backgrounds, with each one telling stories related to the Nusantara region – including stories directly from the Nusantara region, as well as migrant communities of Asia. **The Singapore Showcase** demonstrates how the connection audiences feel to their roots can extend beyond their ethnicities, to the region they grew up in.

Seasoned storyteller and theatre practitioner, **Verena Tay**, will tell *The Holy Banyan* investigating how it became a revered icon in the Nusantara region. **Dawn Lau**, a storyteller mentored directly by **Kamini Ramachandran**, will explore the concept of “*Daulat*” through stories about the sultans of early Singapore. Theatre practitioner, **Grace Kalaiselvi**, will present the Indonesian folk tale of *Dewi Kadita* in ***Goddess of the Sea***. Museum docent, **Hafiz Rashid** will narrate ***Syair Sinyor Kosta***, the tale of a Portuguese seafarer and his love for Layla Mayang, the Malay lover of a Chinese merchant. Editor **Mrigaa Sethi**, known for her personal storytelling and spoken word performances, has chosen to share favourite stories through ***Krishna’s Unusual Adventures***. Arts correspondent **Akshita Nanda**, will be performing the story of ***Shiva and Shakti***, exploring the powers of male and female divinity.

The Young Storytellers Showcase: The Wings of Love, will similarly be a celebration of Asian mythologies, exploring how our history goes beyond 700 years. Both ***The Wings of Love*** and ***Make Believe*** emphasise the storytellers’ shared identities as migrants and regional ethnic people. All of the storytellers involved in ***The Wings of Love*** are performance trained, which complements “*Make Believe*” perfectly.

Athena Wee who acted in movies such as Vidsee’s *Queen of Hearts*, will be performing the tragic Chinese love epic, ***The Butterfly Lovers***. **Sharvesh Leatchmanan**, who played the role of Nevin in *Tanglin*, will delve into traditional Indian mythology and explore the illusion of time. Trained in singing and the piano, **Kira Lim** will transport audiences with her operatic rendition of the folksong *Arirang* as she tells a Korean tale of separated lovers. A seasoned performer, **Charlotte Lau** will be returning to StoryFest for her second year in 2019, enlightening us on the origins of a lake in Vietnam through the tale of a feisty princess. Also not new to StoryFest is **Wang Shao Kai**, who originally worked as a Marketing Assistant in the first edition of StoryFest. This time, he will be returning to perform a Tibetan story of the talking corpse, inspired by a tale he heard recently in Nepal.

Encouraging intercultural exchange between local and overseas storytellers

StoryFest 2019 also promotes knowledge and intercultural exchange between local and overseas storytellers, by showcasing extraordinary storytellers and stories from around the world to the local audience, and vice versa. StoryFest 2019 invites four international artists to present their works, individually and as part of ***A Night of Magical Myths: Festival Closing Showcase***, and offers them an opportunity to watch local storytellers performing their stories in their respective showcases. The Festival marks the Asian premieres of ***Reflecting Fridas: The Life of Frida Kahlo*** and ***Gilgamesh***, by **Ana Lines** and **David Novak** respectively.

Brazilian storyteller and chairperson of the Stafford Knot Storytelling Club **Ana Lines**, explores the complicated story of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo with ***Reflecting Fridas: The Life of Frida Kahlo***, navigating how Frida’s struggles through love, injuries and suffering contributed to her art.

David Novak, a recipient of the Circle of Excellence Award from the National Storytelling Network USA, uses his background in theatre arts to help him bring the ancient Sumerian epic, ***Gilgamesh***, to life.

Martina Pisciali, who trained as a Young Storyteller under the mentorship of Raccontamiunastoria in Rome, will be presenting ***The Journey of a Young Storyteller***, sharing her development as a storyteller through the years.

The Festival culminates in ***A Night of Magical Myths: Festival Closing Showcase***, featuring **Ana Lines**, **David Novak**, **Martina Pisciali** and Scottish storyteller, **Daniel Allison**, performing on the same stage. **Lines** will be presenting ***Barbecued Husbands***, with fantastical stories based on an anthology of indigenous mythology collected by Brazilian anthropologist Betty Mindlin. **Novak** will be performing ***Stories on the Edge of Dark***, a collection of eerie stories inspired by traditional Native American and European folklore. **Pisciali's** story ***The Pale Mountains*** is a rare folktale of separated lovers originating from her Italian heritage of the Dolomite mountain region. **Allison** will be showcasing ***The Daughter of King-Under-Wave***, a Scottish tale of the Fianna, a legendary band of Celtic warriors who protected the shores of Scotland and Ireland long ago.

StoryFest 2019 aims to introduce children to global storytellers, who will share stories from their native regions, encouraging the children to become curious and take ownership of their own roots. The family audience shows in StoryFest will include **Ana Lines' *Jungle Adventures***, where she will bring the Brazilian jungle to life with her animal folktales. **David Novak** will invite audiences to create an imaginary fire as he tells participation and interaction tales in ***The Storyteller's Fire***. **Daniel Allison** will perform ***This Tale, That Tail!***, where he will not only be telling stories of leopards, lions, kings and ponies, but he will also be playing the didgeridoo, offering another layer to his stories through the use of sound and music.

Making meaning out of stories based on our own identities

The Festival encourages audiences to make their own meaning from the stories they hear based on personal observations and individual identities. Independent researcher, curator, arts practitioner and educator, **Zarina Muhammad**, will be showcasing her **Visual Storytelling Exhibition – *Pharmacopeias for Accredited Agents of Poisoning*** together with a short **Ceremonial Ritual Performance**. Zarina's work invites audiences to use their own existing narratives, cultural references and myths to make meaning of the exhibition and performance.

This year marks the first time StoryFest will be presenting a visual storytelling exhibition. The Exhibition is based on mythical female characters embodied through clay effigies. As audiences enter the Exhibition, they are encouraged to tap on their own experiences to create stories about the effigies. These effigies can represent characters from stories that audiences are familiar with, or they can even represent the viewer themselves, based on individual interpretations of the artefacts.

The **Ceremonial Ritual Performance** will be led by **Zarina Muhammad** just before her workshop, with elements like batik, spices and flowers as homage to Nusantara links and practices. Audiences will also be invited to participate and carry items which form a part of her performance. Once again, audiences are encouraged to apply their own narratives and cultural experiences to make meaning of the ritual performance in personal ways.

Storytelling is universal

StoryFest 2019 demonstrates storytelling's universality and existence within different forms, and how it is more than a tool to engage children. The Festival showcases experts working in different niche areas of applied storytelling, encouraging audiences to explore the possibility of using storytelling in different settings. These seven experts will be facilitating workshops and masterclasses over the course of the Festival, guiding participants to explore the application of storytelling in different contexts and through various forms.

In her workshop **Puteri, Ratu, Nenek Kebayan: Tracing the mythological roots and translations of the feared and revered body in Southeast Asia**, **Zarina Muhammad** will be using storytelling expressively by demonstrating how to make clay effigies and encouraging participants to express their stories through the making process. This workshop focuses on the process rather than the outcome, showing participants how to give shape and form to their ideas and thoughts, and weaving their narrative through the visual arts.

Another hands-on and activity-based workshop is **Rachel Yang's *The Doll Maker's Narrative***. A qualified art psychotherapist and president of the Art Therapists' Association (Singapore), Yang uses storytelling therapeutically, in the creation of the doll, with the doll working as a representation of self, or a medium to talk about a problem.

Storytelling can also be used for business, as shown by **Dr Edmund Chow** in his workshop, ***Leadership and Storytelling***. Chow is both an educator and an applied theatre practitioner, and he has developed a storytelling program for leadership at the Singapore Management University. His workshop will focus on corporate storytelling, where participants can learn how to form a narrative and tell a story related to the workplace, whether it be regarding leading a team, problem solving or selling a product.

Choo Ruizhi uses his Instagram platform, @singapore_stories, as a mode of digital storytelling. His workshop, ***What is Singapore, too?*** demonstrates how he uses his platform to have conversations about Singapore history; questioning identity, roots and stories. His workshop encourages the younger generation to explore different means to discover their own narrative, and tell their own stories.

Ana Lines' workshop takes a more reflective approach to storytelling. ***Reflections: Storytelling through Memories*** uses old photographs as an entry point for participants to access past memories to encourage the creation of their own personal narrative.

Daniel Allison's workshop, ***Transforming Tales: Adapting Ancient Tales for Today's Audience*** demonstrates how storytelling can be used to adapt old stories and material, to present a more contemporary voice. **Allison** is a writer and published author of an anthology of Celtic folktales, who works primarily with old, literary texts. Participants can learn creative writing techniques specific to the adaptation process and the ethics of doing so.

David Novak will be facilitating two masterclasses, titled ***Tell Me About It: Storytelling as a Teaching Strategy***, and ***The Storyteller's Compass: Storytelling as a Tool for Creative Communication*** respectively. The former explores storytelling for education, and how it can be used as a pedagogical tool in a classroom setting. The latter highlights storytelling as an instrument for creative communication by focusing on conversational skills.

(This program has been made possible in part through the sponsorship of the National Storytelling Network.

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Promoting the art of listening and sharing narratives

Throughout the Festival period there will be a free interactive audience co-creation programme, **Dis/Connect: Digital Detox**. This programme will be located at the ground floor Gallery of the The Arts House, forming a special space programmed to inspire conversation, the sharing of spoken stories and creation of visual stories. This programme consists of kinaesthetic, visual, aural and text-based activities that complement each other perfectly to get audiences off their digital devices.

People preferring kinaesthetic activities can experiment with **Origami Tales** by **Origami Singapore**, which features a creative paper folding activity combined with oral storytelling. Suitable for both families and adult participants, this activity will encourage participants to share stories based on the objects and characters they have created.

Audiences who enjoy more visual activities can try their hand at **My Story, My Art** by **Daylight Creative Therapies**. Trained facilitators from DCT will guide participants in using simple visual art methods to respond to their personal narratives, and participants are encouraged to share their individual experiences.

The Big Story Tent allows audiences to close their eyes and listen to stories told by emerging and established storytellers, with scheduled storytelling sessions, engaging audiences who are more inclined towards aural activities. Beyond this, The Big Story Tent will also see facilitators introduce puppets and props to encourage story sharing, communication and conversation between strangers, and among families and friends.

Room to Read by Asiapac Books presents a more text-based activity, and consists of a picture book library for browsing and reading aloud. There will also be a curated book display, with specially selected books linked directly to the featured stories performed during the Festival.

More information on StoryFest 2019's full line-up can be found on <https://storyfestsg.com>. To purchase tickets, please log on to <https://storyfest.peatix.com>

Event Details

StoryFest 2019 (#MakeBelieveSG)

Venue: The Arts House, 1 Old Parliament Lane, Singapore 179429

Dates: 21 to 24 June 2019

Notes to the Editor:

High-resolution images are available here.
(Credits: The Storytelling Centre Limited)

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About StoryFest

StoryFest: International Storytelling Festival Singapore is a platform to celebrate and showcase varieties of styles, repertoire and cultural arts presentation of storytelling presented by Singaporean and international storytellers. Organised by The Storytelling Centre Limited, a two-year-old non-profit storytelling arts organization to promote storytelling as an art form and cultural tradition, the Festival aims to bring the best of artistic and applied storytelling to the Singapore audience.

About The Storytelling Centre Limited

The Storytelling Centre Limited is a non-profit organisation based in Singapore. Our core mission is to foster and advance the art of storytelling through performances, collaborations, artistic exchanges, mentorships, training and community outreach.

The Storytelling Centre Limited firmly believes that stories are storehouses of Singapore's unique multidimensional legacy. The oral traditions of folktales, mythology, legends and fables are avenues for preserving, showcasing and developing Singapore's rich and diverse heritage. Our focus is on ensuring the sustainability of the art form by nurturing emerging Young Storytellers.

Flagship programmes:

- StoryFest: International Storytelling Festival Singapore
- The Young Storytellers Mentorship Project

For more information, visit <https://storytellingcentrelimited.com>

About The Arts House

Occupying the almost 200-year-old building that was home to Singapore's first parliament, The Arts House continues in the distinguished tradition of this gazetted national monument and now plays a key role in the country's arts and creative scene. The Arts House at the Old Parliament, as it is affectionately referred to, promotes and presents multidisciplinary programmes and festivals within its elegant spaces. It focuses in particular on the literary arts, celebrating the works of written and spoken word artists from Singapore and beyond.

The Arts House is run and managed by Arts House Limited. For more information, visit www.theartshouse.sg.

About Arts House Limited

Arts House Limited (AHL) is a not-for-profit organisation committed to enriching lives through the arts. AHL runs The Arts House, a multidisciplinary arts centre with a focus on literary programming located in the heart of Singapore's Civic District; manages Goodman Arts Centre and Aliwal Arts Centre, two creative enclaves for artists, arts groups and creative businesses; and presents festivals through the arts centres. AHL presents the Singapore International Festival of Arts, the annual pinnacle celebration of performing arts in Singapore commissioned by National Arts Council.

AHL was set up in 11 Dec 2002 as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) under NAC and was formerly known as The Old Parliament House Limited. It was officially renamed Arts House Limited on 19 Mar 2014.