

# Sover Photo: The Yong Siew Toh Conservatory Orchestra

## Ed's **Note**

#### Dear readers.

usic fans in Singapore are always in for a treat. From the indie Laneway Festival in January to the upcoming largest free alternative music festival in June, there is something for every music lover, drawing visitors from the region and bevond. This issue of Experience Singapore brings to you some of Singapore's popular music festivals. Flip to **Hitting the notes** and you may find yourself wanting to check them out yourself!

Beyond local and international music festivals, Singapore has also not overlooked the cultivation of its own homegrown talents. In A new beat, find out more about the incentives and infrastructure in place to support the young and professional musicians in chasing their dreams.

Some budding artistes have gone on to become the nation's household names, garnering fans and recognition locally and abroad. Loud and lauded puts the spotlight on some of these trailblazers, who dared to dream and persevered in honing their craft to get to where they are now.

Last but not least, in the face of growing nontraditional threats such as cyber security, our regular Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) column highlights a joint workshop "Capacity Building for International Cyber Security Negotiations" for ASEAN diplomats. The course was held in collaboration with the Geneva-based ICT4Peace Foundation and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. Turn to Combating cyber crime to find out more.

Bring on the music, and enjoy this issue of Experience Singapore.

Public Affairs Directorate Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore

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Share with us your memories, photos and experiences in photos and experiences in Singapore under the Singapore Cooperation Progrmme. Email us at mfa@sgmfa.gov.sg

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Music festivals in Singapore – both homegrown and international – are a big draw for visitors from the region.



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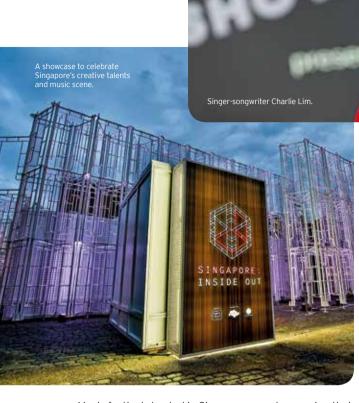


mid declining compact disc (CD) sales, music juggernaut HMV pulled down the shutters of its last remaining outlet in Singapore - for good - in September 2015, sharing a fate with other music retailers, both international and homegrown, who have previously exited.

It was the rise of digital platforms for music and piracy that led to the demise, said local retail experts. But while that may be the case, Singapore's music scene is more audible than ever before. Last year (2015) was a prolific year for homegrown music with 30 new albums released between April and June. Following that, rising stars pop guartet Sam Willows (who performed at the opening of the 28th Southeast Asian Games in Singapore in June) released their debut album in October, followed by all-female punk band No Pantz's extended play (EP) on Christmas Day.







Music festivals hosted in Singapore are also proving their staying prowess, attracting droves of fans year after year (see page 10). Meanwhile, more Singaporean-made music are making their mark abroad (see page 8).

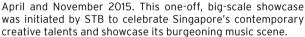
#### A MEDLEY OF SUPPORT

Overall support for the local music industry has significantly strengthened in recent years. In May 2015, the Musicians Guild of Singapore was set up to support the livelihood, career and professional development needs of the working musicians community. Initiated by a group of professional musicians, The Guild counts Singapore's Ambassador-At-Large Professor Tommy Koh as its patron, while Mando-pop superstar Stephanie Sun and Cultural Medallion awardee singer, composer and playwright Dick Lee are among its registered members.

Government funding and grants have also improved. In September 2014, the National Arts Council (NAC) and the Media Development Authority (MDA) consolidated their grant schemes for existing and budding musicians to provide support for the production of full-length albums or EPs, development of press kits, and participation at music festivals abroad. Grants are now also available for music training or course subsidies and allowances.

The increasingly lively music scene in Singapore prompted these moves by the MDA and NAC as they felt it was "important to develop the music sector in a more holistic manner", said NAC's Acting Director of Sector Development (Music and Theatre) Grace Ng. "We want to more effectively seed artistic growth, grow the appetite for Singapore music and develop market intermediaries as champions for the sector, to build a music scene that all Singaporeans are proud of and wish to participate in," Ms Ng said in a statement.

Opportunities for Singaporean contemporary bands and artistes to showcase their music overseas are now more available and possible. Also in 2015, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) partnered with the Music Society, Singapore (SGMUSO) to offer local acts a chance to perform in Beijing, London or New York City as part of "Singapore: Inside Out" – a multi-city travelling showcase that took place between



Groundbreaking singer-songwriter Charlie Lim, who was part of the event's line-up in London, thinks that "there's no better time to do original music than now". Mr Lim, 27, whose recent second album *Time/Space* clinched top spot on the iTunes Singapore chart within an hour of its release in June 2015, told *Experience Singapore*, "Platform-wise, there are a lot of pop-up shows and festivals, which is fantastic, but musicians could also use more mid-sized venues to showcase their work as well as more tie-ins with regional and international events.

"The whole ecosystem comprising artistes' managers, booking agents, publicists, music producers, sound engineers and music journalists should continuously grow." Mr Lim also performed at the annual international jazz festival "Sing Jazz" in March this year,

#### **ARTISTIC ACCOMPANIMENT**

Local bands presenting their music at "Singapore: Inside Out"

Those wishing to pursue their passion in music further can do so with the various music mentorship programmes available. Institutions such as the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts' School





of Young Talents and School of the Arts (SOTA), opened in 1999 and 2008 respectively, offer a complete musical education up to degree level - an option not available in Singapore previously. SOTA's six-year music programme offers youths aged 13 to 18 years masterclasses by renowned local and international artistes, as well as performance opportunities in solo and chamber music.

The National University of Singapore (NUS)'s Yong Siew  $Toh (YST) \, Conservatory \, of \, Music, which \, opened \, in \, 2003, offers \,$ a four-year, full-time undergraduate Bachelor of Music degree programme and a boutique Master of Music programme. In October 2015, the Conservatory performed its first overseas concert at Hong Kong's City Hall to mark Singapore's Jubilee - its 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence. Aside from these prestigious full-time programmes, the Conservatory also runs the Young Artist Programme for secondary school Singaporean students who show outstanding performance abilities during auditions for admission to its Bachelor of Music Degree programme, but who were not offered admission because of the academic criteria required by NUS. The programme is conducted by Conservatory faculty members and provides professional training in musical performance with supporting academic study.

YST Conservatory of Music's alumni Ms Syafiqah 'Adha Mohamed Sallehin credits her successful career - as a composer and the Music Director of traditional contemporary Malay ensemble Gendang Akustika – to the formal training she received "from highly-esteemed professors as well as visiting composers and artists". Ms Syafiqah, 26, graduated in 2013 with a Bachelor of Music degree. "There are indeed more opportunities now for local aspiring musicians to pursue their interest in music, be it in instrumental performance or music creation," she said. "The various arts and music institutions in Singapore have greatly helped the local music scene to flourish over the decade by attracting and developing a growing community of professional musicians who are performing at high standards."

Music professionals can boost, refine and hone their skills with NAC's Capability Development Grant. This grant supports the continuous professional development of those who work in Singapore's arts and culture sector and can be used for workshops, masterclasses, seminars, conferences, residencies and many other training and skills development programmes.







WE WANT TO MORE EFFECTIVELY SEED ARTISTIC GROWTH, GROW THE APPETITE FOR SINGAPORE MUSIC AND DEVELOP MARKET INTERMEDIARIES AS CHAMPIONS FOR THE SECTOR, TO BUILD A MUSIC SCENE THAT ALL SINGAPOREANS ARE PROUD OF AND WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN

GRACE NG. NAC'S ACTING DIRECTOR OF SECTOR DEVELOPMENT (MUSIC AND THEATRE)





yber security is fast emerging as a salient global issue. Government officials and diplomats are often ill-equipped but will increasingly be called upon to coordinate and lead international cyber security discussions and negotiations. Against this backdrop, the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) collaborated with ICT4Peace Foundation, a think tank based in Geneva and supported by the Swiss and German governments, and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) to conduct an inaugural workshop titled "Capacity Building for International Cyber Security Negotiations" for diplomats from ASEAN countries from 19 to 20 October 2015. This workshop was held back-to-back with the ASEAN Regional Forum Seminar on Operationalising Cyber Confidence Building Measures jointly organised by Cyber Security Agency Singapore and the US Department of State from 21 to 22 October 2015.



#### REGIONAL CYBER SECURITY CAPACITY BUILDING

The workshop aimed to equip ASEAN officials with a firm grasp on cyber security policy issues and the skills needed in international cyber security negotiations. A total of 19 participants from ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretariat attended the workshop. Distinguished speakers included Ms Michele Markoff, Deputy Coordinator for Cyber Issues in the US State Department, Mr Karsten Geier, Head of the Cyber Policy Coordination Staff in Germany's Federal Foreign Office, and Ms Caitriona Heinl, Research Fellow for cyber security issues at the Centre of Excellence for National Security

↑ One of the speakers, Dr Nils Melzer (centre) is Senior Adviser to the Security Policy Division of the Political Directorate at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. He spoke on cyber security and international law at the workshop.





at the RSIS. They covered a range of issues related to international cyber security and current consultation and negotiation efforts, such as international norms of responsible state behaviour, confidence-building measures and international cooperation.

The climax of the workshop was a simulation exercise led by Mr Henry Fox, Director of Cyber and Space Policy in Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which provided an opportunity for participants to put theory into practice. During the simulation exercise, the participants attempted to develop a consensus text on regional cyber security cooperation. Participants, practitioners and academics were able to discuss and understand the concerns, best practices and policies for combating cybercrime at the regional and global level. Mr Muhd Ashady Mohd Harris from Brunei's Ministry of Defence commented, "The exercise helps in tuning and gearing our operational activities towards national and international cooperation when and if required."





#### THE EXERCISE HELPS IN TUNING AND GEARING OUR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES TOWARDS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WHEN AND IF REOUIRED

MR MUHD ASHADY MOHD HARRIS. BRUNEI'S MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



#### **TOWARDS A SECURE REGIONAL CYBERSPACE**

The objectives of cyber security capacity building are two-fold: to mitigate risks to both rights and security in the cyber-sphere, and to broaden participation in cyber security-related international debates and global negotiations. RSIS Senior Fellow Mr Mushahid Ali emphasised in his opening remarks that "there needed to be international rules and norms to keep ICT productive and safe in our region". The workshop provided a platform to discuss these issues, and was thus a stride towards a sustained, open, safe and secure cyberspace for the region. The SCP looks forward to conducting more courses related to the increasingly important topic of cyber security with relevant existing and new partners.

← Founder and President of the ICT4Peace Foundation, and former Ambassador of Switzerland Dr Daniel Stauffacher giving his opening remarks. The Foundation champions the use of ICT for peace building, crisis management, and humanitarian aid, and supports diplomatic processes for a peaceful and open cyberspace.

◆ Participants learnt about prevailing issues related to cyber security policy and the skills needed in international cyber security negotiations.





#### **RANI SINGAM**

One of the most sought-after vocalists in Asia, Rani Singam was discovered in 2002 by Jeremy Monteiro who mistook her demo CD to be that of famous American jazz singer Sarah Vaughan's. The former lawyer is also listed in *The Jazz Singers, The Ultimate Guide* – an encyclopaedia of the best of the genre's singers, where Ms Singam is listed alongside legends like Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra. Her debut album in 2004, produced by Mr Monteiro, was distributed in Asia and the United States. The album *With A Song In My Heart* was given a top rating in *O's Place Jazz Newsletter*, a leading jazz publication in the US.

#### THE SAM WILLOWS

its first album in late-2015.

WORLD STAGE.

Since they burst onto the scene in 2012, pop quartet The Sam Willows - comprising siblings Benjamin and Narelle Kheng and their friends Sandra Riley Tang and Jon Chua - has attracted more than a million views on their YouTube page, and more than 15,000 subscribers. In 2013, the band played at six international music festival and conferences eight months. These included the South by South West (SXSW) Music Festival in Austin, Texas, US, the Canadian Music Week in Toronto, Ontario and the WAM Festival in Perth, Australia. The band released

Singapore's most successful Mandopop export, Stephanie Sun has extensive fan bases in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Ms Sun broke onto the scene in 2000 and picked up various regional newcomer awards within the first year of her music career. Today, the mother of one has 12 studio albums to her name, including *Stefanie* (2004), which won Best Female Vocalist at Taiwan's prestigious Golden Melody Awards – the first time a Singaporean had done so. Ms Sun was the first pop act to perform at the new 20,000-seater National Stadium in Singapore for her comeback concert in July 2015.





#### JEREMY MONTEIRO

Known as Singapore's "King of Swing", Jeremy Monteiro received the Cultural Medallion in 2002. Mr Monteiro has performed with many jazz greats including Grammy-winning musical duo Michael and Randy Brecker, as well as Ernie Watts and Jimmy Cobb. At Singapore's inaugural Mosaic Music Festival in 2005. Mr Monteiro and his jazz trio performed with the late American jazz saxophone and flute player James Moody, in celebration of the legend's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mr Monteiro is a Voting Member of the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts in the United Kinadom.



#### TAUFIK BATISAH

Singer, songwriter and music producer Taufik Batisah is the first winner of singing reality show Singapore Idol. Since clinching the title in 2004, he has bagged three awards - Most Popular Act, Most Popular Song and Best Act in Singapore - at the Anugerah Planet Muzik (APM) 2008, a competition that recognises Malaylanguage singers in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. In 2014, Mr Taufik once again won for Most Popular Song at the APM. Mr Taufik has branched out into hosting local television shows and also appears in two upcoming Malaysian movies.

#### **DICK LEE**

Singer-songwriter and playwright Dick Lee has a music and theatre career of more than 40 years. Mr Lee has composed pop songs, scores for iconic Singapore musicals including Beauty World (1988), Fried Rice Paradise (1991) and Forbidden City (2003), as well as songs to celebrate Singapore's National Day. When Beauty World debuted in 1988, it toured four cities in Japan. Mr Lee's 1989 album, The Mad Chinaman, went platinum three months from its release in the region, and was also well-received in Japan. It was brought to life onstage with his musical The Adventures of the Mad Chinaman in 2011. The "upsized" version was staged in September 2015, as part of Singapore's Golden Jubilee celebrations. In 2003, Mr Lee was awarded the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize. He received Singapore's highest arts accolade, the Cultural Médallion, in 2005.



#### **BILLY KOH**

One of the most influential figures in Asian Chinesepop music, Billy Koh is the founder and former chief executive officer of homegrown recording label Ocean Butterflies Music. Mr Koh has produced more than 200 albums for singers from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China and the US. He has also discovered – and wrote the music for - many successful Asian acts including Kit Chan, A-Do, and JJ Lin. Mr Koh was awarded the Meritorious Award and Wings of Excellence Award by the Composers and Authors Society of Singapore (COMPASS) in 2001 and 2005 respectively.



#### **MARGARET LENG TAN**

The Washington Post in October 2014 called her "the formidable, pathbreaking virtuoso of the modern piano". Singapore-born and Brooklyn-based Margaret Leng Tan has also earned accolades such as "queen of tov piano" and "one of Singapore's most prominent musical exports". Ms Tan, who recently performed at the 2015 Singapore International Festival of Arts, has played in some of the world's prestigious concert halls, including New York City's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Centre. Ms Tan is also the first woman to earn a doctorate from Juilliard School, the prestigious performing arts conservatory in New York City.



#### **CORRINNE MAY**

Born in Singapore and now based in Los Angeles, singer-songwriter Corrinne May's debut album in 2001 earned her the "Kerrville New Folk Award" from 600 contenders at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas. United States. After sold-out shows in Singapore, she embarked on her first tour of Japan, doing instore shows to standing-room-only crowds at Tower Records locations in Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka in 2007. In recognition of her contributions to local and regional music scenes, Ms May received the Young Composer of the Year award and Wings of Excellence award from COMPASS, the performing rights society of Singapore, in 2007. Ms May is currently working on her sixth album.



# ning Hands

#### **BAYBEATS**

Baybeats has established a reputation as the largest free alternative music festival in the region. Organised and hosted by Singapore's national performing arts centre Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay, it offers a complete concert-going experience with live performances and activities around the arts venue at Marina Bay. Now in its 15th edition, it will be held from 24 to 26 June 2016, with a hotlyanticipated range of alternative music across different genres - including folk, pop, metal, post-rock, emo, punk, electro and more – from Singapore and the region, for music fans to discover and enjoy.

Beyond festival days. Baybeats supports the development of Singapore's music community through mentorship programmes for youths under the Baybeats Budding initiative. In 2015 for instance, eight Budding Bands were selected through audition to undergo a four-month mentorship programme helmed by prominent Singapore music industry veterans. The bands made their Baybeats debut at the end of the programme. The initiative also provides mentorship opportunities for aspiring music journalists, concert photographers and video production artists in its bid to grow a community of music lovers.

"Baybeats' focus on homegrown musicians means that audiences can relate to the stories the artists share through their music, and this connection keeps our audiences engaged. With the wide range of music genres presented, there is always something for everyone to enjoy at the festival. The fact that all the performances are free adds to the draw of the festival," the Esplanade's Arts programmer Ms Cecilia Chow told Experience Singapore.



# HITTING THE NOTES

With something for every type of music lover, Singapore's popular music festivals attract visitors from the region and beyond.

TEXT BY FAIROZA MANSOR

#### **SING JAZZ**

The annual Singapore International Jazz Festival, or Sing Jazz, first took to the stage at the Marina Bay Sands (MBS)'s Event Plaza in 2014. Within a short time, the three-day festival has established itself as a premier international festival of jazz and jazz-inspired music. This year's edition ran from 4 to 6 March 2016 - its third - and included in its international line-English singersongwriter Joss Stone, Russian jazz trumpeter Vadim Eilenkrig, and British acid jazz band Incognito, performing at the festival for the third time. Jeremy Monteiro, a jazz pianist, singer, composer and a Cultural Medallion awardee led the line-up of local musicians.

The event's co-founder Mr Michael Tay and his team have high hopes for the future of the festival. "We want Sing Jazz to become a household name on the global jazz circuit, comparable to big-name jazz festivals in Newport, Montreaux and New Orleans," Mr Tay said. "If the Dubai Jazz Fest can

climb from a three-day festival attracting 1,200 participants in 2003 to become a nine-day festival in 2014 reaching 60,000 [attendees], I believe Sing Jazz too can achieve that level of success one day."

Sing Jazz is organised by the Foundation for the Arts and Social Enterprise, founded by Mr Tay. "It's a very long journey we've started on. If we were just music organisers, we would just make money off tickets and sponsors. But the whole idea (for) supporting Sing Jazz is because we need the stage for our own local musicians," Mr Tay said.

"If you don't have a platform to allow your local musicians to perform with the best of international musicians, (and use) some of their branding and pass it to our musicians, we will be in a rut for many years." he added.







IT'S A VERY LONG JOURNEY WE'VE STARTED ON ... BUT THE WHOLE IDEA (FOR) SUPPORTING SING JAZZ IS BECAUSE WE NEED THE STAGE FOR OUR OWN LOCAL MUSICIANS

MR MICHAEL TAY, SINGJAZZ CO-FOUNDER





LANEWAY FESTIVAL SINGAPORE

Singapore holds the distinction of being the first city in 2010 to mark the St Jerome's Laneway Festival's expansion into Southeast Asia from Melbourne, Australia (where it originated), and other Australian cities as well as Auckland. This year, the much anticipated annual indie festival, popularly known as Laneway, was held on 30 January at Singapore's largest outdoor space, The Meadow at Gardens By The Bay.

The inaugural Laneway Festival Singapore in 2011 drew about 6,000 music fans from all over Asia to the Fort Canning Park located within Singapore's Central Business District. The festival moved to The Meadow in 2013. In 2015, Laneway attracted a sold-out crowd of 13,000. At the sixth edition this year, a fourth stage was added and more than 28 acts performed over 12 hours for the festival's most extensive programme yet.



"If I look back from day one to this event, I would note serious progression. Laneway's reputation as a leading event worldwide was really apparent and the artists were so happy to be there. I felt like the previous 10 years of blood, sweat and tears [since Laneway first originated in 2005] had finally culminated in an event that was truly amazing on every level," said Mr Danny Rogers, Laneway's co-founder.



#### NOISE SINGAPORE FESTIVAL

Noise Singapore was initiated by the NAC in September 2005 to help youths express, develop and showcase their creativity. The programme pairs young talents aged 17 to 35 years with professionals in music, art, design and photography for them to hone their skills and learn from industry veterans. The Noise apprenticeship and music mentorship programmes culminate with an annual exhibition and a Noise concert at the Esplanade.

Noise Singapore has been steadily growing since its inception in 2006, said NAC's Director for Arts and Youths Mr Kenneth Kwok. The initiative attracted about 6,000 participants in 2015 - a huge

> jump from the 250 applications received in 2006. "We're proud to have been able to offer diverse opportunities for our young people to encounter the arts and express their creativity," said Mr Kwok. To mark its 10<sup>th</sup> year, a two-day Noise Alumni Concert was held at the Lawn @ The Foothills, located within the Fort Canning Park, in October 2015. The showcase consisted of live performances by familiar names in the Singapore music scene who were once Noise mentees themselves. Noise Singapore 2016 is set to be staged sometime between August and September this year.



### **ETHNIC EXPLOSION**

Arts festivals that celebrate Singapore's cultural diversity have a strong music component and are permanent features for Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay.

KALAA UTSAVAM Prominent musical acts, both classical interpretations and contemporary expressions, feature in the performance line-up at this Indian festival of the arts. In 2014, popular Indian band Raghu Dixit Project performed to a packed house, and in 2012, the band Indian Ocean performed with Strings from Pakistan as part of a doublebill concert. In 2015, for the first time in its 14 years of running, the event was headlined by commissioned works featuring Singapore artists, as opposed to shows imported from India.

HUAYI Chinese music fans are often in for a treat at this annual Chinese arts festival. The festival has featured a range of musicians including Taiwanese electronic pop-rock band Hello Nico to vocalists such as Chinese songstress Gong Linna, Local acts including the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, singer Dawn Wong and Mandopop songwriter Chen Jiaming have also been given the opportunity to shine.

PESTA RAYA Pesta Raya places a significant focus on Malay music, both modern as well as traditional. In its latest showcase in August 2015 for example, the festival paid tribute to some of the community's most prominent pioneers such as Nona Asiah, a popular voice on Malay radio and cinema in the 1940s and 1950s. Contemporary Malay talents making an impact in the regional entertainment scene such as Indonesian pop/rock quartet Noah, and Malaysian experimental rock group Pitahati, were also invited to play.

