

# **ARTS HOUSE LIMITED**

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

Arts House Ltd (AHL) is a not-for-profit organisation committed to enriching lives through the arts. AHL manages two key landmarks located in the heart of Singapore's Civic District – The Arts House, a multi-disciplinary arts centre with a focus on literary programming, and the Victoria Theatre & Victoria Concert Hall, a heritage building that is home to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. It also runs the Goodman Arts Centre and Aliwal Arts Centre, two creative enclaves for artists, arts groups and creative businesses, and performing arts space Drama Centre. AHL presents the Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA), the annual pinnacle celebration of performance and interdisciplinary arts in Singapore commissioned by the National Arts Council.

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

### **Vision**

A leader in nurturing, inspiring and enriching communities through the arts in Singapore

### **Mission**

Bridging the arts and audiences by transforming ideas into reality through our distinctive spaces and programmes

### **Values**

#### **Excellence**

We embrace change and champion innovation in our pursuit of creative explorations and meaningful arts experiences. We perform at the highest standards, striving to be the best that we can be.

#### **Respect**

We treat others how we would like to be treated. We value each person's worth and contribution and celebrate authenticity and diversity. We remain grounded and humble in our interactions.

#### **Integrity**

We conduct ourselves with the highest ethical standards and are transparent and accountable for all our actions.

#### **People**

We believe in our people and recognise that we can only achieve our goals by working and collaborating so that we can lean on and learn from each other. We also put others before self in our service to the arts.

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**Charity Registration Number:** 01658

**Unique Entity Number (UEN):** 200210647W

**Institution of Public  
Character (IPC) Status:** Effective 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022

**Registered Address:** 28 Aliwal Street #03-07 Singapore 199918

**Bankers:** DBS Bank Ltd  
OCBC Ltd  
Standard Chartered (Singapore) Ltd

**Auditor:** Ernst & Young LLP

**Related Entities:** The Company does not have any subsidiary, associate or joint venture.

**Management:** Sarah Binte Mohamed Abdullah Martin, CEO  
Ng Soon Lee, CFO  
None of the above has prior appointment in a charity.

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**Board of Directors:**

AHL comprises 10 directors as at end of financial year who can identify with, and contribute to, the cause of AHL. The directors are:

	Date of first appointment	Date of last re-appointment	Term Expiring	Board of Directors	
				Held	Attended
Tan Wee Yan Wilson (Chairman)	1-Jun-19	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	4
Ang Kah Eng Kelvin	31-Mar-16	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	2
Kwok Siew Loong Kenneth	25-Jun-18	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	4
Lynette Pang Hsu Lyin	31-Mar-16	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	2
Madeleine Lee Suh Shin	3-Aug-16	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	3
Maniza Jumabhoy	31-Mar-16	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	3
Ong Han Peng (Wang Hanping)	1-Jun-19	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	3
Ong Chao Choon	1-Apr-11	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	4
Phua Hwee Choo	1-Jun-19	1-Jun-19	31-May-21	4	2
Sarah Binte Mohamed Abdullah Martin (Ex-officio) <sup>1</sup>	12-Dec-16	1-Jun-19	3-Aug-20	4	4
Eduardo Ramos-Gomez <sup>2</sup>	1-Aug-18	9-Jul-19	18-Mar-20	4	4
Gan Christine (ex-Chairman) <sup>3</sup>	1-Apr-14	1-Jun-17	31-May-19	-	-
Chong Yuan Chien <sup>3</sup>	14-Apr-14	1-Jun-17	31-May-19	-	-
Deborah Joanne Ho Nyuk Choo <sup>3</sup>	14-Apr-14	1-Jun-17	31-May-19	-	-
Koh Choon Fah <sup>3</sup>	1-Apr-11	1-Jun-17	31-May-19	-	-
Mok Wei Wei <sup>3</sup>	1-Apr-14	1-Jun-17	31-May-19	-	-

<sup>1</sup> Term ended on 3-Aug-20

<sup>2</sup> Term ended on 18-Mar-20

<sup>3</sup> Term ended on 31-May-19

All directors are appointed by the National Arts Council and none are remunerated for their services except for Ms. Sarah Martin who is remunerated for her services as ex-officio of the Board. Re-appointment to the Board can be considered after a lapse of at least two years. The Board conducts regular self-evaluation on a bi-yearly basis to assess its performance and effectiveness.

The Board observes the maximum limit of four consecutive years for Directors holding the appointment of Finance Committee Chairman and re-appointment to this position can be considered after a lapse of at least two years.

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**Board Committees:**

The Board has delegated specific responsibilities to four Committees and each Committee has its own terms of reference, roles and responsibilities approved by the Board. The Board acknowledges the ultimate responsibility on all matters while these Committees have the authority to examine issues and report back to the Board with their recommendations. Minutes of these meetings are also circulated at every Board Meeting.

Audit Committee (AC)

The Audit Committee (AC) was established in August 2016 and comprises three non-executive and independent directors. The AC assists the Board in its oversight of AHL's financial reporting, system of internal controls, internal and external audits, and interested person transactions (if any). Committee members as at end of financial year are listed as follows:

	Designation	Audit Committee	
		Held	Attended
Ong Chao Choon	Chairman	2	2
Ang Kah Eng Kelvin	Member	2	2
Eduardo Ramos-Gomez	Member	2	1

Finance Committee (FC)

The Finance Committee (FC) was established in April 2014 and comprises three non-executive and independent directors. The FC assists the Board in its oversight of AHL's finances, budgeting process and matters relating to AHL's use of reserves. Committee members as at end of financial year are listed as follows:

	Designation	Finance Committee	
		Held	Attended
Madeleine Lee Suh Shin	Chairman	2	2
Tan Wee Yan Wilson	Member	2	2
Ong Han Peng (Wang Hanping)	Member	2	2

SIFA Committee

The SIFA Committee was established in April 2014 and comprises eight non-executive and independent directors. The SIFA Committee assists the Board to provide guidance on the overall direction, programmes and budget of SIFA, advises and supports SIFA in its communication and engagement of stakeholders, and reviews the outcomes and annual performance of SIFA.

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The SIFA Committee also identifies areas for improvement, change or further development for future festivals, and reviews and gives recommendations on the development of AHL's capabilities and resources in organising SIFA.

Committee members as at end of financial year are listed as follows:

	Designation	SIFA Committee	
		Held	Attended
Lynette Pang Hsu Lyin	Chairman	4	4
Madeleine Lee Suh Shin	Member	4	1
Ang Kah Eng Kelvin	Member	4	3
Chong Yuan Chien	Advisor	4	4
Gan Christine	Member	4	0
Mok Wei Wei	Member	4	2
Kwok Siew Loong Kenneth	NAC Observer	4	2
Serene Lim	NAC Observer	4	0

On 31 May 2019, Director Christine Gan and Mok Wei Wei retired from the Board and stepped down from their appointments in the SIFA Committee. Board Member Kelvin Ang was appointed into the SIFA Committee and attended his first meeting on 24 Oct 2019.

Board member Kenneth Kwok was also invited to join the SIFA Committee as guest observer from NAC from 2 Aug 2019. Following his secondment to MND, Ms Serene Lim (Director, Policy and Planning, NAC) then took over as guest observer in subsequent SIFA Committee meetings from 6 Feb 2019.

Human Resource (HR) Committee

The Human Resource (HR) Committee was established in April 2016 and comprises three non-executive and independent directors. The HR Committee assists the Board in providing oversight on executive and leadership development, reviewing and approving executive remuneration policies, approving annual increment and bonus pay-outs, approving changes in HR policies, and attending to HR-related matters raised to the Board. Committee members as at end of financial year are listed as follows:

	Designation	Human Resource Committee	
		Held	Attended
Phua Hwee Choo	Chairman	2	2
Tan Wee Yan Wilson	Member	2	2
Kwok Siew Loong Kenneth	Member	2	2

On 31 May 2019, Director Koh Choon Fah, Christine Gan and Lynette Pang Hsu Lyin retired from the Board and stepped down from their appointments in the HR Committee. Director Georgina

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Phua was appointed as HR Committee Chairman while Wilson Tan and Kenneth Kwok were appointed as Members.

### **Board Meetings:**

Board meetings are held on quarterly basis, with a quorum of at least one-third of the Board, to review results and performance, forward plans and prospects of AHL. Staff who are not Directors may be invited to attend Board Meetings to provide information but they do not vote or participate in Board decision-making.

### **Conflict of Interest:**

AHL has in place a policy for Conflict of Interest and Declaration for the Board as well as for staff to ensure that directors and officers act independently and in the best interest of AHL. The Policy of Conflict of Interest and Declaration form is circulated to the Directors on a yearly basis as a reminder of the requirement for full disclosure in writing to the Board immediately when a conflict of interest situation arises.

If and where there is present or potential conflict of interest, the director is to disclose the conflict situation and excuse him/herself from the discussion and all decision-making situations with regard to the matter.

### **Strategic Planning:**

During the year, the Board endorsed various work plans for key functions, including plans for SIFA, placemaking Civic District, programming, leasing, upgrading and maintenance of venues, as well as AHL's response to the impact of COVID-19.

### **Human Resources Management:**

AHL has human resource policy for staff in place with the aim to attract, retain and motivate staff who have suitable qualifications, experience and performance. The Human Resource Committee provides guidance in setting remuneration packages and as part of good governance, no staff is involved in setting his/her own remuneration.

To create a professional, fair and inclusive work environment, the code of conduct has been established for all employees to adhere with. In addition, a whistle-blowing policy is in place where staff and any persons may raise and/or report any misconduct in writing directly to the Board Chairman or Audit Committee Chairman.

### **Financial Management And Controls:**

#### Funding Sources

AHL is financially supported by Government grants, rental and service charge income, venue hire income, donations, sponsorships and sales of tickets for its programmes.

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### Budget Planning and Monitoring

The Board approves the annual budget of AHL, and financial results are provided to the Board on a quarterly basis, with comparison to the approved budget.

### Capital Asset Management

A fixed asset register is maintained to track the additions, disposals and movements of fixed assets. Physical sighting of assets is performed periodically, and value of assets are adequately insured.

### Reserves Management

AHL manages its reserves in accordance with a Reserves Policy that is approved by the Board, to ensure adequate reserves for long-term financial sustainability. Reserves are invested in fixed deposits in accordance with AHL's Investment Policy that is approved by the Board.

### **Disclosure And Transparency:**

Both the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements of AHL are published on our website at [www.theartshouse.sg](http://www.theartshouse.sg). Remuneration of AHL's 3 highest paid staff is disclosed in bands of S\$100,000 as follows:

Remuneration	No. of employees
\$200,000 - \$300,000	3

Further details on remuneration of other staff and other aspects of the financial results for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 may be found in the published Audited Financial Statements.

### **Public Image:**

The communications toolkit document is designed to safeguard and ensure that Arts House Limited's disclosure of information in the form of media alert and press releases to our stakeholders provides a consistent tone of voice that echoes our vision and mission. In addition, it provides factual, accurate, balanced, timely; and distributed to our media partners. The toolkit document also covers areas such as description of AHL's venues and festival in 4 official languages, guidelines on the usage of logos, crisis communication processes and social media etiquette policy for employees. Apart from this document, AHL Communications team actively monitors and keeps track press coverage, sentiment analysis as well as the tone of the reports. These findings are regularly shared during the bi-weekly operations meeting as well as periodic updates to AHL Board in the form of a newsletter.

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### Key Public Programmes:

#### \*THE ARTS HOUSE\*

#### Overview

We focused on strengthening and expanding existing programmes and those created in 2018. In particular, our signature mid-sized festivals Textures and LumiNation had more cohesive and stronger programming threads which could be seen in the higher satisfaction rates from audiences. We were also pleased to curate and deliver a successful Late Night programme for the Singapore Writers Festival which took inspiration for the first time from the Literary Pioneer Exhibition.

#### Key Programme Highlights - Literary Arts (Apr 2019 - Mar 2020)

i. *Cita Seni*

Co-presented by the NUS Department of Malay Studies and The Arts House, Cita Seni invited all to learn more about the Malay literary and artistic heritage in Singapore and around the region. The bilingual programme paired Malay literature with a performative element from various artists.

- *Narratives in Music (20 Apr 2019)*

This recital-cum-forum by pianist and music educator Nabillah Jalal explored the dimensions that exist at the intersection of piano and poetry. It also featured new solo piano works based on selected poems from Singapore's leading poets like Masuri S N and Heng Siok Tan. These new works are a dedication to Nabillah by Lithuanian composer, Algirdas Kraunaitis. Throughout the session, Nabillah introduced each piece and the poem which she associated it with, thus encouraging listeners to appreciate the convergence of musical and poetic articulations. She shared her teaching practices through a discussion of how an appreciation of poetry, stories and narratives are weaved into the imaginative process of interpreting music and crafting a recital.

- *Rhythm of the Straits (14 Sep 2019)*

Led by a young and talented musician, Fadhli Ramlee, this session showcased a wide range of rhythms of traditional Malay music, juxtaposed against its contemporary renditions. Fadhli shared his experiences in learning and play Malay music, including his regional exposure on the varieties of Malay traditional music. He also shed insights into how the cultural dynamics of the region is inextricably linked to the evolution of Malay music over the decades. He supported his presentation with many video clips of his past performances as well as live demonstrations of polyrhythms with a small ensemble, which made it especially engaging for audiences.

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- *Sonic Spaces & Sonic Seas (12 Oct 2019)*

Titled *Sonic Spaces & Sonic Seas*, the third session of Cita Seni featured local alternative rock trio The Its, who melds influences from the Nusantara region with Eastern and Western rock to present an eclectic set with an alternative, experimental and ambient approach. In this session, *The Its* performed a one-hour set before a dialogue session with Dr Azhar, where they discussed their sonic endeavours, how they drew inspiration from the landscapes and cultures of the region, and how these elements became an integral part of their explorations in sound and music-making. It was an engaging session – largely due to the performative elements – that shed light on contemporary music and, in particular, a style of music that fuses Western elements with traditional Malay styles.

- *The Gastronomy of Nusantara (15 Feb 2020)*

Cita Seni's final session featured food traveller Azfar Maswan and NUS lecturer Dr Azhar Ibrahim in a discussion on food culture and gastronomic diplomacy in *Nusantara*. The session was conducted in two parts: a lecture by Dr Azhar Ibrahim on 'ASEAN Food Heritage' followed by a talk by Azfar Maswan on 'The World of Sambal'.

- ii. *StoryFest 2019: International Storytelling Festival Singapore (21 - 24 Jun 2019)*

The third edition of *StoryFest*, a co-presentation with The Storytelling Centre Limited, featured 22 events - 29% increase in programmes compared to 2018 edition - which drew more than 2,000 visitors over the weekend. This edition fared very well with a remarkable 98% tickets sold.

- iii. *Note for Note: Stop, Look, Listen (10 Jan 2020)*

16 poets lent their words to a diverse collage of poems that decipher, describe and define the city. In three unique sets, the poetry was performed with musicians who mapped a sonic landscape that blended city sounds with music. Each set followed a broad theme of motion, considering the city as speed, scene and sound. This edition was curated by poet Marc Nair and directed by Cherilyn Woo. It was also held in conjunction with Prologue.

- iv. *Remember When: From Memories to Monologues (2 Jul - 5 Aug 2019)*

Remember When is a creative writing programme targeted at seniors that aims to provide participants with an opportunity to pick up creative writing skills and craft their own stories. For the fourth run, the stories written focused on three themes – the story behind their names, a beloved family member, as well as a "creative writing" segment where they personified an object in the House. Participants enjoyed the workshops which provided an "enriching experience, especially when I noted the improvement". One unique aspect of the show-and-tell for this batch was that it featured live music interludes between the scenes, performed by one of the participants on his ukulele with the rest singing along, which evoked an intimate and heart-warming atmosphere.

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v. *The Page on Stage: Missing* (4 -7 Jul)

The second instalment saw the adaptation of Ng Swee San's short story *Missing* brought to life on stage. Director K. Rajagopal brought his cinematic background to the stage with the use of filmed sequences and projection to enhance Neo Swee Lin's layered performance. The feedback on the performance was positive, with Swee Lin's performance being particularly commended.

vi. **பேனாச்சுடர்** *A Tamil Creative Writing Workshop* (17 Aug, 7 Sept, 16 Nov 2019 and 16 Jan 2020)

The second edition of **பேனாச்சுடர்** saw young Tamil writers come together to develop their writing skills while also sharing their own work and ideas with their peers. A special edition of the session was held on 17 August in conjunction with LumiNation which featured a walking tour of monuments around the Civic District and participants writing in response to these spaces. This session, facilitated by Harini V, also featured theatre and film actor Sivakumar Palakrishnan. We will take a hiatus on this programme and re-evaluate how it can contribute to the scene following a lower participation rate.

vii. *IMHO* (11 Apr, 18 Jul, 15 Aug, 14 Sep, 12 Oct 2019 & 15 Feb 2020)

The first season of the *In My Humble Opinion (IMHO)* series concluded on 11 April 2019 with a lively discussion on George Orwell's *Down and Out in London and Paris*. The second season began on 18 July and featured Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. We also featured a special edition of *IMHO* as part of *LumiNation* that discussed the collection *Written Country: The History of Singapore through Literature* by Gwee Li Sui. This was the first local text featured in the series which drew out a healthy crowd, many of whom shared their personal stories related to the events written about in the book. In the subsequent sessions, three books were explored: *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan and *What's the Right Thing to Do* by Michael Sandel. All the sessions continued to be led by Cheong Suk Wai who, for this second season, had prepared slides with talking points and built a further reading list for participants interested in exploring the topic further. The programme saw audience numbers increasing and the final session in February drew the highest attendance despite the COVID-19 situation.

viii. *LumiNation* (15 -18 Aug 2019)

The second edition of *LumiNation* took place over a weekend with the theme "Building Identity". The programmes were curated to explore the relationship between self, space and place in Singapore and to uncover lesser known narratives, personal stories and histories that have not been fully investigated in the mainstream to create a fuller understanding of what it means to be Singaporean. Two key programmes were *Collective Memory: Haw Par Villa*, a photo exhibition by Deanna Ng that documented the memories of those who visited the park in the 60s and 70s, as well as the film programmes curated by The Filmic Eye, that

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tied together many of the threads explored in the festival. Many of the films also featured post-show dialogues with the directors so that audiences could get a deeper understanding of the ideas behind the creation of these films. Talks and panels included explorations of iconic spaces and places in Singapore such as Chinatown, Marina Bay Sands and Kent Ridge, as well as discussions on the Japanese War Crime trials and the role that film plays in creating a Singapore identity.

*ix. Shiyun: Island Interludes (7 & 8 Sep 2019)*

Drawing on the parallels between Chinese poetry as a lyrical recitation and Chinese chamber music as a melodic dialogue between instruments, *Island Interludes* takes audiences on a poetic journey through various sites and famous landmarks in Singapore, allowing them to rediscover spaces that are both familiar and distant through the beauty of lyrical verses and melodies. Held in conjunction with the Mid-Autumn Festival, the performance features excerpts from 23 poems by a myriad of writers across different generations, including Cultural Medallion recipients Wong Yoon Wah, Liang Wern Fook, LinGao, Xi Ni' Era and Zhou Can and award-winning young poets Chow Teck Seng, Tang Jui Piow and Zhou Hao amongst many others. Curated by Singapore Literature Prize-winning poet, Tan Chee Lay, the poems are recited by Lee Yong Tick, Liow Shi Suen, Mia Chee and Tan Chee Lay, paired with music composed and arranged by Phang Kok Jun, and accompanied by photographs taken by Lee Leng Kiong.

*x. Singapore Writers Festival (1 – 10 Nov 2019)*

The Arts House (TAH) continued its role as the Key Venue and Programme Partner for the Singapore Writers Festival (SWF) 2019. Similar to 2017, TAH was commissioned to curate and manage the Literary Pioneer programme featuring Rex Shelley. In addition, for the first time, the SWF Late Night Programme was tied into the exhibition and we programmed an immersive evening of programmes throughout the house with artists responding to quotes by Shelley through their work.

• *Exhibition – Rex Shelley: The Gentle Observer*

The SWF team invited Brian Gothong Tan as the exhibition designer with the directive to bring in more multi-media elements to the exhibition. Tan kept the exhibition more visual rather than text-based, including creating animated digital murals for each of the book covers which was projected on the Tudor Rose wall of the House. Melissa De Silva did the research and several themes came up strongly across the four novels relating to Eurasian culture that crossed with some of Shelley's life events. These were all woven together in the exhibition booklet, with it not only being a documentation of Shelley's life but also about the Eurasian community in general. To extend the life of the exhibition beyond the festival dates and for it to reach wider audience, an online version of the exhibition was also developed. Using the pick-up rate of the exhibition booklet as a guide, there were 825 visitors to the exhibition.

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- *A Bigger Party Than Expected (1 Nov 2019)*

For the first time, the SWF Late Night Programme was tied into the Literary Pioneer Exhibition as a way of expanding the range of the exhibition by working with artists to respond to Rex Shelley and his work. The objective was to create an immersive experience for audiences to wander around both timed and durational performances in the house, with artists responding to their chosen lines of text from Rex Shelley in whatever way they saw fit within their artistic practices. The programme was well received by audiences who remarked on the buzz that it brought to The Arts House as well as the variety of programmes that offered different entry points and elicited varied reactions from the audiences. Learning lessons from this programme were largely logistical and had to do with crowd management. A total of 243 tickets were sold via SISTIC with an additional 175 registered guests from the SWF opening party. In total, there was a visitorship of 1,821 for A Bigger Party Than Expected across all the programmes.

- x. *Rapatseni – Berseri Lakon & Alun (7 Dec 2019)*

*Rapatseni* is the Malay programme under The Arts House's *Poetry with Music* series, which celebrates Malay poetry and the beauty of the Malay language, music, culture and traditions. Titled *Berseri Lakon & Alun*, the performance is underpinned by the notion that "art is the poetry of life, music is the dance of the world" and featured poems that explore life and love through a writer's eyes. Unlike the previous editions, *Berseri Lakon & Alun* was presented in a more "theatrical" format, driven by a plot with two parallel but intersecting storylines. The performance featured the works of Hamed Ismail, Kamaria Buang and Rafaat Hamzah, which pays tribute and celebrate to the work by an older generation of writers while also giving an introduction to the richness of our Malay literary heritage.

- xii. *Prologue – In conjunction with Light to Night Festival 2020 (10 –11 Jan and 17 – 18 Jan 2020)*

In conjunction with National Gallery Singapore's Light to Night Festival, The Arts House presented Prologue, a series of programmes that celebrate words and stories from all over the world. TAH took inspiration from *Light to Night Festival 2020* theme "Invisible Cities and featured special/new editions of programmes from our regular calendar. Some of the highlights include *Note for Note*, *A Novel Idea*, *Reflections by Varsha*, a special one-hour adaptation of Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, as part of the *By Candlelight* series, and *open books* – a Prologue signature, which featured two colourful and interactive dioramas on the lawn that took inspiration from Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. There was also a venue-supported installation featuring a newly commissioned work, *Justice for All*, by Yinka Shonibare CBE, RA, as part of SAW.

- xiii. *Textures – A Weekend With Words (13 –22 Mar 2020)*

The third edition of Textures saw the festival take on the theme of 'These Storied Walls'. The theme called on artists and audiences to reflect not only on the history of the house but

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also its future as a national literary arts centre and how each person who enters it now leaves their mark or story on its walls. It also informed the programming direction to have more audio and interactive installations, inviting audiences to spend a little more time with the works and to listen a little more closely. With this, the festival was also expanded to take place over two weekends to allow audiences more time to visit the works.

One highlight programme which married the interactivity and audio experience was *O/Aural Waves: Spirited Words*, a collaboration between master storyteller Kamini Ramachandran and inter-disciplinary sound artist FERRY. The installation, designed by Irfan Kasban, presented selected stories of Singapore literature which explored notions of religion, culture and spirituality. The work had an overwhelmingly positive response from audiences.

The first-time collaboration with digital publisher Tusitala also saw Textures venturing more into the digital sphere with 360-degree illustrations inspired by a Singapore literature text which was accompanied with audio recordings of the extract and viewed through a VR headset. The programme allowed audiences to immerse themselves into Singapore literature in a different way and was very popular.

Textures 2020 presented 47 programmes and welcomed 8,244 visitors. Surveys indicated that 90% were first time visitors the festival with 56% visiting The Arts House for the first time. Audiences also gave an 89% good/excellent rating on the quality of the programming. Concerns about the COVID-19 situation had led to adjustments to programmes as well as stepping up preventive measures.

#### *xiv. Book Launches*

The Arts House supported the following book launches: *Interpreter of Winds* by Fairuz Ahmad, *Collected Plays Three* by Alfian Sa'at, *ONCE* by Oliver Seet, *The Loving and the Dead* by Catherine Lim, and *Imprints of Time* 《时代印记》 by Tan Cham Yong 陈昌荣, *Dangling Gandhi* by Jayanthi Sankar, *Train Friends* by Ranjani Rao and Nandini Patwardhan, *Marjorie Doggett's Singapore: A Photographic Record* by Edward Stokes, *The Perfect World of Miwako Sumida* by Clarissa Gonewan and *Memorandum: A Sinophone Singaporean Short Story Reader* by Quah Sy Ren and Hee Wai Siam.

### **Key Programme Highlights - Other Programmes**

#### **i. Music**

##### *a) By Candlelight (19 Apr, 8 Jun, 27 Sep, 13 – 14 Dec 2019 and 10 – 11 Jan 2020)*

For the second season of *By Candlelight*, we continued exploring chamber music programmes that worked well within the intimate venues of the House. We expanded the artists that we worked with to curate the season. Kseniia Vokhmianina, with whom we curated the entire first season of programmes, curated just two of the five presentations. We

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also expanded the types of presentations in the series, moving beyond standard repertoire works to include our first contemporary music programme with Christoven Tan, a special Christmas programme with Red Dot Baroque and an upsized edition for Prologue, commemorating the Beethoven 250. Almost all of the programmes, save for the contemporary music, were sold out with many returning audiences acknowledging the gaps in the local chamber music scene that this programme helps to plug.

- *Voices Across Centuries (19 Apr 2019)*

Kenia Vokhmianina (piano) returned to the first presentation of By Candlelight with Maureen Kelly (soprano) and Sergey Tyuteykin (trumpet), presenting a repertoire of works by composers across centuries such as Handel, Mozart, Verdi, Dvorak, Puccini and Gershwin.

- *Up Above Our Heads (8 Jun 2019)*

By Candlelight's second concert in 2019 celebrated contemporary music with a cutting-edge collaboration between leading composer-performer, Garth Knox and Singaporean violist Christoven Tan. Featuring works by contemporary music champions including Luciano Berio, Kaija Saariaho and Garth Knox, this evening also showcased percussionist, Eugene Toh and sound artist, Theemptybluesky.

- *A Tapestry of Armenian Music (27 Sep 2019)*

Performed by Ani Umedyan (violin), Leslie Tan (cello), and Kseniia Vokhmianina (piano), this Armenian programme showcased composers such as Komitas and Babajanyan.

- *A Baroque Christmas (13 & 14 Dec 2019)*

Red Dot Baroque ushered in the holiday season with two sold out concerts with selections from Charpentier's Noëls sur les instruments, works by Biber, Vivaldi, Valentini and Francesca Caccini, and a variety of Christmas folk tunes from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

- *Beethoven's Fidelio (10 & 11 Jan 2020)*

In celebration of the 250th birthday of composer Ludwig van Beethoven, this special one-hour version of Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, was performed by a cast of some of Singapore's finest young singers as part of Prologue and was praised by The Straits Times as "full of musical and dramatic value".

#### **ii. Others**

- a) Marjorie Doggett's Singapore Exhibition (14 Nov 2019 – 2 Feb 2020)

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This exhibition featured 45 works of the pioneer local photographer Marjorie Doggett based on a new photobook *Marjorie Doggett's Singapore: A Photographic Record* by Edward Stokes from the Hong Kong Photographic Heritage Foundation. Many photographs of Singapore's historic buildings and scenes had never been seen by the public as they were from her personal collection which were recently donated to the National Archives.

*b) Poetry Festival Singapore (19 – 21 Jul 2019)*

Entering its fifth year, Poetry Festival Singapore 2019 centred on the theme of "metamorphosis", which celebrates the transformative power and diversity of Singapore poetry and shines a spotlight on emerging talents and exciting new trends. Programmes included multi-and cross-lingual readings and panel discussions, a poetic-play with music, and a workshop combining poetry with yoga.

*c) S.E.A Write Award Talks (15 & 22 Feb 2020)*

The Arts House supported the Singapore Book Council's series of public talks featuring winners of the 2016 – 2018 S.E.A. Write Awards – Peter Augustine Goh, Ovidia Yu and Chia Joo Ming. In these sessions, the writers shared about their writing journey that led them to win the SEA Write Award. The session by Chia Joo Ming was postponed from 28 March to 4 July, and presented online due to the COVID-19 situation.

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### \*GOODMAN ARTS CENTRE\*

#### Overview

Goodman Place Management Office (PMO) continued to work closely with stakeholders, tenants and community partners to reach out to the public. Programmes initiated by Goodman PMO included the successful annual *Goodman Open House* and the third edition of *Goodman: B-Sides*.

#### Key Programme Highlights

i. Goodman Open House – The Play-Full Edition

GAC PMO presented the annual open house event on 22 Jun 2019. This year's objective sought to engage audiences of all ages through the theme of Music, Dance & Play with a focus on participative music & movement performances for children and families by our resident artists and arts groups offering strong children programmes.

In comparison, 2019 Open House saw a heartening increase in arts tenant participation from only 6 in 2018 to 13 total this year; this does not include the support and participation by project studio hirers and commercial tenants.

The total number of programmes presented also increased by almost double that of 2018. Programme types included black box & outdoor performances, in-studio workshops, talks by our artists and arts groups, as well as all-day activities for everyone.

Based on the 202 visitors surveyed, the overall visitor satisfaction based on variety and quality was at 95%, an increase from FY18 (90%). 97% of the visitors said they had enjoyed the event, with 94% likely to revisit again next year.

The final attendance for the half day event is 3680.

ii. Goodman B-Sides 2019

The third edition of Goodman: B-Sides 2019 was held on 16 November 2019 with the theme "Get Lost in the Arts!". With building connections and placemaking at the core of its programming approach, here were 2 key considerations for the festival:

- Primary: To offer visitors the opportunity to explore Goodman Arts Centre and encounter artists in their personal spaces, understand each artists' creative process, and experience their work environment through a medley of art offerings.
- Secondary: To cultivate meaningful connections and a sense of community and belonging amongst the arts tenants through the community garden and second edition of the "Tenants & Friends of Goodman" BBQ.

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The following components were unique to Goodman: B-Sides 2019:

### *Trails*

Programmes were presented in the form of intimate in-studio sessions through a series of un-guided trails. Getting lost at GAC was no longer a challenge but celebrated in the spirit of fun & exploration.

Visitors were encouraged to find their way to the working spaces of artists for a workshop, performance, conversation or a simple showcase. Through the concept of trails, visitors had the opportunity to build their own arts experience. If they preferred, specially curated trails were offered as alternatives.

Each in-studio session was approximately 15–40 mins. Total time per trail was suggested to be 45 mins–1.5 hours so visitors had the option to do at least 2 activities and more than 1 trail. There were programmes and trail options to serve each of our target audience groups including children and families, the curious, and arts enthusiasts.

### *Community Garden*

The community garden of GAC is located next to Block B. This garden was tended to by neighbourhood gardeners, GAC residents, and a small number of NAC colleagues—an interaction which happened organically through the common interest and goal of caring for the garden. The garden within GAC was thus a symbol of the connection between place and people with the potential to provide opportunities for deeper partnerships.

The programming team envisioned for the community garden to be a space that could continue to serve GAC tenants' programmes and activities. With this in mind, the team sought the expert knowledge of Nova Ceceliana Nelson, founder of Cultivate Central and the team behind Artground's Good Garden to help rejuvenate and redevelop the garden in conjunction with Goodman: B-Sides 2019.

True to the spirit of the community garden, the project had contributors and volunteers from GAC's community of artists, facilities team, cleaners, and community gardeners. The support and positive response received were encouraging signs that such initiatives were effective in helping foster a more synergistic artistic community.

The new garden in its first phase was presented through a series of programmes at Goodman: B-Sides 2019:

- A storytelling programme developed and produced by Cultivate Central & Kamini Ramachandran of Moonshadow Stories.
- Garden-centred market with farm-to-table and organic produce
- Gardening talks, demonstrations and workshops

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It has been almost a year since the completion of the first phase, and the garden is flourishing with plenty of interest from our community of artists and a good number of programme ideas coming in.

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### **\*ALIWAL ARTS CENTRE\***

#### **Overview**

Aliwal Arts Centre Place Management Office (AAC PMO) partnered URA's 'Streets for People', later renamed 'Lively Places Programme' – a joint HDB and URA initiative, for the second year running, to facilitate road closures along Aliwal Street, and in addition at Sultan Gate closures for its annual place-making events, the Aliwal Arts Night Crawl and Aliwal Arts Urban Festival. Although the footprint was more compact, the condensed programmes made greater impact and engaged audiences over a longer period. Both festivals also continued exiting partnerships with stakeholders within the precinct.

#### **Key Programme Highlights**

##### *i Aliwal Arts Night Crawl 2019 (13 Jul 2019)*

Aliwal Arts Night Crawl, the annual multi-disciplinary arts festival held in in the heart of Kampong Glam, returned for its seventh edition. This signature event by Aliwal Arts Centre pays homage to the rich cultural heritage of Kampong Glam. Featuring curated programmes fusing tradition and heritage with a contemporary edge, it featured storytelling tours, performances, exhibitions, immersive workshops and a night market.

Highlights include:

“In Search of the Gelam Tree” by Kamini Ramachandran was a new commissioned programme. Both sessions were sold out and well received. The highlight was the last stop of the tour, where participants were treated to traditional Malay communal meal accompanied by music at the second level of 113, Arab St shop house.

“9 Lives Show” by 9 Lives was the second edition of their exhibition showcase. One of their exhibits was recreated to showcase the existing “cats of Aliwal”. Overall, the exhibition was well received by the public. It was held at Malay Heritage Centre’s (MHC) “Finale Gallery” for fifteen days, and this was the first time MHC allowed an external party to exhibit in their gallery.

“LAPIS” by RSCLS exhibition was housed at the first level of 113 Arab St. Eight live-sized portraits of local residents and shop owners of Kampong Glam were showcased, accompanied by a mash up of their voice recording.

##### *vi Aliwal Urban Art Festival 2020 (18 Jan 2020)*

The seventh edition showcased artists from the periphery at Aliwal Arts Centre in a showcase of visual art, alternative music, dance performances, and skateboarding that confronts your perception with the question “What if”. What if everything you thought about subculture was wrong? What if street art is beyond the streets? What if urban art takes over?

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Highlights included:

Glow with the Fluo by The Blackbook Studio and RSCLS, where street artists decked art walls with fluorescent paint while audience watched art materialize in real time.

What If... Smells could come alive? by ScRach MarcS, in collaboration with Prachi Saini, a GAC Project Studio tenant. In this four-part installation, dancers translate scents into sense through their bodies in inventive and unpredictable movements. Audience watch the unique story of each smell unfold as the aromatic becomes energetic.

Urban Sounds curated by SGMUSO amped up the festival ground with the ebb of hip-hop and flow of R&B music. Featuring Mediocre Haircut Crew, Preetipls, BigDBangla, Tengyboy and special guest – Pyra from Thailand.

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**\*SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS\* (16 MAY – 2 JUNE 2019)**

The first half of FY19 saw the successful completion of Festival Director Gaurav Kripalani's second SIFA. With more than 150 ticketed and free events running from May 16 to June 2, the festival had more than 73,000 festivalgoers, up from 55,000 in 2018.

There were 6 sold out productions ranging from music legend Ryuichi Sakamoto's intimate 300-seats performance, **Fragments**, to virtual-reality theatre production **Frogman** by British company curious directive.

SIFA 2019 saw four full-length local commissions come to fruition that dived into contemporary issues and unearthed lesser known historical figures:

Checkpoint Theatre's **Displaced Persons' Welcome Dinner** was a "brilliantly acted and beautifully presented" (The Straits Times) look into the world of the humanitarian aid industry.

Ho Tzu Nyen's **The Mysterious Lai Teck**, having done a circuit of international showcases in Hamburg and Tokyo, made waves for local audiences intrigued by the visual artist's take on the enigmatic character on which his performance installation was based.

Canada's Daily tour les jours collaborated with Singapore dancer-choreographer couple ScRach MarcS to create **We Can Dance**, where participants were invited to dance in a recording booth with the footage collectively projected on the walls for the public to enjoy and join in.

**Dream under the Southern Bough: Existence** – the second instalment of Toy Factory Production's trilogy of plays presented in SIFA – brought the stories and poems of Tang Xianzu to life, this time in the larger Drama Centre Theatre.

Of special note in SIFA 2019 were the family-friendly offerings including New Zealand's pre-eminent Silo Theatre's interpretation of Sergei Prokofiev's beloved classic, **Peter and the Wolf**, as well as the highly interactive **De Relaxerette**, a ferris-wheel-like structure of hammocks where audiences could relax and be treated to Singaporean and Dutch stories.

SIFA continued to receive healthy visitorship for the talks and performances held at the Festival House. The festival once again closed with a well-attended concert at the Botanic Gardens by **Singapore Symphony Orchestra featuring singers Elena Wang, Julia Abueva and Sean Ghazi**, performing an evening of popular musical showtunes.

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### **Future Plans and Commitments:**

#### **Fundraising Plans for the following financial year:**

Arts House Ltd (AHL) extends our heartiest gratitude to our generous sponsors and donors, for their contributions through cash donations and in-kind support. It is the giving hearts and efforts of these organizations and individuals who truly believe in the arts and AHL, that we are able to continue to bring the value of arts to the community. Our appreciation to National Arts Council for their confidence and support.

In May 2019, AHL organized our inaugural charity dinner 'Into the Other World' at the Annex Building of The Arts House. As a Singapore Gucci Osteria experience, the brand's spirit of eccentricity was translated into an evening of art and cuisine, specially curated by world renowned chef Karime Lopez, the maiden chef of Gucci Osteria in Florence. Our guests were charmed and entertained by Singapore's very own master storyteller, Kamini Ramachandran and tenor Jonathan Charles Tay, accompanied by violinist Jocelyn Ng. The event raised \$40,000 to establish The Arts House as the literary arts centre. AHL would like to thank all donors who made this event possible.

AHL will endeavour in our fundraising efforts and aims to build and grow our supporters and partners through long term sustainable alliances, strategically aligned to AHL's mission and goals.

#### **Future Programmes:**

##### **\*THE ARTS HOUSE\***

- i. Cita Seni (20 Jun, 5 Sep, 17 Oct 2020)*
- ii. StoryFest: International Storytelling Festival Singapore (17 – 27 July 2020)*
- iii. LumiNation (1 – 30 Aug 2020)*
- iv. Remember When: From Memories to Monologues (13 Aug – 15 Oct 2020)*

##### **\*GOODMAN ARTS CENTRE\***

- 1. Goodman Open House – The Digital Edition (12 – 14 Mar 2021)*

##### **\*ALIWAL ARTS CENTRE\***

- 1. Soundscape (web video series; 18 Dec 20 – 5 Mar 21)*

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### **\*SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS\* (2020)**

SIFA in 2020 was supposed to continue in its official 17-day, three weekend festival format from 15 to 31 May. This year's highlight would have been four brand-new productions by Singapore theatre-makers The Finger Players, Nine Years Theatre, The Necessary Stage and Toy Factory Productions. These works were commissioned in the course of Festival Director Gaurav Kripalani's three year festival cycle, to be presented in his final year of curating the festival.

However, the developing COVID-19 situation severely impacted SIFA along with many international arts festivals worldwide at the start of 2020. By March, stricter international border controls and more stringent social distancing measures meant that the festival would no longer be able to proceed. As such, the SIFA team, together with NAC, came to the decision to cancel SIFA 2020. The cancellation was announced publicly on 23 March 2020.

At NAC's request to explore alternative methods to showcase local artists to replace the gap left by the festival in May, the Festival Director and team of producers planned **SIFA v2.020**, a series of curated digital programmes taking place from 25 May to end December 2020 that provides a platform for both artists and audiences to navigate and engage in new arts experiences in this pandemic-laden world.

Housed under SIFA All-Access on the festival website, the first wave of programmes ranged from talks, panels and workshops to play-readings and vodcasts that catered more to artists, industry players and followers of the festival.

A second wave of programmes in November - December is also being created to showcase performances for myriad audiences. As Singapore gradually re-opens and resumes activities, the team may now explore whether programs can also take place in venues within safe distance guidelines and capacities.

Some programmes include:

- a) Unboxing the Music – Sounds from Asia by Ensemble AEquilibrium (contemporary music)
- b) One Thousand Ways by 600 Highwaymen (theatre)
- c) Mr Brown Live! (music/theatre/comedy)
- d) Sound Social Sessions featuring Planeswalker, and Zul Mahmoud (sound/experimental music)
- e) The Wandering by SAtheCollective (dance/film/music)

Festival Director Gaurav Kripalani was also invited by NAC and AHL to stay on for one more year to plan SIFA 2021, and Festival Director designate Natalie Henedige will take over from 2022 – 2024.