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CENTRE 42 LAUNCHES NEW SUITE OF PLAYWRIGHT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Centre 42 is pleased to announce a brand new set of initiatives dedicated to supporting and developing playwrights across a range of experience levels. Broadly termed the New Writing Development Programmes, these initiatives encompass residencies for playwrights, presentation opportunities, and dramaturgical support for work in development.

These programmes were devised in a collaboration between Centre 42's Company Manager Ma Yanling, Creative Associate Joel Tan, and Creative Producer Shridar Mani. The programmes were created to meet gaps in the industry as determined through a deep process of research, during which the team ran focus groups and interviews with a wide range of industry players, including playwrights, theatre companies, producing platforms, and playwright educators.

These new programmes come on the back of eight years of Centre 42's work in the scene as a centre for text-based work for the stage, during which time it grew to meet many different needs and urgencies as a space for independent theatre-makers, not just playwrights.

On how this programme builds on Centre 42's work, company manager Ma Yanling says, "Centre 42 has sort of come full-circle after eight years, to bring the focus back on the craft and professional practicalities of playwriting in Singapore."

In the current landscape, there exist many introductory platforms that support new writers up to a first-stage reading. Few playwrights go on to a professional staging or multiple airings of their work. Yanling adds: “The research period, supported by NAC’s Self-Employed Persons Grant (SEPG) afforded us updates on our local landscape to see where the recurrent gaps are. Short of C42 expanding to become a producing and presenting house, we hope to utilise our limited resources to bridge this gap by building an active and sustained developmental pipeline for playwrights to the professional stage. This also includes building on the new writing development capacities of our network of directors and dramaturgs.”

On the guiding philosophy of the programme, Creative Associate Joel Tan says: “What this new suite of initiatives does is put writers at the heart of our programmes. Throughout this process, we’ve asked ourselves: how do we meet writers and their plays at their point of need? How do we better advocate for writers to the people with producing power? How do we spotlight, support, and develop writers alongside their plays? As a result, all of these programmes are writer centric, but also make it a priority to hold writers within a network of other practitioners—directors, dramaturgs, actors, and producers.”

The New Writing Development suite of initiatives goes live in September 2022, kicking off as a pilot programme to test out and refine the model.

1. THE PROGRAMMES

I. Playwright’s Professional Development Residency

One of two new writing development residencies, the Playwright’s Professional Development Residency (PPDR) is the cornerstone initiative of the New Writing Development Programmes. Targeted at early-career playwrights, selected writers form a studio that will meet regularly to discuss their craft, their ideas, and support each other in their projects, while receiving opportunities for presentation and professional engagement. They will also receive a modest stipend to sustain their writing practice throughout the residency.

Where many playwright support programmes focus on developing a single play idea, this residency aims to develop the playwright in a holistic way: through writing across different dramatic forms and contexts, teaching opportunities, and reading and critiquing.

The pilot incarnation of the inaugural residency will support four early career playwrights. The first batch of writers are (in alphabetical order):

Ahmad Musta'ain Bin Khamis
A Yagnya
Danial Matin
Rachel Chin

A major tenet of this residency is active advocacy for the four writers through presentation opportunities, connecting them with the industry, and pushing for their work to be read, seen, and considered seriously, all made possible due to the rigorous, long-term nature of this residency.

The pilot will encompass various showcases of the writer's work, and will culminate in a professional production of new short plays developed over the course of the residency.

The one-year pilot is a compressed version of the full developmental model. The full model would go on for another year, where in addition to more reflection and presentation opportunities, the four writers will develop a full length play.

II. Writer-In-Residence

This is the second of Centre 42's new writing development residencies. The Writer-in-Residence scheme, the first in Centre 42's history, spotlights and supports a mid-career playwright for a period of six months.

During their time with Centre 42, the Writer in Residence is given a modest stipend and access to working and rehearsal space. In close consultation with the Writer in Residence, Centre 42 will also produce a number of public reading events that showcase work-in-progress, past work they'd like revisited, or other writings. Centre 42 will also produce a public workshop of the writer's own design.

The Writer in Residence will be deeply involved in the life of Centre 42, reading new plays and providing dramaturgical support to other writers, as well as facilitating a number of new script readings during the New Scripts Residency (see below).

We're delighted to announce that our inaugural Writer in Residence is playwright Michelle Tan, who joins us from September 2022 to April 2023. During her time with us, Michelle will be developing her new play, *The Radicalisation of Mrs Mary Lim-Rodrigues*.

Commenting on the residency and its invitation to reflect on her practice, Michelle says, "One of the questions I remember the C42 team asking was "What do you feel you need as a writer?" [it's] a question that also asks something of the landscape and the community in which writing happens. What are the support structures that can help new writing flourish? What are the dispositions with which we approach the process of writing? How would writing shift if we took all the time and space it took to develop work? So these next six months will also be a place to sit with these questions, and to hopefully give someone else something that they feel they need."

III. The New Scripts Residency

This is a regular offer of dramaturgical support for new scripts, convened every few months, with low barriers to entry. On a regular basis, we open our inboxes for script submissions from playwrights seeking dramaturgical support for their work. From a shortlist, one script will receive a facilitated, closed-door table read with professionals present, and two will receive one-on-one dramaturgy sessions with our Writer in Residence.

At every step along the way, from the reading and selection of scripts, to the facilitated table read, the programme will engage artists from a pool of dramaturgs, directors, and writers with whom we've been working for some time. Many of them have been intently involved in the development of the programme, through focus groups and trial workshops, and are actively engaged in their practices with new writing development.

Additionally, the closed-door table read will also engage a number of students from LASALLE BA(Hons) Acting, in an ongoing partnership between LASALLE College of the Arts and Centre 42.

The first New Scripts Residency will convene in September 2022, and the Open Call for scripts submissions is from 15 – 22 August 2022.

IV. Headline Acts

Headline Acts is a fun and informal presentation opportunity for playwrights of all stripes and experience levels to put fresh material in front of a live audience. The prompt is simple: the 10-minute piece must in some shape or form respond to the latest news headlines. This is Centre 42's take on scratch nights, a way for writers to test new dramatic material in front of a live audience, with the added impetus of keeping the work tuned to the pulse of things that are happening in the world.

Writers put their names in the hat through a first-come-first-served open call. Three will be selected for each night. On top of that, each event will be "headlined" by an invited writer. Headline Acts is envisioned as a way for writers to meet each other, listen to what matters to other writers, and seed ideas for new plays.

Scheduled to run every few months, the first Headline Acts will take place in January 2023.

On his hopes for the New Writing Development Programmes, Creative Associate Joel Tan says: "I think it's really exciting that Centre 42 is taking a much more direct and confident hand in writer development. We see ourselves performing a function that's currently missing in the landscape, which is literary management. We want to be the people who meet writers, keep track of their work, support their development, spotlight them, and ultimately advocate for their plays to be seen on stage."

2. ARTIST BIOS



Ahmad Musta'ain is an educator and playwright. He enjoys teaching Language Arts and is always seeking for opportunities to lead, devise and participate in applied theatre projects with young people and those in sensitive communities. He's part of Main Tulis Group and had previously served on the Arts Consultative Panel (ACP) of IMDA and on executive committee of the Singapore Drama Educators Association. View online profile [here](#).



A Yagnya is a collaborative theatre maker and Japanese translator. Yagnya's playwrighting credits include *Between 5 Cows and the Deep Blue Sea...* (Previously read at Esplanade's Raga 2020), *The Oven Story* *அவன் கதை* (3Pumpkins, 2020), *Hi, Can You Hear Me?* (Playwrights' Cove 2020), and *subTITLED 1.0* (Bridging the Gap Collective, 2021). She has also co-written for GroundZ_0's *Prism of Truth* (Huayi 2020), interpreted for ITI's Noh Theatre Module, acted in *Goddesses of Words: Angry Indian Women* (Textures 2020), and dramaturged for *(un)becoming* (Festival of Women N.O.W. 2021). She was also a participant in a Devising for Actors and Playwrights 2021 programme by The Necessary Stage (TNS) and was engaged in a Lab with TNS on using AI in performance making. Yagnya enjoys creating socially conscious works that challenge her audience into breaking out of their echo chambers. View online profile [here](#).



Danial Matin (he/him) has written plays about family, identity, love, grief, and suicidality and occasionally dabbles in poetry and short prose. He is particularly interested in unearthing the instability of the interstitial, especially in relation to the personal, the historical, and the structural in/of Singapore. His recent accolades include *i can't, stop* for Bored Whale Theatre's fourplay (2022), radio play *Rolling with the Times* for The Second Breakfast Company's *Geylang Serai Trails* (2021), *Before You Go* (dir. Chong Gua Khee) as part of Playwrights Commune's Open Studio (2021), and an adaptation of selected short stories from Alfian Sa'at's *Corridor* for *re:VERSE 4.0* as part of #BuySingLit 2020 presented by Matter.Less. He is grateful to have been under the tutelage of Lucas Ho (Singapore), Tony Perez (Philippines), Howard Craft (USA), and Gabrielle Calvocoressi (USA) and has attended workshops with established playwrights such as Haresh Sharma (Singapore), Joel Tan (Singapore/ UK) and Paula Vogel (USA), amongst others. Imaginative narratives about intimacy and the interpersonal are close to his heart, right next to bubble tea. View online profile [here](#).



Rachel Chin is a Malaysian-born actor-playwright based in Singapore. Her writing credits include *Adulthood* (Mewatch, Mediacorp); *Galatea: A Musical Fable* (MoreLife Theatre); *Galatea* (Theatre of Others Audio New Play Festival); *Expats Anonymous* (Produced and Developed with the Yale Cabaret - Cab 53); *the Sony Playeverything Show* (Playstation Asia - online); *Yeye* (LASALLE College of the Arts); and *Mama Says Don't Talk Back* (LASALLE Solo Festival). She is also co-founder, writer, and performer for the Otters United Funny Club (stage and online). Rachel is a graduate of the BA (Hons) Acting programme at LASALLE College of the Arts, and has been mentored by Aubrey Mellor OAM, Haresh Sharma, and Chong Tze Chien among others. View online profile [here](#).



Michelle Tan is a writer and drama educator. As a playwright her work has been produced by several local companies, including Cake Theatrical Productions and Singapore Repertory Theatre. Currently Michelle teaches in the theatre faculty at the School of the Arts. View online profile [here](#).



Joel Tan is a playwright based between London and Singapore. In Singapore, recent productions of his plays include *TARTUFFE* (Wildrice, 2022), *CAFE* (Wildrice, 2020), and *TANGO* (Pangdemonium, 2017). Recent UK projects include *NO PARTICULAR ORDER* (Theatre503, 2022) which was shortlisted for Theatre 503's 2018 Playwriting Award, *LIVING ARCHIVE* (Royal Court, 2022), *INSIDE/OUTSIDE* (Orange Tree Theatre, 2021), and the audio play *GHOSTS IN THE BLOOD* (Audible originals for LAMDA, 2021). He is under commission with the Royal Court, Headlong Theatre, and the Almeida Theatre. Joel was part of Theatre 503's 2019/2020 residency scheme the 503 Five, the Royal Court writers' programme 2021, and was an associate artist with the London-based Chinese Arts Now Festival and Singapore's Checkpoint Theatre. He is a Creative Associate with Centre 42's New Writing Development Programme, and leads the programme's Professional Development Residency for playwrights. View online profile [here](#).



Shridar Mani has more than a decade of programming and producing experience. His current practice centers on bringing to light socio-cultural issues by re-thinking traditional forms and modes of presentation within the framework of contemporary artistic practice, and putting art forms and practices in dialogue with each other to build and sustain stronger artistic communities in Singapore. He is also the co-founder and company manager of The Opera People, a Singapore-based opera company, redefining the

experience of opera and the co-founder of local arts initiative Other Tongues – A Festival of Minority Voices. He is currently also one half of The Public Space, a production house with an arts-centred vision, designing experiences that bring people, stories, and ideas together. View online profile [here](#).



Centre 42 is a non-profit arts organisation with IPC status committed to the creation, documentation and promotion of text-based works for the Singapore stage. As a theatre development space and intermediary, we incubate original writings for the stage, support the development of artists and new works, and develop and maintain a functional archive documenting the histories and processes of Singapore theatre.

Centre 42 is developed in collaboration with the National Arts Council (NAC), and officially opened in 2014. We are a charity with IPC status, and are currently supported by the NAC for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2023.

Visit website and C42's Archive of SG Theatre [here](#).

For interview opportunities and any other media enquiries, please contact:

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For public information about the programmes, please visit:

<https://www.centre42.sg/residencies/new-writing-development-overview/>

For Open Call information about the New Scripts Residency September 2022, please visit:

<https://www.centre42.sg/residencies/new-script-residency/17606/new-scripts-residency-sep-2022/>