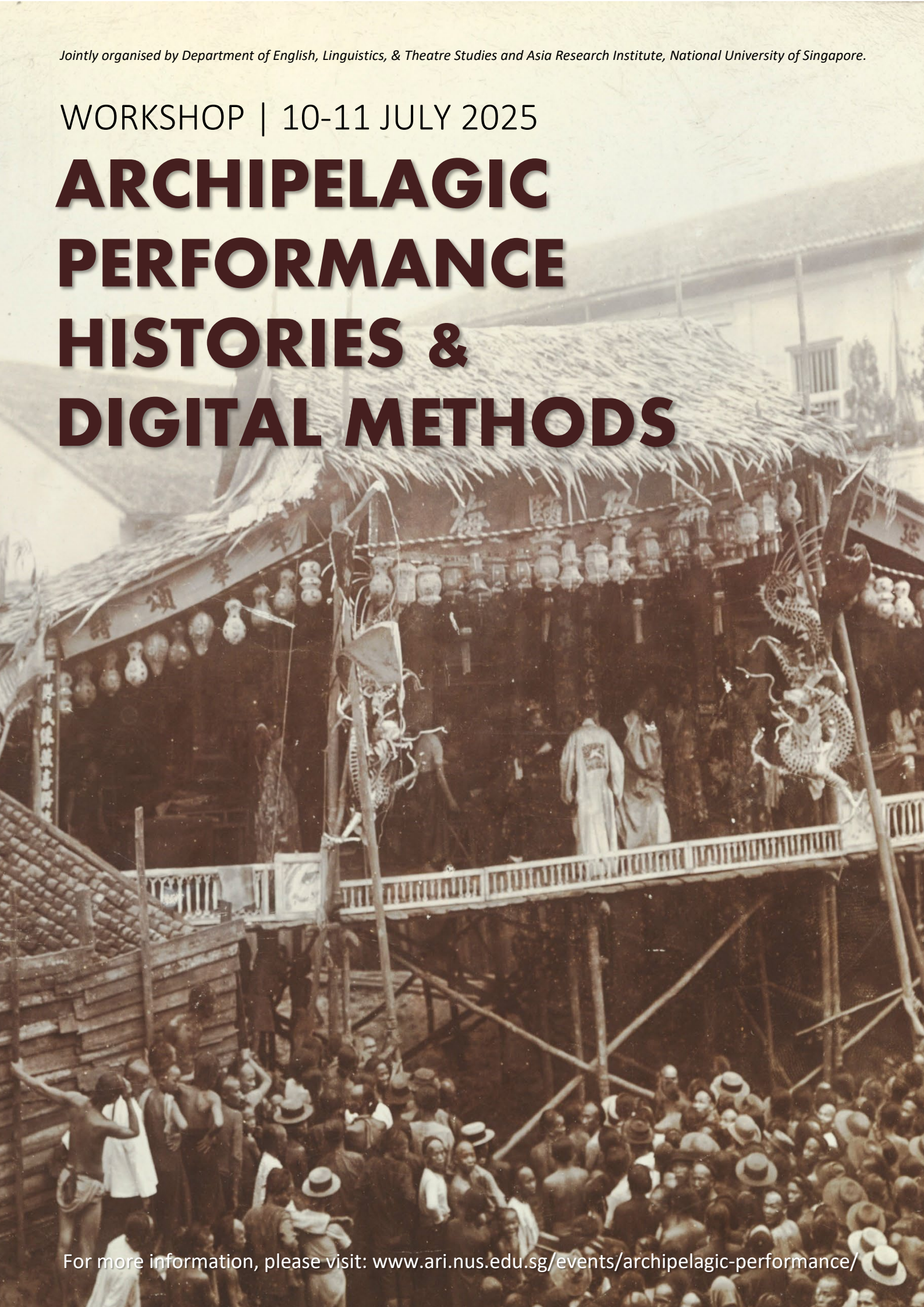
Jointly organised by Department of English, Linguistics, & Theatre Studies and Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.

WORKSHOP | 10-11 JULY 2025

ARCHIPELAGIC PERFORMANCE HISTORIES & DIGITAL METHODS



For more information, please visit: www.ari.nus.edu.sg/events/archipelagic-performance/

The workshop is jointly organized by the Department of English, Linguistics, and Theatre Studies and the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore.

The workshop aims to explore the historical connections and flows of performance-making and travel across Asian regions, seas, straits, and beyond, focusing on developing research into cultural heritage and past intercultural engagements in this part of the world. It seeks to identify maritime and land routes and geographical nodes that were part of performance networks, touring, diasporic exchanges, and migration of practitioners and troupes from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. It aims to de-emphasise the continent, sub-continent or mainland as the sole origin of performance practices and instead focus on the flow and circulation of people, practices, and intercultural performance-making over time and transregionally. It recognises these flows as a collective heritage that was interactive and polycentric, rather than exclusive to the histories of nations and linear narratives of historical processes. The concept of 'archipelago' (Rae 2019) is incorporated as a metaphor to challenge dominant discourses of continentalism and nation-states. The goal is to decentre knowledge production and retell historical narratives of performance histories across a wider geography based on evolving social and ecological relations.

Papers seek to uncover familial ties, apprentice-master relations, genealogies, social ties, and cultural exchanges that made possible hybridisation and cross-cultural innovations that came to define performance practices found in Southeast and East Asia and beyond. Divergent routes of performance networks may be addressed alongside imperial routes and Empire touring. Additionally, the workshop will intersect with the field of digital humanities, exploring how digital tools and approaches can contribute to the study of performance histories.

The workshop aims to propel the extensive study of the archipelagic flow and circulation of performance-making and travelling, building on prior research on interculturalism in Southeast and East Asian performance. It will also encourage scholars to engage with digital scholarship and combine historical and archival research with digital approaches to bring about interdisciplinary collaborations and exchanges.

Scholars working on regional case studies, performance databases, and theatre archives are encouraged to submit a proposal. The workshop also welcomes studies that combine digital methods such as network analysis, historical GIS, and visualisations with archival research and data collection across archives and digital collections. It also explores traditional methods and interfaces of storytelling and knowledge production in relation to performance-making and embodied practices. Methodological innovation is welcomed, and the conference themes and topics will encourage collaborative research projects and researchers who use digital approaches in their studies, including those exploring the possibilities of augmented and virtual reality technologies for rethinking performance. By combining approaches across disciplines, we hope to find new ways to tell and experience stories of our shared and unshared heritages, legacies, and genealogies of performance making in the region.

The workshop aims to cover the following topics:

1. Who were the actors, agents, commissioners, and nodes responsible for forming and shaping transregional relationships, and who made possible the travelling of performance practices across geographical regions? What were some of these social relations within a troupe, a company or between individuals who facilitated these travels and theatre migration?
2. What were the technologies that made these exchanges possible? And how did they contribute to creating and maintaining these performance networks? How can new digital technologies create platforms of exchange and dialogue based on alternative geographies and imaginaries of connection?

3. Where were the places of performances and what were their individual and collective histories? How were these places connected? How did each performance or production fit into the ecosystem of each 'place'? And how were such sites part of a wider regional or transregional network of performance travels?

4. How did the travels in turn change the way the performers were received back home? Did performers adapt and respond to local tastes and expectations as they travelled from one place to another? What repertoire did performers acquire, invent, or carry forward from their travels?

5. Compared to travel routes shaped by the Empire, what other routes were travelled by the performers of diasporic communities? For instance, Cantonese opera troupes toured the Australian goldfields in Victoria during the Gold Rush from the 1850s to 1870s. What places were included in the itineraries of these troupes and what networks existed in the nineteenth century that made these transregional tours possible?

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

DATE	**TIME** (SGT)	**PANEL SESSION**
10 Jul 2025 (Thu)	09:30 – 09:45	**WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**
	09:45 – 10:30	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1**
	11:00 – 12:30	**PANEL 1** – Archipelagic Crossings in Material Culture and Theatre Photography
	13:30 – 15:00	**PANEL 2** – Gender and Historiography: Women Entertainers, Itinerant Mystics, Courtesans, and Hula Dancers
	15:30 – 17:00	**PANEL 3** – Reassessing Historiography through Biographical Research
	18:00 – 19:30	**WORKSHOP DINNER** *(For speakers and chairpersons only)*
11 Jul 2025 (Fri)	09:30 – 10:30	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2**
	11:00 – 12:30	**PANEL 4** – Performing Data: Transcribing, Mapping and Representing Archipelagic Connections
	13:30 – 15:00	**PANEL 5** – Across the Seas: Archipelagic Narratives and Diasporic Identities
	15:30 – 17:00	**PANEL 6** – Tides of Archipelagic Past and Present: Mediating Intercultural Bodies and Island Indigeneities
	17:00 – 17:10	**CLOSING REMARKS**
	17:15 – 18:15	**BUSINESS MEETING** (*For speakers only)*

10 JULY 2025 • THURSDAY

09:30 – 09:45	**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**
	TIM WINTER | *National University of Singapore* **ALVIN ENG HUI LIM** | *National University of Singapore*
09:45 – 10:30	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1**
Chairperson	**KYUEUN KIM** | *National University of Singapore*
9:45	Island Time? Temporality, Historicity and Archipelagic Performances **PAUL RAE** | *The University of Melbourne*
10:10	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
10:30 – 11:00	**MORNING TEA BREAK**
11:00 – 12:30	**PANEL 1 – ARCHIPELAGIC CROSSINGS IN MATERIAL CULTURE AND THEATRE PHOTOGRAPHY**
Chairperson	**ALVIN ENG HUI LIM** | *National University of Singapore*
11:00	A Photowayang of Theatre Photography **ALVIN ENG HUI LIM** | *National University of Singapore*
11:15	Reinterpreting 'Cosmopolitanism' of Raffles' *Wayang Klitik* Collection **RANI PRIHATMANTI** | *Universitas Ciputra – Surabaya*
11:30	Unveiling Mak Yong: Decoding its Transborder History through Photographic Evidence, Official Narrative, and Collective Memory **SYAFIQ FALIQ BIN ALFAN** | *Universiti Malaya* **ALIYYAH NUHA FAIQAH BINTI AZMAN FIRDAUS** | *Hiroshima University*
11:45	*Rayuan Asmara* and Malay Theatre at the Archipelagic Crossing **YEE CHENG KOH** | *National University of Singapore & King's College London*
12:00	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
12:30 – 13:30	**LUNCH BREAK**

13:30 – 15:00	**PANEL 2 – GENDER AND HISTORIOGRAPHY: WOMEN ENTERTAINERS, ITINERANT MYSTICS, COURTESANS, AND HULA DANCERS**
Chairperson	**ROWEENA YIP** | *NUS College*
13:30	Women Entertainers in Asia's Militarized Cultures: Tracing Women Performers across Dancehalls, Clubs, and Camp Stages through Asia's 20th Century of Wars and Occupations **KATHERINE MEZUR** | *University of California – Irvine*
13:45	*Moner Manusher Khoje*: Traversing Sacred Geographies, *Tantric* Mysticism, and the Politics of Digital Transcendence in *Baul* Performance **ADRIJAA CHAKRABORTY** | *University of Edinburgh*
14:00	Reading Colonial Photographic Portraits of Indian Courtesans as Performance: Mapping Transregional Legacies of Embodied Knowledge and Intellectual Labor **SHRINWANTI MISTRI** | *University of Minnesota Twin Cities*
14:15	Aloha China: Hula Dance in Southern China and the South Sea, 1920s-1940s **EN LI** | *University of Texas at Dallas*
14:30	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
15:00 – 15:30	**AFTERNOON TEA BREAK**
15:30 – 17:00	**PANEL 3 – REASSESSING HISTORIOGRAPHY THROUGH BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH**
Chairperson	**CAROLINE CHIA** | *Nanyang Technological University*
15:30 *Online*	Porter McCray and the Origins of Performance Studies **RASHNA DARIUS NICHOLSON** | *University of Warwick*
15:45	The Making of the 'Modern': South Asian Dance Histories, Archipelagic Metaphors and Asia as Method **PRIYANKA BASU** | *King's College London*
16:00	"Their Programme is Most Diversified and Should Secure a Full House": Kate Howarde's Performances in Singapore and on Thursday Island **LAURA GINTERS** | *University of Sydney*
16:15	Reassessing Dance Modernity and Historiography at the Ends of Empires through Biographical Research on Norda Mata **LUKE AARON FORBES** | *Independent Scholar*
16:30	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
17:00	**END OF DAY 1**
18:00 – 19:30	**WORKSHOP DINNER** *(For speakers and chairpersons only)*

11 JULY 2025 • FRIDAY

09:30 – 10:30	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2**
Chairperson	**KYUEUN KIM** | *National University of Singapore*
09:30	The Plotting of *Panorama Singapura*: Media Archaeology, Theatre History, and the Visualisation of Performance **JONATHAN BOLLEN** | *National Taiwan Normal University*
10:10	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
10:30 – 11:00	**TEA BREAK**
11:00 – 12:30	**PANEL 4 – PERFORMING DATA: TRANSCRIBING, MAPPING AND REPRESENTING ARCHIPELAGIC CONNECTIONS**
Chairperson	**HEDREN WAI YUAN SUM** | *National University of Singapore*
11:00	Ontology as a Method: Representing the Complexities of Archipelagic Performance Histories and Connections **HEDREN SUM** | *National University of Singapore*
11:15	Mapping Patrons, Venues and Performances: A Digital (Hi)story of the Parsee Theatre's Intercultural and Polycentric Engagements in and around Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Singapore **BAHAR GÜRSEL** | *Middle East Technical University*
11:30	Digital Tools for Tracking Archipelagic Touring: Harmonising Performing Arts Databases Down Under **SARAH THOMASSON** | *Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington* **CHRIS HAY** | *Flinders University*
11:45	Kinaesthetic Sketching **FUSAKO INNAMI** | *Durham University*
12:00	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
12:30 – 13:30	**LUNCH BREAK**

13:30 – 15:00	**PANEL 5 – ACROSS THE SEAS: ARCHIPELAGIC NARRATIVES AND DIASPORIC IDENTITIES**
Chairperson	**YEE CHENG KOH** | *National University of Singapore & King's College London*
13:30	Mak Yong: Popular Theatre and Heritage of Southeast Asia, 1870-1960 **ALAN DARMAWAN** | *SOAS University of London*
13:45	Navigating Livelihoods 'On the Road': Life Histories of Sinophone Performing Artists in Singapore, 1930s-1970s **BEIYU ZHANG** | *Jinan University*
14:00	Stirring the Heartstrings through Hometown Music: Performing Nanyin **CAROLINE CHIA** | *Nanyang Technological University*
14:15	Hang Tuah in a Sea of Islands: Archipelagic Readings of the Malay *Hikayat Hang Tuah* **SOLIHIN BIN SAMSURI** | *University of California – Berkeley*
14:30	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
15:00 – 15:30	**AFTERNOON TEA BREAK**
15:30 – 17:00	**PANEL 6 – TIDES OF ARCHIPELAGIC PAST AND PRESENT: MEDIATING INTERCULTURAL BODIES AND ISLAND INDIGENEITES**
Chairperson	**KYUEUN KIM** | *National University of Singapore*
15:30	The Historical Geographies of Intercultural Actor Training in Singapore **NIEN YUAN CHENG** | *Singapore University of Technology and Design*
15:45 *Online*	SAIL UP! Celebrating Australia-Indonesia's Shared Heritage through Contemporary Art **ABDI KARYA** | *Makassan Art Research and Global Encounters Institute*
16:00	Paglubog at Pag-ahon (Submerging and Ascent): Nissology in Martha Atienza's *Our Islands* **GIANPAOLO L. ARAGO** | *University of the Philippines – Diliman*
16:15	Performing Indigeneity: Contradictions of Land Reclamation in Drama Box's *Air* **MATTHEW FAM** | *University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign*
16:30	**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**
17:00 – 17:10	**CLOSING REMARKS**
	TIM WINTER | *National University of Singapore*
17:10 – 17:15	**BREAK**
17:15 – 18:15	**BUSINESS MEETING** *(For speakers only)*
	ALVIN ENG HUI LIM | *National University of Singapore* **HEDREN WAI YUAN SUM** | *National University of Singapore* **KYUEUN KIM** | *National University of Singapore*
18:15	**END OF WORKSHOP**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1

Island Time?
Temporality, Historicity and Archipelagic Performances

PAUL RAE
The University of Melbourne
paul.rae@unimelb.edu.au

In English, the phrase 'island time' describes an unhurried pace in locations where physical and cultural conditions predominate over standardised clock-based schedules. Used sometimes pejoratively, sometimes nonchalantly, its casual and colloquial utterance nevertheless points to certain conditions of island life that pose interesting questions for us in the context of our workshop: what is the temporality of island performances? How does this impact their relationship with the past? And what this mean for their documentation and analysis?

In this paper, I consider these questions with one eye on the range of papers to be presented in the course of the workshop, and another on a case study from the Indonesian 'island paradise' of Bali.

Legong is at once one of the best-known and most arcane of the 'traditional' Balinese dances. Typically featuring two or more dancers performing in a synchronicity that is significantly determined in dialogue with the gamelan, rhythm is only one of many ways in which the complex temporality of the form is established. At the same time, *Legong* is deeply informed by its history of overseas touring and presentation, and of the attention paid to it by Euro-American artists and ethnographers who developed a wide range of methods to record it visually.

In this paper, I use the example of *legong* to argue that island and archipelagic performances hold within them a distinctively varied and densely woven set of temporalities. I consider where and how these make their presence felt, and what their implications are for doing performance history, and the visual and digital methods available to facilitate it.

Paul Rae is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne in Australia. He is the author of *Theatre and Human Rights* (Palgrave, 2009), *Real Theatre* (Cambridge UP, 2019), and co-editor, with Tracy C. Davis, of *The Cambridge Handbook of Mixed Methods for Theatre and Performance Research* (Cambridge UP, 2024). A former editor of the journal *Theatre Research International*, and co-artistic director of the Singapore-based theatre company Spell Seven Performance Club (1997-2016), Paul publishes widely on contemporary theatre and on Asia-Pacific performance cultures. *What the Theatre Said*, a bi-weekly Theatre and Performance Studies newsletter comprising an essay and other features, can be found at https://theatresaid.substack.com/

A Photowayang of Theatre Photography

ALVIN ENG HUI LIM
National University of Singapore
alim@nus.edu.sg

On Tuesday, 14 December 1897, or the 21st day of the 11th month of the year of Guangxu Emperor, Tong Qing Teahouse (Chinese: 同慶茶園) in Shanghai advertised in Shen Bao the staging of *hua jing xi* (畫景戲) by a troupe from Singapore ("星架坡"). "Spending a lot of money" to bring the "Singapore troupe" to Shanghai, another advertisement described the performance as a co-performance with local star actors and the troupe performers. These performers combined with *hua jing*, most likely moving painted backdrops, and depicted scenes of spirits, deities and bodhisattvas emerging from the clouds. This teahouse would later play a significant role in the history of early cinema in China. Besides staging Cantonese opera performances, they hosted European "technicians" who showcased the latest technologies at that time, for instance, the gramophone, proto-cinematic devices, and early film projectors.

Starting with this imagery of supernatural forces framing the Cantonese opera performance, this paper engages with a series of images of religious performances and street *wayang* in the Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill's photographic collection (digitised and curated together through the efforts of Oh Soon-Hwa) and images collected by the National Archives Singapore. I see with a theatre-inflected gaze and imagine how they, at that time when early film in the 1920s were understood and translated as "影戏" or "shadow play" (literal translation), would suggest an interwoven relationship between theatre (or more precisely *xiqu* and puppetry) and moving pictures.

These photographs capture movements frozen in time as bodies enacted the entrances and exits of deities and spirits. Scenes of a littoral zone where boats and people gathered are followed by images of streets where the burning of incense blurred the figures of devotees labouring in the background. Liminal spaces as they were, ash and smoke remained as imprints of the residual force of rituals to transform spaces. These acts of worship were captured as stills, returning to tell us a repertory of stories in the present. By moving these images, I hope to illustrate the history of transregional connections where theatre meets picture, and picture meets the digital.

Alvin Eng Hui Lim is a performance, religion and theatre researcher. He is Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. His research focusses on the intersections of theatre and religion, popular religious practices, spirit mediums and rituals, with emphasis on digital media. He is also Deputy Director and Technology and Online Editor (Mandarin) of the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A, http://a-s-i-a-web.org/). His monograph, *Digital Spirits in Religion and Media: Possession and Performance*, was published by Routledge in 2018.

Reinterpreting 'Cosmopolitanism' of Raffles' *Wayang Klitik* Collection

RANI PRIHATMANTI
Universitas Ciputra – Surabaya
raniprani417@gmail.com

This paper reinterprets the concept of 'cosmopolitanism' by analyzing Stamford Raffles' wayang klitik collection, examining how this assemblage of Javanese wooden flat puppets reflects cross-cultural exchange in the early 19th century. Traditionally, cosmopolitanism has been understood as openness to diverse cultures and globalised experiences. However, the 44 *wayang klitik* Raffles amassed during his time as Lieutenant Governor of the Dutch East Indies in Java (1811–1816) offers a more nuanced view. These puppets reflect cosmopolitanism through their storylines and attire. *Wayang klitik* is performed based on local Panji tales, and each figure is adorned with mixed-culture textile patterns that represent the rich history of Javanese civilisation. The attire was deeply influenced by Indian trade textile patterns, such as patola, which then adapted and transformed into Javanese *cinde* cloth, *nitik* batik of jogja and *jlamprang* batik of Pekalongan, highlighting the influence of Indian trade textiles as symbols of elite status and wealth. These textiles also represent Javanese courtly culture and the transregional connections of the Indian Ocean trade. This paper challenges traditional understandings of cosmopolitanism in these 44 *wayang klitik,* suggesting that it is not a singular East-meets-West phenomenon, but rather a complex negotiation involving the dynamic, multifaceted process of cultural exchange.

Rani Prihatmanti is a cultural heritage researcher and the Director of the Centre for Creative Heritage Studies (CCHS) at Universitas Ciputra-Surabaya, where she also teaches in the Architecture department. She earned her PhD from Universiti Sains Malaysia and previously was a Fellowship recipient in the same institution. She is currently also a Research Associate at the Tracing Patterns Foundation, USA. Her commitment to cultural heritage led to her being selected as a scholarship recipient for the UNESCO Asia-Pacific and ThinkCity Sustainable Heritage Management masterclass in 2022. In 2023, she was an Asian Graduate Student Fellow recipient at the Asia Research Institute, NUS. Rani's research interest is cultural heritage preservation in Malay ethnobotany, cultural food and foodways, and traditional textiles. She is currently collaborating on a research project with The British Museum London.

Unveiling Mak Yong: Decoding Its Transborder History through Photographic Evidence, Official Narrative, and Collective Memory

SYAFIQ FALIQ BIN ALFAN
Universiti Malaya
sefalfan@um.edu.my

ALIYYAH NUHA FAIQAH BINTI AZMAN FIRDAUS
Hiroshima University
d214777@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

Mak Yong, a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage, has been documented from the late nineteenth century. However, connections between its historical development and contemporary practice are not thoroughly examined. This study addresses this gap by analysing early twentieth-century photographs by G.R. Lambert & Co. from digital archives of Leiden University Libraries and comparing them with studies by Skeat (1900) and Cuisinier (1936), and modern historical narratives of Mak Yong. We focus on the costume style elements from the contemporary Kelantan tradition to Sumatra and Riau by cross-referencing these various historical evidence during the colonial period. Employing triangulation method, the study integrates historical records, archival data, visual analysis and oral traditions from diverse stakeholders such as artists, archivists, and academics. Techniques like thematic data analysis, interviews, and photo elicitation will support the historical and visual scrutiny. The study will also situate the role played by the Sam-sam community in linking Malay and Siamese performing arts (Mek Mulung, Menora, and Mak Yong), essential for understanding the current historical trajectory of Mak Yong. This exploration aims to illuminate the social networks shaping Mak Yong's official history, rediscover the obscured memories of its past, and provide a deeper insight into its cultural continuity and transformation.

Syafiq Faliq Alfan, also known as SEFA, is a performance artist, a cultural researcher and a Senior Lecturer at the Drama Department, Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya. He is deeply involved in exploring the history and cultural evolution of Traditional Southeast Asian Performing Arts from multiple theoretical viewpoints. In 2022, he received his doctoral degree from the Graduate School of Integrated Arts and Sciences at Hiroshima University, Japan, for his work on developing an analytical methodology for a comparative study of Mak Yong and Noh dances using Motion Capture technology. Currently, his research under the Early Career Researchers Grant at Universiti Malaya concentrates on archival studies of Mak Yong outside of Malaysia. He aims to understand the transformations in costume elements from the early 1900s to the 1970s, continuing the thematic focus initiated during his doctoral program at Hiroshima University.

Aliyyah Nuha Faiqah is a recipient of the Japanese Government (Monbukagakusho: MEXT) Postgraduate Scholarship 2020. She is currently pursuing her PhD studies at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University, Japan in applied linguistics. She has been involved in capacity building projects in Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos. She has also conducted research in discourses of expert views on obesity in Malaysia and Sweden and higher educational leadership policies in ASEAN. Aliyyah Nuha's research interests are broad ranging and include Sociolinguistics, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), Academic and Professional Discourse, and Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). She is a Lifetime Member of the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics (MAAL) which is affiliated with the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA). In 2024, she received the AILA Solidarity Award from AILA at the 21st AILA World Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for in-person participation.

Rayuan Asmara and Malay Theatre at the Archipelagic Crossing

YEE CHENG KOH
National University of Singapore & King's College London
e0308333@u.nus.edu

The Indonesian toneel, a Dutch-inspired dramatic genre with European theatrical conventions, has often been cited as an early influence on the creation of the Malay sandiwara, a modern Malay form of spoken drama. Boundaries between these two dramatic forms have always been blurry, where both terms have been used interchangeably then and now. To uncover relations between the two dramatic forms, I examine an Indonesian toneel troupe, Rayuan Asmara, which toured Malaya in 1947. To suit Malayan tastes, Rayuan Asmara labelled itself as a sandiwara troupe, and capitalised on the individual appeal of some former pre-war toneel artistes from the well-acclaimed Bolero and Dardanella. The troupe even playfully invoked the name of the distinguished toneel dramatist Andjar Asmara, after whom it was partially named, despite the uncertainty of his involvement. Its vaudeville-like character drew positive British attention as well; however, beneath the entertainment lay the stirrings of a pan-Malayan-Indonesian nationalism, guided by the vision of Greater Indonesia — an anti-colonial sentiment facilitated by shared language and cultural affinities within the Malay Archipelago. Here, I argue that ambiguities between toneel and sandiwara point less to the need for reiterating formalistic differences than to a general expression on the heterogeneity of Malay identity. This inherent fluidity of Malayness, I contend, is characteristic of an ambivalence which continues to propel the development of Malay theatre today.

Yee Cheng Koh is a PhD candidate under the Joint Degree Programme with the National University of Singapore and King's College London. Her research interests lie in the making of modern Asian theatre in Southeast Asia, with a specific focus on English, Chinese, and Malay theatre in post-war Singapore and Malaysia, where she explores how the politics of (de)colonisation shape the making of national theatres in both countries.

Women Entertainers in Asia's Militarized Cultures: Tracing Women Performers across Dancehalls, Clubs, and Camp Stages through Asia's 20th Century of Wars and Occupations

KATHERINE MEZUR
University of California – Irvine
mezur@berkeley.edu

The maps of militarized cultures of war in Asia show the names of states and official borders with arrows for the routes of armies, and bright colored flags marking conquered territories. But, the travels of wartime women performers create a multi-sensory collage of concentric circles, fading loops, broken lines, and erased names. In studies of inter-Asian wartime performance, the traditional theatre troupes have histories of time, place, and plays, such as James Brandon's *Kabuki at War*, and there are monographs of infamous directors like Ito Michio, or stars like the Korean modern dancer Choi Seung-hee. However, women popular entertainers, especially dancer-singers from across Asia are left out of this circulation. While the horrors of the mass forced prostitution of many women by the Japanese and the postwar poverty across Asia turned many women to "entertainment" prostitution, there were remarkable artists who created their own forms of dancing and singing derived from mixes of Asian and Western ballroom, pop, and jazz forms. This study will begin a "digital thick description" made up of visual, audio, and kinaesthetic "evidence" found from places (military bases, dance halls, clubs), sound sources (vinyl, radio, tape), and gestural sources from photographs, posters, scores, and films. Above all, the women's gestural and vocal art practices in militarized cultures will form an animated archipelagic archive that offers challenges to sedimented nation-bound genealogies of artistic practices and a retrieval of the Asian woman dancer-singer in performance studies

Katherine Mezur is a lecturer, University of California-Irvine, Department of East Asia Studies, (Premodern to Contemporary). PhD Theatre and Dance, Asian Performance, University of Hawai'i Manoa, MA Dance Studies, Mills College, BA Film Studies, Hampshire College. Research/practice includes gender, performance studies in theatre, dance, immersive media arts (installation, VR, screen performance) in/from the Asia-Pacific; Japanese traditional, contemporary, popular performing arts histories, film, animation, music video, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean women artists and *shōjo* cultures. Publications *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Female-likeness on the Kabuki Stage, Corporeal Politics: Dancing East Asia*. Journal Articles, VERGE: Studies in Global Asia, Performance Research, Theatre Research International, Performance Paradigm, Discourses in Dance. Chapters in *The Bad Girls of Japan*, *The Dumbtype Workbook*, *Movements of Interweaving*, *The Routledge Companion to Butoh*. Positions: Freie Universität Berlin, Beijing Dance Academy, Georgetown, University of Washington Seattle, McGill, CALArts. Grants: Fulbright, JSPS Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, SSRC, NEH, and NSF. UC Professional Development Fund Award 2018, 2022. Her current research focuses on radical heritage: Asian pop screen cultures; pop war: global Asia's militarized performances; wildlife afterlife: beyond human animal studies in climate crisis.

Moner Manusher Khoje: Traversing Sacred Geographies, *Tantric* Mysticism, and the Politics of Digital Transcendence in *Baul* Performance

ADRIJAA CHAKRABORTY
University of Edinburgh
adrijaa.2020.1470@mirandahouse.ac.in, a.chakraborty-10@sms.ed.ac.uk

This paper explores the transregional, esoteric, and technological dimensions of *Baul* performance, rooted in the syncretic confluence of *Shakta Tantra*, *Vaishnavism*, and *Sufi* mysticism. The *Bauls* of the Bengal region (present-day West Bengal, India, and Bangladesh), as itinerant mystics and performers, embody a liminal existence—transgressing orthodox religious boundaries while articulating a radical spirituality through their music, poetry, and bodily practices. Central to their philosophy is the *Deho-tatwa* (doctrine of the body), which aligns with *Tantric* cosmologies of the body as a microcosm of the universe. Songs such as "*Moner Manush*, *Moner Manush Bhajle Sonar Manush Hobi*" (Seek the divine within, and become the golden human) and "*Manush Vogoban*" (Human is God) reflect this embodied search for the divine. Furthermore, this cultural transcendence is deeply secular in nature. The *Baul* ideology establishes the self as divine, transcending singular religious frameworks, socio-political boundaries, and geographical borders, offering a spiritual praxis for all of humankind.

This research interrogates the historical and contemporary transregional circuits of *Baul* performance, drawing from archival materials, such as the *Baul Fakiri Archive*, ethnographic studies by Sudhir Chakraborty, the autoethnographic account of the primary investigator, and musicological analyses by Charles Capwell. From the colonial railways that facilitated their journeys across Bengal, Assam, and beyond, to marketplaces and *mela* (fairs) serving as intercultural nodes of exchange, *Bauls* have historically acted as cultural connectors across polycentric performance ecosystems. Their itineraries also intersected with colonial fetishisation of the "exotic East," as Orientalist scholars and folklorists commodified their spiritual practices within the Empire's cultural marketplace. By positioning *Baul* performance as part of an "archipelagic flow" of practices and knowledge, this paper disrupts the continental focus on singular origins, instead reframing *Bauls* as participants in transregional networks of sacred and cultural exchange that echo broader maritime and terrestrial circulations across Asia.

The paper further examines the role of digital mediation in transforming *Baul* performance into a virtual *Akashic* field—a metaphysical network mirroring their *Tantric* ideals of infinite interconnection. Platforms like YouTube, global streaming services, and online festivals have reshaped their sacred itineraries, enabling *Bauls* to reimagine their identity within diasporic and global contexts. This digital archive becomes not only a repository of cultural preservation but also a site of resistance, challenging imperialist legacies and Orientalist reductions while simultaneously battling its commodification within capitalist frameworks. As emerging technologies like virtual and augmented reality enter this space, they offer new horizons for *Bauls* to extend their spiritual praxis, crafting immersive, interactive experiences that transcend physical and temporal boundaries while deepening their engagement with global audiences.

Through this lens, this study addresses key questions: How did *Baul* performers adapt to local and global audiences as they traveled? What repertoire did they acquire or transform during these journeys? How do digital technologies replicate or disrupt older transregional networks? And finally, what potential does virtual reality have in reimagining the future of *Baul Sangeet*? Ultimately, this paper situates *Baul* performance within a broader framework of cultural migration, sacred embodiment, and the politics of resistance, elucidating how their physical and digital travels interrogate postcolonial hegemonies, reconfigure transregional networks, and articulate critiques of global modernity. By weaving together the material and virtual, the terrestrial and the maritime, *Bauls* continue to embody alternative cosmologies of connection and cultural transmission in an increasingly globalised world.

Adrijaa Chakraborty is a performance theorist and dance revivalist exploring the intersections of gender, ritual, and identity through performance, with a focus on South Asian traditions and endangered cultural practices. She is a recent master's graduate from the University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, and an alumna of Miranda House, University of Delhi. Her research employs frameworks like performance theory, eco-cosmopolitanism, practice as research, digital archiving and experimental methodologies to decode the cultural and spiritual narratives woven into traditional art forms. Her work delves into the dynamic performance practices of Kali Tandava, Baul Sangeet, Chauu, Noh, Kabuki and Bonbibi Palagan as well as exploring the potential of virtual reality and emerging technologies to preserve and reimagine dying art forms. Her research has been funded by the Nritya Sanskriti Academy. She is an editor of South Asian Folklore and Dance Studies and Chalachitra Darpan. She advises and teaches at Nrityamanjuri and Nrityakosha. As an award-winning scriptwriter and seasoned theatre practitioner, Adrijaa uses performance as a medium of resistance and transformation, shedding light on the resilience and fluidity of South Asian traditions. She has learned over 14 dance and theatre forms and is deeply committed to their revival and preservation, ensuring their endurance. Beyond academia, Adrijaa teaches dance and Karate, explores esoteric Shakta practices, and delves into the art of language and storytelling. A connoisseur of tea culture, she finds harmony in blending the scholarly and the soulful.

Reading Colonial Photographic Portraits of Indian Courtesans as Performance: Mapping Transregional Legacies of Embodied Knowledge and Intellectual Labor

SHRINWANTI MISTRI
University of Minnesota Twin Cities
mistr062@umn.edu

This paper engages with three colonial-era photographic portraits of Indian courtesans from the British Raj—Zahore Begum (1868), Gauhar Jaan (undated), and two unnamed courtesans from Hyderabad (1860s)—as repertoires of embodied knowledge, affective resistance, and epistemic agency. While these portraits were produced within orientalist and moralizing visual regimes designed to aestheticize, classify, and contain the courtesan figure, I argue that they also carry repertoires of agency, intimacy, and cultural labor that disrupt the fixity of the colonial archive. Drawing on Diana Taylor's (2003) conceptual dyad of the archive and the repertoire, and her later notion of *presente* (2020), this paper situates the courtesan not as a passive object of the colonial gaze, but as a repertoire-bearing performer-historiographer whose gestures, postures, and affective presence reverberate beyond and disrupt the scopic containment of the archive. Incorporating Tina Campt's (2017) method of 'listening to' images, Saidiya Hartman's (2019) assertion to look beyond the disciplinary intentions of the archive, and Assia Djebar's (1992) feminist critique of the reductive colonial visual archive, I adopt an embodied, affectively engaged mode of analysis that foregrounds intimacy and relationality as critical tools of feminist historiography. Through a close reading of these three photographs, I demonstrate how courtesans' intellectual and artistic labor, long erased or diminished by colonial and bourgeois Hindu nationalist narratives, persists in the tactile and affective excess of the archive. These photographs, I argue, do not merely document the past; they perform an enduring presence that challenges the archival desire for closure and invites us into a reparative relation with India's cultural memory of courtesan performance.

Shrinwanti Mistri Shrinwanti Mistri is currently a PhD Fellow at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, pursuing a PhD in Theatre Historiography and Performance Studies. She is also a Doctoral Fellow at the University of Minnesota's Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC). Additionally, she is a Doctoral Fellow in Moving Image, Media and Sound at the University of Minnesota's Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature. Her transdisciplinary research interests encompass feminist and postfeminist performance; social media and digital performance cultures; critical caste and technology studies; affect, habitus, embodiment, and labor in digital spaces; posthumanism and new materialism; and gender and the digital body. Shrinwanti holds a postgraduate degree in International Studies (Summa Cum Laude) from ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon (Portugal); a master's degree in International Relations from University College Dublin (Ireland) as a UCD Global Scholar; and a bachelor's degree in Political Science (Gold Medalist) from Presidency University Kolkata (India). She is also an alumna of Sciences Po Paris (France), where she spent a semester as part of her undergraduate study abroad program, as a Charpak Exchange Scholar.

Aloha China:
Hula Dance in Southern China and the South Sea, 1920s-1940s

EN LI
The University of Texas at Dallas
en.li@utdallas.edu

Ask most people what they know about "Hula," and they may describe the romanticized image of a brown girl swaying her hips in Hawai'i. Featuring chanted poetry and interpretive movements, Hula originated as a religious performance and preserved the Hawaiian understanding of creation stories and significant events. While Hula dance in the U.S. was typically associated with the U.S.' imperialist interest in Hawaii, Hula also made its way to China in the early twentieth century because of the close Chinese-Hawai'i connections. In the 1930s, dancing troupes in Shanghai started to incorporate Hula dance into their repertoire, and regularly toured in Southeast Asia.

How did people dance Hula outside of Hawai'i, and why does this transnational aesthetic practice matter? This paper rediscovers the historical connections between Hawai'i, Southeast Asia, and urban centers in southern China. Drawing from newspaper articles and memoirs of over 30 individual dancers between 1930s and 1947, I explore various aspects of Hula performance, including familial and professional networks, tours in Southeast Asia, presentation of the dance compared to the American counterparts, and audience perception. Revealing changing expectations about women, this research highlights how mobility, narrowly defined as bodily movement, and broadly defined as geographic traveling, liberated women's mind and broadened their worldview, but not the other way around. Most importantly, this case contributes to diasporic studies encompassing both internal and external trajectories, and both maritime and land routes, beyond a single empire or a nation state. In addition to an upcoming monograph, I hope to work with documentary directors such as Lisette Marie Flanary (Hula Trilogy: "Hula beyond Hawai'i" (2006), "Men in Hula" (2009), and "Tokyo Hula" (2020) to retell the story of Hula and global diaspora and reach boarder audience.

En Li is a historian of late imperial and modern China, with an emphasis on the cultural history of China and its overseas communities (PhD in Chinese History, Washington University, 2015). Her first book, *Betting on the Civil Service Examinations: The Lottery in Late-Qing China*, was published by the Harvard University Asia Center in 2023. She was honoured with Drake University's "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" Award in 2021 and awarded tenure in 2023. She is currently an Associate Professor and the program coordinator for the Asian Studies Minor at the University of Texas at Dallas, and she has been appointed as an inaugural Provost Teaching Fellow for 2024-2027. Her second book project, *Aloha China: Hawaiian Dance, Urban Life, and Asian-Pacific Diasporas, 1920s-1940s*, examines similar transnational cultural history to her first book, while drawing from her personal experiences learning and performing Hula in Taipei, Hong Kong, St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas City, Des Moines, and Dallas since 2008.

Porter McCray and the Origins of Performance Studies

RASHNA DARIUS NICHOLSON
University of Warwick
rashna.nicholson@warwick.ac.uk

This presentation tells the tale of one of the most influential men in the history of performance studies: Porter McCray. Over the course of his tenure as director of the John D. Rockefeller (JDR) 3rd Fund, McCray distributed a total of $5,467,577 for the preservation of cultural traditions in Asia, and to a lesser extent Europe and the US. However, his influence far exceeded the sums that he disbursed globally. The unassuming gentleman from Virginia was instrumental in the international recognition and success of luminaries as diverse as Robert Wilson, Vijay Tendulkar, Nam June Paik, and Cecile Guidote. Yet his legacy remains almost entirely unknown.

This presentation tells the tale of this pivotal figure in theatre history. Tasked by JDR III with scouting for "outstanding talent, both existing and potential," McCray single-handedly determined "who would lead the way to distinctive developments in the arts". In the process, the JDR 3rd Fund became a clearing house for global artistic and scholarly standards. McCray thus played a decisive role in developing the performing arts as an important arm of US foreign policy, setting a pattern for "intervention without undue influence."

Rashna Darius Nicholson is Associate Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Warwick. She was previously an Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong and has held fellowships at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, the National Humanities Center, and Hughes Hall, Cambridge. Her research and teaching specializations include nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century theatre history, historiography, and practice; postcolonial and world literature; and cultural development. Rashna currently serves on the editorial boards of *Theatre Research International*, *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, *The Journal of Global Theatre History*, Palgrave Macmillan's Transnational Theatre Histories series and Boyden and Brewell's Nineteenth-Century British Theatrical Culture series. She was convenor of the IFTR Historiography Working Group between 2017 and 2020 and currently serves as co-chair of DramaHE.

The Making of the 'Modern': South Asian Dance Histories, Archipelagic Metaphors and Asia as Method

PRIYANKA BASU
King's College London
priyanka.basu@kcl.ac.uk

This paper is part of a larger project on the rethinking and reconceptualization of 'modern' dance in the South Asian context, especially in the early decolonial period. It focuses on three distinct resources—the letters of Wendy Beavis (actress in the travelling troupe *Shakespeareana*) at the Shakespeare Institute Library, the memoirs of Pakistani dancer Afroza Bulbul, and the Chitrasena and Vajira Dance archives at Colombo—to underscore the vitality of transnational mobility, cultural exchange and cultural imaginaries in writing dance histories. Both Beavis and Bulbul wrote their memories of performances, spaces and encounters during their ship journeys in 1953, travelling to and from the imperial centre. On the other hand, Chitrasena's ideations of a 'modern' dance for Sri Lanka emerged from travels and training at Tagore's Santiniketan and the latter's voyages to Southeast and East Asia via Ceylon. South Asian dance histories that have been predominantly India-focused need a reframing through these examples of transregional and transnational mobilities and exchanges. In such reframing, this paper proposes to rethink the Western-centric strictures of the term 'ballet' that was being variously designed and adapted in the South Asian context to offer a decolonial understanding of dance through 'Asia as Method' (Chen, 2010).

Priyanka Basu is a lecturer in Performing Arts at the Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries, King's College London. She was previously Curator of the 'Two Centuries of Indian Print' at the British Library. Her first monograph, *The Poet's Song: 'Folk' and its Cultural Politics in South Asia* (2024) was shortlisted for the David Bradby Monograph Award 2024. Her co-edited volume*, 'Performing' Nature: Ecology and the Arts in South Asia* is forthcoming from Routledge this year. She is the Historiography Working Group Co-Convenor at IFTR and a Working Group Coordinator at TaPRA UK. She is also an elected Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Royal Asiatic Society and Royal Anthropological Institute. Her research interests include cultural histories of theatre and performance, intermediality of print and performance, and intersections of race and gender in dance. She is a trained Odissi dancer and has performed in the UK, Japan and India.

"Their Programme is Most Diversified and Should Secure a Full House": Kate Howarde's Performances in Singapore and on Thursday Island

LAURA GINTERS
University of Sydney
laura.ginters@sydney.edu.au

Kate Howarde (1864-1939) was an Australian actor, producer, director and playwright. Returning from Europe to Australia in 1909 she performed both in Singapore and on Thursday Island – archipelagic sites of performance, with culturally diverse local audiences. Although following an established Empire route (via Gibraltar, Cairo, Aden, Bombay, Singapore) home, Howarde eschewed the colonial Victoria Theatre in Singapore, negotiating instead to perform at Harima Hall, a cinema and popular live performance venue, accessible to a broad, multicultural local audience. While I have previously focussed on Howarde's theatrical activities in terms of their nation-bound, inter-Australian geographical reach (Thursday Island in the north to the island of Tasmania in the south), this paper proposes a reconsideration of this approach through these performances, locating them as a place of encounter between islands, including Australia (an archipelago in all but name), and multiple cultures (Indigenous, colonial, migrant). This paper explores not only the frayed edges of supposedly bounded states and regimes, but also the ways in which such island encounters travel "home" with performers, inflecting not only their later practices, but also, significantly, how we, through digital humanities tools, like the AusStage national performance database, may later account for them.

Laura Ginters is Associate Professor in the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Sydney. She serves on the Editorial Board for *About Performance* and *Australasian Drama Studies*, and is a member of the Seymour Theatre Centre's Advisory Group. She has a long-standing research interest in historical rehearsal processes in Germany in the 18th-19th century, and her translations of German and Austrian plays have been performed, published and adapted (including for Belvoir St Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company and Sydney Theatre Company). Her recent Australian theatre history research has explored the early reception of Brecht, amateur left-wing theatre, student drama, and 19th-century touring actresses. She was recently a CI on the Australian Research Council LIEF Grant to develop the capacity of the award-winning national performing arts database, AusStage, with a focus on enriching datasets in relation to 19th-century actors, including Kate Howarde.

Reassessing Dance Modernity and Historiography at the Ends of Empires through Biographical Research on Norda Mata

LUKE AARON FORBES
Independent Scholar
lukeaaronforbes@gmail.com

Biographical research into dancer and choreographer, Norda Mata, (b. 1900, Meistersfelde, German Empire–d. 1972, Katoomba, Australia,) generates new insights into transimperial dynamics and formations of cultural modernity. A little-known, early exponent of expressionist dance in East Asia (Republic of China and Empire of Japan), South Asia (British India), Southeast Asia (Dutch East Indies, British Malaya, British Hong Kong, Colony of Singapore), the Pacific (US territory of Hawai'i) and Australia, Mata's biography demonstrates how a white European woman's dances, generally perceived as representations of European modernity, were significantly shaped by settings at the temporal and geographical ends of empires. Even Mata's racial identity was mobilised; she was considered to be a German dancer outside of Europe and a Chinese dancer in Berlin and Dresden of the Third Reich, inviting speculation about why she features in no German-language dance history writing and only peripherally in non-European dance history (mostly Australian). Moreover, Mata, the origins of non-European references in her dances, and the colonial networks that sponsored her touring left little to no trace prior to the widespread and ongoing digitisation of historical colonial sources, illustrating how supposed competing imperial histories, of the coloniser and the colonised, are also dialogical. In short, approaching Mata's life and work as archipelagic formations—fragmented, assembled, and performed—this chapter shows how transimperial geographies co-create(d) both modernist dance and its afterlives.

Luke Aaron Forbes is an early-career, independent dance scholar currently employed as a grant and impact narrative writer by the University of Technology Sydney's Transdisciplinary School. Luke's doctoral research, conducted at the Centre for Theatre and Performance, Monash University, examined the ways dancing and dance scholarship can be vehicles through which settler colonists imagine they interact with and govern Indigenous "Others" and lands. Luke completed his MA Dance Studies at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln. Luke's research has appeared in the *Journal for Emerging Dance Scholarship*, *Runway Journal*, and *Australasian Drama Studies Journal*. Luke co-edited and contributed a chapter to the German Dance Archives book project, *Yvonne Georgi: Tagebuch und Dokumente zu Tanztourneen mit Harald Kreutzberg (1929–1931)* (2019). Luke has published journalistic articles in dance, literary, arts and lifestyle outlets, including *Australian Book Review*, *Dance Australia*, *Dance Europe*, *DAPPER DAN*, *Springback Magazine*, and *Time Out Melbourne*.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2

The Plotting of *Panorama Singapura*: Media Archaeology, Theatre History, and the Visualisation of Performance

JONATHAN BOLLEN
National Taiwan Normal University
jonathan.bollen@ntnu.edu.tw

What can research excavating performance from the past learn from the media archaeology of transportation? This presentation approaches the touring travelogue, the moving panorama, the aerial survey, and other metaphors of transportation in graphic forms of media that relayed the mobilities of modernity into the plotting of performance. Within this approach, plotting entails contrary considerations of artistic practice: firstly, how to *perform a plot*, by enacting a 'proposed arrangement', 'a sketch' or 'outline' of 'something' that will happen in performance; and, conversely, how to *plot a performance*, by drawing up a 'plan', a 'map', a 'chart' or 'graph' that represents the movements of the agents, objects, effects, and actors in performance. In theatre practice, these two considerations, dramaturgical and cartographic, are often complementary aspects of rehearsal, where plotting may be both a retrospective record of past performance and a prospective plan for future performance. To attend to plotting, however, as a medium of graphesis, is to emphasise the aesthetics of visual design and documentation. In this sense, plotting or 'plotography' becomes a visual form of knowledge made from the artefacts of past performance.

For illustration, this presentation turns to two theatres of significance in the history of Singapore: the Capitol Theatre, in its initial phase as a commercial venue presenting Hollywood movies and touring revue from 1930 to 1942; and the National Theatre, opening in 1963, as a venue for the cultural programs of the government of Singapore. Both venues hosted performances propelled by the mobilities of modernity. *The Marcus Show*, a large-scale revue from the United States of America, performed at the Capitol in 1934, and again in 1939, travelling by ship on international tours that also took in Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Calcutta, and Penang. Thirty years later, the National Theatre hosted touring revues from many nations, with troupes flying in to Singapore under the sponsorship of diplomatic missions, beginning with the South-East Asia Cultural Festival. The National Theatre also functioned as a platform for performances assembled from within the diversity of multicultural Singapore. Selected for this presentation, *Panorama Singapura* was a variety show of Chinese and Malay performances in 1964, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture during the period of Singapore's union with the Federation of Malaysia.

By excavating graphic forms of media from the archival strata that document productions, this presentation plots the mobility of performance in different periods to make visual arguments about the distribution of modernities through cultural flows of power.

Jonathan Bollen, PhD FAHA, is Professor in the Graduate Institute of Performing Arts at National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei. He is the author of *Touring Variety in the Asia Pacific Region, 1946–1975* (Palgrave, 2020), and co-author of *Visualising Lost Theatres: Virtual Praxis and the Recovery of Performance Spaces* (Cambridge UP 2022), *A Global Doll's House: Ibsen and Distant Visions* (Palgrave, 2016), and *Men at Play: Masculinities in Australian Theatre since the 1950s* (Rodopi, 2008). He has experience in the digital humanities, contributing to the development of AusStage since 2005. He previously taught theatre, drama, and performance at the University of New South Wales in Sydney and Flinders University of South Australia.

Ontology as a Method: Representing the Complexities of Archipelagic Performance Histories and Connections

HEDREN SUM
National University of Singapore
hsum@nus.edu.sg

Ontology offers a foundational method for organising and interpreting complex knowledge from diverse digital sources. Gruber (1995) defined it as an 'explicit specification of a conceptualisation,' enabling the formal representation of concepts and their relationships for nuanced interpretation and semantic interoperability. This paper introduces the Archipelagic Performance Histories Ontology (APHon), a critical framework designed to model and analyse performance histories across Southeast Asia's archipelagic regions from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. APHon encompasses a range of traditions—including Western theatrical troupes, Chinese Wayang, Bangsawan, and Asian folk dance—each contributing to the region's layered cultural, historical, and socio-political landscapes through distinct forms of movement, translation, and encounter. With Singapore positioned as a central node, APHon maps transregional networks of performance-making, tracing the circulation of genres through port cities, urban centres, and maritime corridors—particularly the Malacca and Singapore Straits—toward Australia, East Asia, and beyond. The ontology's conceptual clusters—Performance, Person & Troupe, Tour, Support, and Society & Community—support a wide range of digital outputs, including story maps, visualisations, digital exhibitions, and interactive essays, enabling intercultural exchanges to be rendered visible and narratively reassembled. Critically, APHon integrates culturally specific knowledge structures within a formal semantic model, navigating tensions between structural rigour and interpretive flexibility. By adopting a critical ontological approach, it addresses the challenges of modelling fluid, embodied, and relational performance traditions, offering a robust yet context-sensitive framework for rethinking the representation of archipelagic heritage in the digital age.

Hedren Wai Yuan Sum is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Digital Humanities at the National University of Singapore, specialising in digital methodologies, knowledge organisation systems, ontology-based frameworks, and immersive technologies to enhance cultural heritage interpretation. Formerly as principal librarian for digital scholarship, his work integrates cultural heritage and information science, focusing on how XR and AI transform historical content analysis. Hedren holds a PhD in Art, Design, and Media (Art History) from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and is committed to advancing Digital Humanities through research and collaboration.

Digital Tools for Tracking Archipelagic Touring: Harmonising Performing Arts Databases Down Under

CHRIS HAY
Flinders University
chris.hay@flinders.edu.au

SARAH THOMASSON
Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington
sarah.thomasson@vuw.ac.nz

Performance histories dominated by discourses of the nation-state cannot properly account for historical connections and flows of performance-making across regions. Live performing arts databases that capture program data about the performance – such as dates, venues, key artistic contributors, and producing organisations – provide a tool to measure and visualize these flows over time and across space. The recent harmonisation of two national performing arts databases – AusStage and Theatre Aotearoa – creates an archipelagic repository of performance data that can track productions and companies as they travel around the Indo-Pacific region.

In this paper, we use this new harmonised dataset to investigate cultural exchanges – measured by tours of theatrical performance – between Singapore, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Australia. As a case study to illustrate the affordances of harmonisation, we will focus on Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA) programs to identify Australian and New Zealand work presented in Singapore and Singaporean work that subsequently travelled to these countries. What are the productions and companies that connect these three countries through touring and what do they tell us about networks of performance-making within the region? Developing a methodology for investigating transregional touring with digital tools also challenges dominant discourses of continentalism and nationalism within performance histories of our region.

Chris Hay is Professor of Drama at the Flinders Drama Centre and Director of the Assemblage Centre for Creative Practice Research in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Chris is the research lead for AusStage: the Australian Live Performance Database, and a lead investigator of the Australian Research Data Commons HASS+I RDC priority area "Australian Creative Histories and Futures" (ACHF). The ACHF project seeks to protect, enhance, and harmonise Australia's national cultural data collections, building on the successful data harmonisation undertaken between AusStage and Theatre Aotearoa to include multiple artforms and disciplines. Chris is the co-author of *Contemporary Australian Playwriting* (Routledge 2022) with Stephen Carleton (University of Queensland) and, together with Adelle Sefton-Rowston (Charles Darwin University), they are leading a new project on re-mapping Darwin as a lost literary capital using cultural data.

Sarah Thomasson is Senior Lecturer in Te Whare Ngangahau – Theatre and Performance Studies at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa. She is the author of *The Festival Cities of Edinburgh and Adelaide* (Palgrave Macmillan 2022) and co-primary investigator on the Theatre Aotearoa project. This project is a collaboration with AusStage to harmonise the two live performing arts databases to share infrastructure and functionality and to enable further collaboration on the two datasets. With colleagues Jonathan Bollen (National Taiwan Normal University) and James Wenley (Te Herenga Waka), she presented the *Performing Data* seminar series and symposia (2023-24) to help researchers use these databases' updated functionality to undertake their own data analysis through visualisation projects.

Mapping Patrons, Venues and Performances: A Digital (Hi)story of the Parsee Theatre's Intercultural and Polycentric Engagements in and around Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Singapore

BAHAR GÜRSEL
Middle East Technical University
bgursel@metu.edu.tr

IIn November 1901, the Ottoman Empire's first resident consul general in the Straits Settlements, Ahmed Ataullah Efendi, acted as a patron and attendee of three different theatrical performances staged at the Parsi Theatre in Singapore, which was originally developed by the Parsi community in India. His patronage was not singular, and represented a tradition whereby a diverse array of individuals and organisations were patrons of various theatrical productions at the Parsi Theatre that was renowned for its cultural syncretism, mobility and technical prowess. The primary focus of this paper is the utilisation of pertinent newspaper advertisements and reviews from Singaporean digital archives[1] to develop an ArcGIS StoryMap that amalgamates spatial data with textual content, archival images, and AI-generated text-to-image creations. The research will examine information about itinerant Parsi Theatre troupes and practitioners, their prior and subsequent destinations, the details concerning the performances they staged at various permanent and temporary locations in the city, and the local and foreign patrons whose names appeared in associated advertisements and reviews. This paper will therefore address flows and circulations, social connections, hybridisation, and cross-cultural interactions and innovations pioneered by the Parsi Theatre in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Singapore and the Southeast Asian archipelago.

Bahar Gürsel is Associate Professor at the Department of History and Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Social Sciences of METU. She has contributed to the curatorial teams of several exhibitions that concentrate on photographic archives and related primary sources, and was the recipient of the Isaac Manasseh Meyer Fellowship in 2022. "Peranakan Chinese Women and Lingerie Dresses: Localisation of a Global Fashion Trend in the Early Twentieth Century" (July 2024, *MUSE*) and "An American in Korea: The Travels and Accounts of Frank G. Carpenter, 1888-1924" in *Seoul in Photos: Library of Congress Collection* (Seoul: Seoul Museum of History 2023, 220-241) are among her latest publications. A forthcoming book titled *Visual Representations of Femininities in the Malay World: Camera, Chimera and Colonisation* (co-written with Maznah Mohamad and Suriani Suratman) is going to be published by Routledge.

[1] NewspaperSG, https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/, Digital Gems https://digitalgems.nus.edu.sg/

Kinaesthetic Sketching

FUSAKO INNAMI
Durham University
fusako.innami@durham.ac.uk

Performers' bodies, through their learning and performing activities around World War II, connected geopolitical sites in Asia, Europe, and North America beyond state-based territoriality and belonging. Japanese actors and troupes traveled to Manchuria, Harbin, Shanghai, and Singapore from the late 1930s through the early 1940s where performers functioned as part of national agenda, while dwelling in the margin of body politic.

Among them, the ballet dancer Komaki Masahide's memoirs demonstrate uneven self-presentation regarding his experiences of being part of the Ballet Russes in 1940s occupied Shanghai. Komaki's footsteps—tracing his involvement in Ballet Russes, theatrical stages, and body-shape exercises in postwar occupied Japan—reveal topography as lived. While reconsidering a conception of topography by connecting the subject's mental traveling and bodily mapping with the network of fellow individuals, I develop the idea of "kinaesthetic sketching" to reflect upon the embodied mode of attention to one's surrounding environment to transcribe movements. With a motif of "sketching" that poet/writer Miyazawa Kenji developed in Komaki's native place in Iwate prefecture, this paper attends to the mode of transcribing movements via surrounding sceneries thereby reflecting the moving self. Subsequently, I aim to develop dance writing (reviews, manuals, and criticisms) as part of literary genre.

Fusako Innami is Associate Professor in Japanese and Performance Studies at Durham University, and author of *Touching the Unreachable: Writing, Skinship, Modern Japan* (Michigan, 2021). Fusako's current project, *Gestural Writing: Performance, Topography, Trace*, concerns performance which by its very nature disappears. How do we recollect live performances that are not available in recordings, but only remain in the form of reviews, scores, pictures, or digitized archives? Her project gathers traces of dancers' transcultural movements, contacts, and memoirs to reconsider the surface features of land and ground: topography. As a US-UK Fulbright scholar, based in the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at UC Berkeley, she explores new methods of reconstructing past performances. As an academic, dance reviewer, and practitioner, Fusako conducts dance workshops in Japan, "Touch," to translate touch in literature back to moving bodies; and an ongoing international symposium, "Translating Embodiedness," to develop new methodologies for translating embodied practices across media.

Mak Yong:
Popular Theatre and Heritage of Southeast Asia, 1870-1960

ALAN DARMAWAN
SOAS University of London
ad100@soas.ac.uk

The late nineteenth century witnessed the thrive of modern technology and capitalist economy that brought about mobility of people and cultural amalgamation in the European colonies in Southeast Asia. Commercial entertainment emerged as hybrid and experimentative form of amusements such as *wayang parsi* and *komedie stamboel*, bringing together Indo-Persian, Malay, and European performance practices and actors, which then, stimulated the formation of other popular forms of theatre, including *bangsawan, opera batak*, *mendu*, and *dulmuluk*. In this theatrescape, a theatre practice called *mak yong* from the northern Malay peninsula flourished to become itinerant entertainment with troupes travelling the archipelago and developed local styles in the locations that are now part of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. Yet, scholarly debates overlooked this development and have seen the art form as either folk theatre or palace amusement. Against this backdrop, this paper looks at *mak yong* as popular entertainment from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century by making use of digital sources including oral histories, newspaper reports and advertisements at the National Library of Singapore, and digitised archives (e.g. photos, reports, and Malay manuscripts) from university libraries of Cambridge and Leiden, and the National Library of Indonesia. This aims to investigate *mak yong*'s development within the time frame and attest its position as a shared heritage of archipelagic Southeast Asia, combining dance, music, and acting for commercial performances at the request of charity organisations, high-ranking British officers, Malay royal families, and for the crowds in colonial cities in the region.

Alan Darmawan is Postdoctoral Researcher at SOAS University of London and is currently working for the Leverhulme Trust-funded *Mapping Sumatra's Manuscript Cultures* project. He obtained a PhD from Hamburg University, where he defended his thesis on the revival of *mak yong* theatre in the Riau Islands, Indonesia. His latest articles on the revived form and traditionalisation of *mak yong* appear in the *Indonesia and the Malay World* (2024) and *Asian Theatre Journal* (2023). Alan co-authored a chapter on Malay transnationalism in the lens of shared cultural heritage of traditional performing arts, *Transnational Malay Identity: Performing art and the revival of royal patrons in the Riau Islands* (2023). His research interests include cultural revival, oral traditions and performance, Islam and manuscript traditions, manuscript collections and digitisation.

Navigating Livelihoods 'On the Road': Life Histories of Sinophone Performing Artists in Singapore, 1930s-1970s

BEIYU ZHANG
Jinan University
zhangbeiyu20102011@163.com

Due to the booming entertainment market in the diaspora since the 1930s, Chinese performers formed itinerant theatre troupes, travelled to Nanyang to cater to the entertaining needs of their fellow immigrants in Singapore and Malaya. They conducted itinerant performing tours across multiple localities across the Malay archipelago. Some successfully returned to China while many others sojourned for some time, which usually led to a permanent settlement in Malaya. This paper complicates this understanding by pointing out that many performing artists got stranded during the Second World War, and experienced the drastic transformation in identity formation as influenced by the Japanese Occupation and postwar nation-building of the host societies. Tracing the life history of a veteran Singaporean-Chinese actor Bai Yan and the sociocultural network unraveled through his personal documents, the paper discusses the complex interplay of memory, place and identity-making associated with a unique diasporic livelihood known as *pao matou/zoubu* (running among ports). Looking into what influences did this pattern of travelling bring to their performances, I argue the interconnectivity of the region afforded greater mobility of people and ideas, forging a welcoming environment for the creation of cosmopolitan Sinophone theatre. Diasporic identities are fueled by travel and movement, which however in this case was disrupted by a sense of impossibility to return, an enduring feeling of dislocation in the diasporic memory. Making use of Bai Yan's personal collections including private documents on his citizenship application, correspondences with his friends and relatives in China in times of turbulence, as well as press clippings, oral recollections about his life stories from the 1950s to the 1970s, this paper will explore an on-ground perspective on the relationship of being national and/or diasporic by juxtaposing performances "on the road" and livelihoods contained in the national borders.

Beiyu Zhang is now Associate Professor at Jinan University, Guangzhou. She obtained her PhD in the History Department in National University of Singapore. She worked as a Post-doctoral Fellow funded by the Macau Talent Program in the University of Macau since December 2018--2020. She is the author of the monograph *Chinese Theatre Troupes in Southeast Asia: Touring Diaspora, 1900s–1970s*. (London: Routledge, 2021). She publishes a number of articles in *Asian Theatre Journal, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, China Perspectives and Asian Ethnology.* Her research interest includes Sino-Southeast Asian cultural interactions, cultural Cold War in Southeast Asia, transnational performing arts and theatre, heritage and identity. She is currently working on the project about the interplay of gender, decolonization and nation-building in Singapore.

Stirring the Heartstrings through Hometown Music: Performing Nanyin

CAROLINE CHIA
Nanyang Technological University
carolinechia_puppetry@hotmail.com

A traditional form of music from south Fujian, the music of the south, better known as Nanyin or Nanguan, served as a significant marker of Hokkien (Minnan) identity and connects compatriots of the same ancestral origin in Kinmen, Taiwan, and the southern seas/Nanyang/present Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Nanyin societies (traditionally known as *langjun* societies) were sites of congregation particularly those who appreciated and longed to hear their hometown music as a form of comforting oneself from homesickness. The way Nanyin was performed has its particular set of rules and members of these societies did their best to adhere and follow the tradition. It is not exaggerating to say, wherever there is existence of the Hokkien community, there is Nanyin. Even in sites where the dominant community is not Hokkien, as in the cases of Hong Kong and Macau, Nanyin was and still remains a significant force bringing the Hokkien community together. This music tradition is deeply rooted in the Hokkien community through different forms and occasions, including traditional theatre, celebratory festivals and even funeral ceremonies. Using published but little known materials such as pamphlets, anniversary booklets and audio-visual records of Nanyin societies, this study aims to identify how this now recognised UNESCO intangible heritage was prominent in connecting the heartstrings of its avid listeners from across the region, notably in Asia and Southeast Asia.

Caroline Chia is a lecturer at the Master of Translation and Interpretation, Nanyang Technological University. She obtained her PhD from the University of Melbourne and previously held teaching and research positions at the University of Melbourne and Nanyang Technological University.

Hang Tuah in a Sea of Islands: Archipelagic Readings of the Malay *Hikayat Hang Tuah*

SOLIHIN BIN SAMSURI
University of California – Berkeley
solihin@berkeley.edu

Hikayat Hang Tuah has been referred to as an epic, an epik, a romance, and a folktale, canonised as "classical" Malay literature too. However, is it appropriate to speak of "reading" the hikayat when Kassim Ahmad's 1964 compilation is the de-facto fragment of a tradition of recitation previously unburdened by any notions of a urtext? How to do right by the chorus of voices that once enlivened the oral hikayat but are now seemingly silenced in print? I am invested in thinking of the hikayat as an "archipelagic" text, investigating the many streams of mediation it has passed through, the motivations and the relationalities behind and between its fragmented transmissions over time, ranging from comic books to filmic adaptations. Considering a width of forms, I account for some of the new directions the narrative tradition has taken and will continue to take since the seventeenth century. Already, such a sensitivity to Hang Tuah's watery roots/routes dislocate the figure popularly fossilised as a paragon of "Malayness" from the alleged Malay heartland of Melaka. Tracing his wanderings down the Melaka Strait invites dialogue with other interlocutors beyond the terra-centric peninsula, namely those who inhabit the Riau Archipelago, the island of Singapura in particular, and their surrounding connective waters.

Solihin Bin Samsuri, born and raised in Woodlands, Singapore, is currently a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley's Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies where he reads literatures of the Malay world. He believes that it is by precisely identifying contested fault lines of what is "Malay," "Islam," and "literature" can hegemonic understandings of these different conceptions be problematised and pluralised. As part of his research on Maritime/Island Southeast Asia, he is increasingly interested in Transpacific connections stretching from Marina Bay to the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Historical Geographies of Intercultural Actor Training in Singapore

NIEN YUAN CHENG
Singapore University of Technology and Design
nienyuan_cheng@sutd.edu.sg

This paper historicises the pedagogy of the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), a legacy of pioneering playwright Kuo Pao Kun who co-founded the institute with its current Director, T. Sasitharan. Kuo and his concept of an "open culture" brought interculturality to the fore of Singapore's theatre in the 1990s. The school is a culmination of this effort, where students from all around the world come together to receive intensive training in four traditional Asian art forms, Kutiyattam, Wayang Wong, Noh, and Beijing Opera, conducted by masters with illustrious performance genealogies of their own stretching back hundreds of years.

My paper builds on the ethnographic documentation and oral history interviews I gathered at ITI in 2021-2022 as their resident Researcher, where I had begun attending to the spatial and temporal imaginaries mapped out in their training processes. I will be supplementing my qualitative data with historical network analysis of the faculty and students. I aim to explore the interplay between the embodied praxis of technical performance training and the geocultural, geopolitical, and historical concerns that emerge in this site in unexpected ways. How does ITI hold space for the mobile histories of these traditions and how is the present and future implicated?

Nien Yuan Cheng is a Singaporean performance scholar and dramaturg. She is presently a Faculty Early Career Award Fellow at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. She obtained her PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Sydney in 2020. Her work explores the politics and poetics of storytelling and dramaturgy in the digital age, intercultural theatre, and oral histories in/as performance. She has been published in the *Oral History Review*, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, and *Performance Paradigm* among others. She has a forthcoming book, *The Storytelling State: Performing Lives in Singapore*, published by the University of Hawai'i Press (2025). For more information, please visit http://cheng-nienyuan.com

SAIL UP!
Celebrating Australia-Indonesia's Shared Heritage through Contemporary Art

ABDI KARYA
Makassan Art Research and Global Encounters Institute
abdikarya@gmail.com

This writing explores the contemporary opera project Sombalak, initiated by Skinnyfish Music in collaboration with artists from Makassar and the Northern Territory of Australia in 2023-2024. Sombalak (Makassarese) and Dhomala (Marege language from Arnhem Land, Northern Australia) both mean "boat sail", symbolising the long relationship between the Makassarese and the people of Australia's northern coast since the 16th century. The project aims to celebrate the shared cultural and historical heritage of Australia and Indonesia. The research examines the role of contemporary art in strengthening cross-cultural relationships and preserving historical narratives that are often overlooked in official narratives. The central research question is how Sombalak can function as a platform to commemorate and preserve the historical relationship between Makassar and Northern Australia through contemporary artistic expression. Through cultural exchange and interculturalism, the project combines traditional knowledge with modern digital technologies including qualitative analysis of interviews with artists, collaborative observations, and archives that chronicle the sea cucumber trade between Indonesia and Australia. The study finds that Sombalak has successfully revived forgotten history and used art to strengthen understanding between Southeast Asia and Australia. The work shows how contemporary art can build cultural bridges and celebrate shared heritage, while responding to the challenges of globalization.

Abdi Karya is a performing art artist and cultural programmer from Makassar-Indonesia. He presented his works and featurings at interdisciplinary local and international forums like the Watermill Center-New York, Guggenheim Museum New York, International Theatre Festival in Colombo-Sri Lanka, Nairobi Summit-Kenya, Ubud Writers & Readers Festival, Makassar International Writers Festival, Jakarta-Jogja-Makassar Biennale, Castlemaine State Festival (Australia), The Rising Festival Melbourne, Indonesian Dance Festival including Melbourne International Documentary Festival. He has been developing a series of collaborations with the Yolŋu people in Northern Territory-Australia since 2014 and managed to produce the Yolŋu-Macassan Exhibition 2017 in Makassar, Yolŋu-Macassan Project at the 10th Asia Pacific Triennial-QAGOMA-Brisbane, SalamFest 2023 in Melbourne, Garma Festival 2023-2024 and with Indigenous Knowledge Studies Institute, The University of Melbourne. He is a founding member of Makassan Art Research and Global Encounters (MAREGE) Institute, a collective of artists- scholars-enthusiast of narrative about Australia-Indonesia historical relationship through the history of the trade of trepang or sea cucumber.

Paglubog at Pag-ahon (Submerging and Ascent): Nissology in Martha Atienza's *Our Islands*

GIANPAOLO L. ARAGO
University of the Philippines – Diliman
glarago@up.edu.ph

This paper attempts to historicize the video artwork of Filipino artist Martha Atienza entitled *Our Islands* (2017). Filmed in Bantayan Island of the Central Visayas Region of the country, the work features local divers and fishermen as they portray various cultural and contemporary figures underwater. Their side profiles are captured as they swim across the camera in a single file, referencing the religious procession of the At-atihan Festival. By taking Atienza's intention of underscoring the community's integral relationship to the sea, the work can be discursive within the ambit of nissology (or Island Studies) where the archipelagic characteristic of the place construes its performative constitution. I further ground this by proposing that this artwork and its performance can be constellated with fluvial processions common in the Philippines such as the Sinulog and the Sto. Niño de Tacloban Festivals. Water thusly becomes passage in this case with the aim to traverse its geopoetic potential, contextualized by the economic and environmental changes the island faces in relation to the sea. By historicizing these seemingly disparate performances, not only do I strive to contribute to the expanding field nissology in the Philippines but generate art historical connections between this art forms and practices.

Gianpaolo L. Arago is a faculty member at the Department of Art Studies, College of Arts and Letters, University of the Philippines-Diliman where he finished his Master's in Art Studies (Art History). He teaches and researches on Philippine art history and art historiography. Currently, his research interests are historicizing visual arts within the fields of radical art, ecological humanities, and nissology. His experience as a cultural worker involved institutions such as Lopez Museum and Library and the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Performing Indigeneity: Contradictions of Land Reclamation in Drama Box's *Air*

MATTHEW FAM
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
mfam2@illinois.edu

This study examines archipelagic theatre through the lens of Singaporean and Johorean Orang Seletar indigeneity, situating it within broader genealogies of indigenous performance practices. Focusing on Drama Box's productions of Air (2019, 2024), it examines cultural reclamation in the context of lost community spaces due to land reclamation and urban relocation. By positioning these practices in dialogue with dominant frameworks of American indigenous performance—incorporating storytelling, and object-oriented ontology—this paper draws on Monique Mojica and Brenda Farnell's assertion that artistic practices intervene to reclaim agency over indigenous identities (2024). In Singapore, where land reclamation disrupts indigenous connections to coastal spaces, Topalovic's concept of the "contradictory island" (2014), highlights tensions between expansion and loss. In turn, this research interrogates the role of performance in addressing this dislocation. It proposes that Singapore and Johor's fluid coastal spaces necessitate new modes of performing indigeneity, reconciling the absence of tangible connections to natural environments. Through multimedia projections of lost landscapes and performance art segments evoking elements of vanished land and sea, archipelagic theatre provides an alternative form of reclamation. This paper argues that such practices not only reconstruct erased spaces but also reimagine indigeneity in the region's urbanized, post-land reclamation context.

Matthew Fam is a third-year PhD student in Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His research focuses on novels and theatre of the Anglophone Global South, with particular interests in Environmental Humanities, Performance Studies, and Indigenous Studies. As a committee member of *Interventions: A Memory Studies Reading Group*, he examines how societies remember history, advocating for interdisciplinary approaches that move Memory Studies beyond trauma paradigms. Matthew has served as a research assistant to Prof. Brett Kaplan, contributing to projects on Black-Jewish identities and Seneca Village—a predominantly Black community, displaced for the creation of Central Park, in New York City. He graduated from the National University of Singapore with a BA (Hons) in Theatre Studies.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS & CHAIRPERSONS

Alvin Eng Hui Lim is a performance, religion and theatre researcher. He is Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. His research focusses on the intersections of theatre and religion, popular religious practices, spirit mediums and rituals, with emphasis on digital media. He is also Deputy Director and Technology and Online Editor (Mandarin) of the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A, http://a-s-i-a-web.org/). His monograph, *Digital Spirits in Religion and Media: Possession and Performance*, was published by Routledge in 2018.
E | alim@nus.edu.sg

Hedren Wai Yuan Sum is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Digital Humanities at the National University of Singapore, specialising in digital methodologies, knowledge organisation systems, ontology-based frameworks, and immersive technologies to enhance cultural heritage interpretation. Formerly as principal librarian for digital scholarship, his work integrates cultural heritage and information science, focusing on how XR and AI transform historical content analysis. Hedren holds a PhD in Art, Design, and Media (Art History) from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and is committed to advancing Digital Humanities through research and collaboration.
E | hsum@nus.edu.sg

Kyueun Kim is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Theatre and Performance at the National University of Singapore. She holds a PhD in Theatre and Performance from The Graduate Center, City University of New York, with a certificate in Interactive Technology and Pedagogy. Her research examines VR and immersive media in contemporary global Asian performance, critical posthumanism, digital humanities, and Inter-Asian cultural studies. She co-convenes the VR and Performance Working Group at the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR).
E | kkim@nus.edu.sg

Tim Winter is Cluster Leader and Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore. He moved to ARI from the University of Western Australia, where he was Professorial Future Fellow of the Australian Research Council. Tim has led the development of heritage diplomacy as a cross-disciplinary concept and introduced geocultural power to the analysis of international affairs. Recent articles on these topics appear in *Geopolitics, International Affairs, International Journal of Cultural Policy,* and *Environment and Planning D*. His most recent books are *Geocultural Power: China's Quest to Revive the Silk Roads for the Twenty-First Century* (University of Chicago Press 2019) and *The Silk Road: Connecting Histories and Futures* (Oxford University Press, 2022). He is now working on the book *The Metaverse: Lessons from History*.
E | twinter@nus.edu.sg

Caroline Chia is a Lecturer at the Master of Translation and Interpretation, Nanyang Technological University. She obtained her PhD from the University of Melbourne and previously held teaching and research positions at the University of Melbourne and Nanyang Technological University.
E | carolinechia_puppetry@hotmail.com

Roweena Yip is a Lecturer at the National University of Singapore (NUS). She received her PhD in Theatre Studies from NUS, having completed her Masters and undergraduate degrees at the University of Edinburgh, UK. Her research has been published in *Asian Theatre Journal*, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre-Fiction* and *The Asian Family in Literature and Film*. She is also Assistant Director of the *Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive* (A|S|I|A).
E | roweena.yip@nus.edu.sg

Yee Cheng Koh is a PhD candidate under the Joint Degree Programme with National University of Singapore and King's College London. Her research interests lie in the making of modern Asian theatre in Southeast Asia, with a specific focus on English, Chinese, and Malay theatre in post-war Singapore and Malaysia, where she explores how the politics of (de)colonisation shape the making of national theatres in both countries.
E | kohyeecheng@u.nus.edu

WORKSHOP CONVENORS

Dr Alvin Eng Hui LIM
English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies, National University of Singapore

Dr Hedren Wai Yuan SUM
English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies, National University of Singapore

Dr Kyueun KIM
English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies, National University of Singapore

Prof Tim WINTER
Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

SECRETARIAT

Ms Valerie YEO
Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore
AS8, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, #04-04, Singapore 119260
E | valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg