PRESS RELEASE
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SeptFest 2021 @ The Substation
The Substation Places Artists at the Forefront of its 31st Anniversary.

Singapore, September 15, 2021 – The Substation celebrates its 31st anniversary with SeptFest beginning 16 September to 24 October 2021. A fully digital programme, audiences can expect to see young artists and veterans forming the core of the programme.

Under the theme Alternative Voice(s), the programme sees a combination of live dialogues with artists from Asia including Singapore, India and Malaysia, and the restaging of previous live performances as video documentation. “The intention is for us to relook at these performances with a new lens, understanding where we are today after surviving almost two years of the pandemic, not only for The Substation but the arts landscape in general. We have so much to be grateful for but our need to have the arts alive and thriving in our lives, has become so much more apparent” said Serene Yap, General Manager.

In its new direction, The Substation aims to fulfil its role as a leading incubator of experimental, multidisciplinary and socially-engaged art forms and a long-standing facilitator of critical conversations across diverse audiences and communities in the region. All programmes for SeptFest 2021 will be made available for free on The Substation’s Facebook page. “What we need more than anything is a ‘home’, a secure platform to take risks, where the ‘small’ and ‘raw’
are still valued. This is where we come to the question of 'space'. Where do we move? In reference to Bell Hooks' *Choosing the Margin as Space of Radical Openness* – ‘that at times home is nowhere, then the home is no longer one place, it is locations.’ We are embarking on this journey of exploration. This is when we came up with **Alternate Voice(s)** as the theme for our 31st anniversary this month. Let us look back before we take a step forward. The community and the minds that The Substation nurtured and built over the years cannot be erased easily, and we need to take the time to reflect, as it is this memory that will feed us, drive us forward and keep the spirit alive” said Raka Maitra, Artistic Director.

**Alternate Voice(s)** comprises two components – screening of four works that were presented previously at 45 Armenian Street; and **Sunday Morning Conversations**, a series of Facebook Live conversations with artists who give voice to alternative communities in their work and practice. Each conversation invites a special guest to speak alongside an Associate Artist of The Substation’s incubation programme, the Associate Artist Programme (AAP). They will talk and share about their challenges and accomplishments while supporting alternative voices in the community.

The Substation continues to be an imaginative playground and sense of identity and shared history. The Substation will be rolling out new content in the last quarter of 2021 that would explore art conversations, experimentation, and placemaking.

SeptFest 2021 **Alternate Voice(s)** will take place from 16 September to 24 October 2021. Documentation videos of past SeptFest 2020 performances will be posted on Facebook and Instagram, and Sunday Morning Conversations will be broadcast via Facebook Live. Follow The Substation on Facebook (@thesubstation) and Instagram (the_substation).
About SeptFest
SeptFest is The Substation’s anniversary celebration of art, culture and community, held annually to mark The Substation’s birth (16 September). Adopting a fresh theme each year, SeptFest aims to bring together intergenerational artists to push experimentation and fresh perspectives, to challenge ourselves to move away from familiar conventions, to represent all disciplines and to create a sense of discovery.

About The Substation
The Substation is a non-profit multi-disciplinary arts company that curates and commissions original works. We are committed to the incubation of new works, discovery of young artists, the development of inter-generational artist collaboration and dialogue between artist and audience in Singapore and the region. The Substation is a playground for new ideas and offers platforms for peer-to-peer feedback and community engagement.

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Note to Editor:
Headshots of the artists are available here -
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QfaH_NXqoWcMi8fnwdw-vCxRakoi8yQR?usp=sharing

For more information, please contact:
Serene Yap, General Manager at serene@substation.org.
APPENDIX

Programme Lineup

Title of Event: SeptFest 2021: Alternative Voice(s)
Presented by: The Substation
Dates: 16 September to 24 October 2021
Venue/Platforms: Facebook (@thesubstation) and Instagram (the_substation)

Artist Director Statement by Raka Maitra

The Substation: A Home for the Arts.

After moving out of 45 Armenian Street, I was confronted by many questions and doubts.

How is the new Substation different from what we had?

The arts scene has undergone immense changes since the 1990s, is The Substation even relevant in today's environment?

Well, the arts scene has grown — from a time where there was practically nothing, numerous professional art companies now offer platforms and jobs to young creatives. A variety of residencies, festivals, and grants have gradually become available to independent practitioners over time. A lot has changed on the surface, but the needs of young artists who do not want to enter this highly corporatised industry remain the same — and therein lies the value of The Substation.

We remain true to the values of The Substation. What the arts need more than anything is a 'home', a secure platform to take risks, where the 'small' and 'raw' are still valued.

This is where we come to the question of 'space'. Where do we move? Bell Hooks, in “Choosing the Margin as Space of Radical Openness”, mentions that “at times home is nowhere, then the home is no longer one place, it is locations”. Perhaps that's the path we need to take for a while. That is when we came up with ‘Alternate Voice(s)’ as the theme for our SeptFest 2021. This year, let's look back before we take a step forward. The community and the minds that The Substation nurtured and built over the years cannot be erased easily, and we need to take the time to reflect, as it is this memory that will feed us, drive us forward, and keep the spirit alive.
Programmes

16 Sept, Thursday | Facebook & Instagram
Video will be available from 2:00pm

SeptFest 2021: Alternative Voice(s) Opening Video by Artistic Director, Raka Maitra

17 Sept, Friday | Facebook & Instagram
Video will be available from 10:30am

Tea Leaves Glowing In The Wind by Tang Da Wu and Zai Tang
Documentation Video

Tang Da Wu and Zai Tang create a performance together using sound, sculpture, body and action. This collaboration stems from conversations about the value of intuition, chance and the unknown in art-making. Improvising in parallel to one another with their respective materials, they attempt to avoid any predetermined relations or generate any specific meaning together. Rather, it is a proposal for a performance of multiple possibilities, where instinct and awareness guide each passing moment. Emerging elements intersect and interrupt, forming tangents and tensions between one another, the space and the audience.

18 Sept, Saturday | Facebook & Instagram
Video will be available from 10:30am

Waltz of the Flower by Caroline Chin and Marvin Acero Ablao
Documentation Video

A tree, a woman. Nobody comes, nobody goes. Then somebody comes, somebody goes. Trust me, it’s exciting.

A woman enters. She threads a familiar space—an empty space with nothing but a pot and a dying tree; a single leaf dangling. She speaks to her invisible audience, at times herself, as she attempts to reveal a story. She deviates, jokes, confesses, reveals, but struggles at completion. Suddenly, someone enters. He carries on his routine and waits. Nobody comes. He begins to dance, uninhibitedly, and he goes.

24 Sept, Friday | Facebook & Instagram
Video will be available from 10:30am

NADA and ScRach Marcs
Documentation Video

In this new collaboration, mythical maestros NADA and dynamic dance duo ScRach Marcs will traverse movement and sound in an exploration of Singapore’s club culture of the past.
Responding to their individual practices, street dance and 60s–80s Malay pop, this performance is a reimagining of a lost cultural era brought to the contemporary stage.

25 Sept, Saturday | Facebook & Instagram
Video will be available from 10:30am

Men with Pens by Subhas Nair and Yanni Chia
Documentation Video

Learn more about the lived experiences of young men from the ages of 15-19 living in the Whampoa rental flat community with Men with Pens (with the support of Beyond Social Services), as they share anecdotal accounts from their aspirations in life to encounters with the police, connections to place, and stories of growing up.

Sunday Morning Conversations is a series of Facebook Live conversations with artists who give voice to alternative communities in their work and practice. Each conversation invites a special guest to speak alongside an Associate Artist of The Substation’s incubation programme, the Associate Artist Programme (AAP). They will talk and share about their challenges and accomplishments while supporting alternative voices in the community.

3 Oct, Sunday | Facebook Live
10:30am – 11:30am

Conversation with Sankar Venkateswaran (India) and Grace Kalaiselvi (The Substation Associate Artist 2021-22)

Due to the lack of affordable rehearsal spaces in the city, Sankar Venkateswaran and his wife Satoko Tsurudome decided to build an independent theatre at “the end of the world” — Attapadi in Kerala, India. There, they live in the jungles and work with the tribal community in the region. This session features Sankar Venkateswaran in conversation with The Substation Associate Artist Grace Kalaiselvi, where they will share about working with marginalised and minority communities in India and Singapore.

Speakers’ Biographies

Sankar Venkateswaran, born in 1979, is a theatre director from India. He lives and works from Sahyande Theatre, a theatre-dwelling he built in the mountain valley of Attappadi, Kerala. His works include Criminal Tribes Act, Ibsen’s When We Dead Awaken, Shogo Ohta’s Water Station, and INDIKA for Munich Volkstheater. He served as the artistic director for the International Theatre Festival of Kerala in 2016 and 2017. He is a recipient of Ibsen Scholarship 2013, Norway.

Grace Kalaiselvi, an Intercultural Theatre Institute graduate, is a freelance theatre practitioner and educator. Her recent works include Can’t Afford to be Sick for SITFE’s SOLO, Paper Paravai for The Esplanade’s Red Dot August, Rasanai for T:>works N.O.W festival, Amma’s Sarees for The Esplanade’s PLAYtime, the Goddesses of Words series -
Angry Indian Woman – The Trial (Singapore Writer’s Festival), Angry Indian Women (Textures) and Touch Me NOT. Recent acting works include a line could be crossed...for M1SFF and The Silence of a falling Tree for SIFAv2.020. She initiated and is a member of Brown Voices, a playwriting collective. Grace hopes to create more works representing the suppressed and minorities.

10 Oct, Sunday | Facebook Live
10:30am – 11:30am

Conversation with Aida Redza (Penang) and Wendy Toh (The Substation Associate Artist 2021-22)

Aida Redza is one of the most intense and controversial dancers in Malaysia. Her latest mission is to work with the local community of women and give voice to the voiceless through movement. This session features Aida Redza in conversation with The Substation Associate Artist Wendy Toh, where they will share about their passion for telling stories and raising social awareness through their respective practices.

Speakers’ Biographies

Aida Redza is an artist who takes on the role of the penjaga (guardian), with a mission to initiate creative projects that nurture, heal and transform, by bringing her works closer to people to highlight the stories and concerns about the everyday. She is engaged in human rights, environmental issues, and the safety and wellness of the community, especially those who are vulnerable, for example, youth, the underprivileged or the marginalized; women, mothers and their children, as well as the LGBT+ community. For the past decade, Aida has been engaging with communities through various creative performances, workshops and flashmob activities in collaboration with WABA (World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action), WCC (Women’s Center for Change), OWEL (Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives), Creativity at Heart, BOLD Association for Children with Special Needs, Penang Down Syndrome Association, KANITA (Center for Research of Women and Gender) and PWDC (Penang Women Development Center), SUARAM, ALIRAN and Freedom Film Festival, using dance as a universal language and catalyst to mobilise action and raise awareness on social concerns.

Wendy Toh is a Singaporean artist with a passion for telling stories through different forms and mediums. She has a wide portfolio that ranges from the performance arts to filmmaking. As an actor and performer, she has multiple credits across theatre, film and TV. Her recent works include Spaced-Out (clown performance, Esplanade), 依依 (short film, Locarno Int’l Film Festival), The Last Chapter (theatre, The Substation), and Fantasia (music/theatre, Nanying Reimagined). As an artist and filmmaker, Wendy’s installation work Eden 依:窩, was showcased in The Substation Gallery in 2021. She made her film directorial debut with Vios (short docu, Singapore Chinese Film Festival 2019). Her follow-up was the experimental short film in Between (Isolation Series, The Substation) and in 2021, she extended her filmography to include Heart Shape 莲蓉包 (short film, Viddsee).

Wendy is a member of Jinen Butoh School under Atsushi Takenouchi. A proud graduate of Singapore’s Intercultural Theatre Institute, Wendy hopes to deepen her craft and continue her journey as a multi-disciplinary artist.
17 Oct, Sunday  |  Facebook Live  
10:30am – 11:30am  

Conversation with Anomaa Rajakaruna (Sri Lanka) and Wendy Toh (The Substation Associate Artist 2021-22)  

Anomaa Rajakaruna is a reputed photographer, award winning tele-filmmaker and leading documentary director from Sri Lanka. She has served as a juror at countless national and international film festivals. As a strong champion of documentary filmmaking and advocate of women representation in the film industry, Anomaa will sit down with Associate Artist Wendy Toh to discuss filmmaking during the pandemic and her documentary work.

24 Oct, Sunday  |  Facebook Live  
10:30am – 11:30am  

Conversation with The Migrant Band (Singapore) and Subhas Nair (The Substation Associate Artist 2021-22)  

Join us as we hear from members of Migrants Band Singapore, a band started in 2015 consisting of migrant workers working in Singapore. The band gathers weekly to practice Bengali folk songs and over the years, has created an important community space for workers — and some occasional guests too!

How has the band evolved over the years? How do they feel about the spaces they perform in? How has the community evolved and come together through music — both in moments of crisis and celebration? Do they have plans to put out original music? Listen in and find out as rapper Subhas — one of the aforementioned guests in the band — sits down with Migrants Band Singapore.

Speakers’ Biography  

Subhas Nair is a rap/hip-hop artist from Singapore who seeks to share perspectives of the world around him and engage with people from different walks of life through his music and lyricism. After releasing his debut album Not A Public Assembly in May 2018, he brought his work to multiple venues including panelling at the Singapore Writers’ Festival, speaking at TEDx PnG, and performing at Other Tongues—a minority voices festival. Subhas believes active allyship is crucial in dismantling systems of oppression on all fronts and uses his writing as a tool to provoke dialogue and social change. He also wrote K. Muthusamy.

Migrants Band Singapore is formed by migrant workers in Singapore and stands committed to promoting Bengali culture in Singapore. Most members in the band are doing hard manual work in Singapore, and take a day off in a week instead of doing overtime to practise and sing Bengali music.