

INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING

2022 **STORYFEST**

FESTIVAL SINGAPORE
igniting imaginations

Story Threads

28 JUNE - 21 AUGUST 2022



#StoryThreads

This year, StoryFest has worked on decentralising, and shifting focus from product to process. The arts industry across the globe has had to work tirelessly to re-find our footing, and take on the mammoth task of reinventing the norms we are accustomed to. Having practiced as a storyteller myself, and as someone who is responsible for the Festival, I have enjoyed inhabiting both the virtual and physical space. But with virtual technology encompassing nearly every aspect of daily life, from work, to our social and personal lives, digital fatigue was an inevitable risk. Because of this, we felt it was time for us to re-examine place and space, and reassess our direction. It was vital that we found creative ways to use both physical place and virtual space to ensure sufficient focus on the process.

There's nothing quite like the magic of experiencing a storyteller tell you a tale in person. Storytelling as a tradition relies on a three-way connection: valuing the nonverbal exchanges shared between the story, the teller and the listener.

The last two and a half years have been a journey of revisiting our relationship with proximity to others. Here in Singapore, we are slowly relearning how to be comfortable with sharing physical spaces. Yet, the digital space has taken an unprecedented hold on our lives, and important questions remain to be asked about the changing meaning of both spheres. As we attempt to strike a new balance, StoryFest returns as a hybrid edition this year.

StoryThreads tugs at the ties we share, be it the invisible web in this remarkably digital age, or the attachments we have with those around us. Historically, the nonverbal dynamics of occupying a physical space together, have played a

large role in shaping the significance of the oral tradition. Pivoting away from our habitual closeness and finding ways to recreate the Festival in a fully digital landscape presented a key challenge to us over the last two years.

After five years of successful editions of our **Young Storytellers' Showcase**, we wanted to continue to set aside quality time for cultivating the next generation of younger talent. The first part of the year was dedicated to a mentorship programme centred around developing children as storytellers, and so began the inaugural **Junior Storytellers' Mentorship Programme** in April. We wanted the space to be able to work on something that was almost entirely durational, and prioritise the process of workshopping. This led us to devote the entire month of April, and some of May, towards working with children in developing their confidence and storytelling skills, which could easily be applied in other aspects of their lives.

This mentorship culminated in [Bedtime Stories](#), which was a series of one-to-one digital livestream performances making use of global time differences. *Bedtime Stories* was a tripartite collaboration by Joshua Sofaer Projects, between StoryFest Singapore, OFFTA Arts Festival (Canada), and the Norfolk and Norwich Festival (United Kingdom). This project utilised the web to invite audiences to listen to a story told in real time by a child in another part of the world, through a video conferencing platform. So much of our social and professional interactions have become quickly digitised, which can feel counterintuitively isolating. However, this same digitisation opened us up to a glorious global network of people with a shared vision, and gave us the freedom to traverse geographical and generational demarcations. Participants of the Junior Storytellers' Mentorship Programme captivated audiences in Montreal, Canada, and audiences in Singapore were enchanted by stories told by children in Norwich, England.

In the second part of the year, we are thrilled to announce that [The Singapore Showcase](#) returns to the Play Den at the Arts House, with *Story Threads*, featuring six storytellers sharing local narratives that bind us. After two wholly digital editions, we are gratified by the chance to finally invite live audiences back to witness our expert raconteurs weave a rich tapestry of regional tales. From tracing the roots of popular urban legends to deconstructing folklore, let our master wordsmiths reel you back into the seats of the Play Den this August, or catch bite-sized iterations on the [StoryFest YouTube channel](#).

We have also wanted to build on our existing pool of resources, and continue platforming local artists and their works. Join us in examining the processes of artists in the [Story Talk](#) conversation series, which returns to provide a closer look into the approaches of our six performers of The Singapore Showcase. These artists, all of whom work in different strands of the creative and cultural economy, are linked by their love for the narrative medium and resonance with Singapore as a place of inspiration and identity. As before, I will be asking these artists to share insights into their practice, and the connections they forge through their work.

#StoryThreads takes a closer look at what it means to connect, in a period when our assumptions about contact have been tested time and again. Discover the ties that bind: across the globe, across generations and across mediums, with us. Despite not having had a tangible presence over the last two years, we hope that the stories we have told, and are yet to tell, will pull you in once again.

Kamini Ramachandran
CREATIVE PRODUCER, STORYFEST



4 MESSAGE FROM ARTS HOUSE LIMITED

As a co-presenter of *StoryFest*, Arts House Limited (AHL) is pleased to support the art of storytelling and the efforts of our storytellers. After two challenging years of living digitally, we are glad that the Festival is returning to the intimate space of the Play Den at The Arts House, Singapore's home to the literary arts.

We look forward to *Story Threads: The Singapore Showcase*, where six outstanding storytellers will reacquaint audiences with the much-missed oral tradition, and enthrall us with tales of love, loss, legend and lore. The teller's words, carefully chosen and artfully paced, have the power to whisk us away to new places in our imagination, and evoke thoughts and feelings that help us see the world – and ourselves – in a new light.

On behalf of AHL, I would like to congratulate Creative Producer Kamini Ramachandran and her team for championing the art of storytelling and thank them for another stimulating edition of *StoryFest*, comprising both in-person and digital programmes.

Sim Wan Hui

DIRECTOR

VENUE PROGRAMMING

ARTS HOUSE LIMITED



Bedtime Stories



ERIN
The Luminous Pearl



HAILEY
The Origin of Thunder, Lightning & Rain



ISHA
The Talking Turtle



JOSIAH
The Empty Pot



JUN KAI
Gecko's Complaint



LEYNA
The Order of the Chinese Zodiac



LORRAINE
The Legend of Bukit Merah



MAITHRI
The Wit of Tenali Raman



MARYJANE
The Dumpling Sage



NADYNE
The Brother of the Three Marias



REANNE
A Lesson from Confucius



RIKA
Anecdotes of Mullah Nasruddin



RUTH
The Legend of Hou Yi and Chang Er



RYAN
The Origin of the Chinese Zodiac



SAFA
The Legend of Kusu Island

Junior Storytellers' Mentorship

April - June 2022

The inaugural Junior Storytellers' Mentorship was a two month-long mentorship programme culminating in an international digital storytelling performance. All performers were mentored by storyteller Kamini Ramachandran, Creative Producer of StoryFest Singapore. The mentorship was held between April and June 2022, and led to 30 live streamed performances in *Bedtime Stories* by Joshua Sofaer Projects.



**Junior Sto
Mento**

Bedtime Stories

28 May - 2 June 2022 (StoryFest to OFFTA)

28 June - 30 June 2022 (Norfolk & Norwich Festival to StoryFest)

Bedtime Stories was a participatory 1:1 artwork originally conceived by UK artist Joshua Sofaer, delivered by children to adults online in real time. Children (aged 9-12 years) worked with a local storyteller to become junior storytellers. Taking advantage of international time zone differences, they then told stories to adult audiences in another country (via an online video conferencing platform) as a 'bedtime story'. This tripartite global project took place between OFFTA (Montreal, Canada), Norfolk and Norwich Festival (UK) and StoryFest (Singapore).



**Storytellers
Partnership**

Story Threads

THE SINGAPORE SHOWCASE

StoryFest is proud to commission six dynamic storytellers from varied backgrounds, working with the narrative in unique ways. Showcase alumni Verena Tay, Stephanie Dogfoot, Hafiz Rashid, and Melizarani T. Selva are joined by newcomers Daryl Qilin Yam and Wesley Leon Aroozoo in weaving tales of love, loss, legend and lore.

19 – 21 August,
7:30pm – 9:30pm
Play Den,
The Arts House

Maker of Mankind, Mender of Heaven – by Verena Tay

“For eons, I dance through the land, my core-length tingling energy. Life shimmers, grows, dies, renews year after year. I am content.”

Peer into the mind of the creation goddess Nu Wa, as she fashions a world entirely from scratch. How much must she give of herself to sustain life? Join literary veteran Verena Tay, as she moulds a whole, wondrous, elaborate world in front of your eyes.

The Pattern of Love - by Hafiz Rashid

“She continued gazing at the stars twinkling in the distance and took comfort knowing that there was still light even in a moonless night, just as there was hope even in the bleakest of circumstances.”

They say every image tells a story. In the batik tradition, visual and written motifs are bountiful, each holding their own narratives. Ever wondered how these symbols came to be? Let Hafiz Rashid transport you to Central Java, as he tells you the tale of Ratu Kencana, and how her undying love and devotion manifested in the *truntum* motif, to be honoured for centuries to come.

Straits - by Stephanie Dogfoot

“She wished she could tell them what she knew. But foxes did not quite speak the same way as dogs. But it didn’t matter. They all knew. The cull had begun.”

What would you give up to save the ones you love most? In the late 1800s, a shape-shifting fox spirit collides head-on with the reality of the rabies outbreak. As she is forced to decide between her true identity, and saving the lives of her found family, find out what choices she makes in ‘Straits’, told by Stephanie Dogfoot.



What Used to Kill Us – by Daryl Qilin Yam

“... heartbreak - it was still a terminal condition at the time.”

A lone butterfly in your home is said to signal the return of a lost loved one. But where did this belief come from? Daryl Qilin Yam has a theory about transformative tales, and it dates all the way back to the third century. Relive the classic story of ‘The Butterfly Lovers’ gently woven together with a personal tale about coming to terms with grief.

The Overhead – by Wesley Leon Aroozoo

“You have to return it. It is meant to be buried. Or Kepala Anjing will punish you. Trust me. I tried...”

Have you seen the Kepala Anjing? The man with the dog’s head, who lurks at night in search of children to steal? In 1980s Singapore, children vanish without a trace, only to be found years later under bridge foundations. Let your spine be tingled, and senses heightened, in Wesley Leon Aroozoo’s ‘The Overhead’. Find out how one man goes on a search to dig up the truth behind a well-known urban legend ... what truths await him?

Sins I Have Yet to Commit – by Melizarani T. Selva

“The suffering inside you contains my suffering and you will grow into solidified adult agony that no one will understand. Not even your imperfect mother.”

To be a mother is to give unyieldingly until there is nothing left to give. If that holds true, how does a mother of a god battle this spiral of baby blues? Witness Melizarani T. Selva as she reimagines the voice of Chaya, mother of the god of karma, Lord Shani Deva, in this tangled web of identity, generational trauma and motherhood.



DARYL QILIN YAM

Daryl is a writer, editor and arts organiser. He is the author of the novella *Shantih Shantih Shantih* and the novel *Lovelier, Lonelier*, a finalist of the 2021 Epigram Books Fiction Prize. He co-founded the literary charity Sing Lit Station. His short fiction and poetry have appeared in publications such as the Berlin Quarterly, The Straits Times, Transnational Literature, and The Epigram Books Collection of Best New Singapore Short Stories.



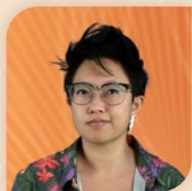
HAFIZ RASHID

Hafiz has been a volunteer museum docent at the Malay Heritage Centre since 2013. As a trained docent, he has conducted tours of MHC's permanent and special exhibitions. He is interested in uncovering the hidden stories of the Malay Archipelago (Nusantara). It is these unique stories that he shares when conducting his tours; the stories behind motifs, cultural practices, daily utterances – stories with deep links to the past.



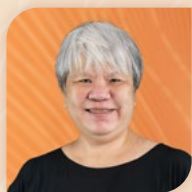
MELIZARANI T. SELVA

Melizarani is a Malaysian writer and spoken word poet, with notable performances at ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival and TEDxGateway. Her first book, *Taboo*, is a poetic interrogation of the Malaysian Indian identity. She co-founded 'If Walls Could Talk: Poetry Open Mic', the Malaysia National Poetry Slam, and co-published an anthology of 100 poems by 61 poets from Malaysia. Presently, she serves as co-editor of 'The Second Link' - A Malaysia-Singapore Literary Anthology project.



STEPHANIE DOGFOOT

Stephanie is a Singaporean writer, performer and producer whose first poetry collection, *Roadkill for Beginners* explores growing up, good times in strange places and strange times in good places. The founder of a poetry night called Spoke & Bird and the co-founder of a comedy night called Siao Char Bors Comedy, Stephanie is inspired by mud and Southeast Asian wildlife.



VERENA TAY

Verena is a seasoned storyteller, theatre practitioner and writer. As an oral storyteller, Verena has delighted audiences in Asia, Europe, and North America with her unique way of bringing stories vocally and physically alive. She is driven to make traditional myths/tales/legends relevant for people today and has successfully coached adults to improve their storytelling craft. She is currently completing her Ph.D. studies in Creative Writing with Swansea University.



WESLEY LEON AROOZOO

Wesley is an educator and multi-disciplinary artist with 13 Little Pictures. His works span literary arts, film, and theatre, and have been nominated for the Epigram Books Fiction Prize, among others. He is the author of *Bedok Reservoir*, whose onstage adaptation was performed at the Goodman Arts Centre. His latest novel, *The Punkhawala and the Prostitute*, was presented at The Substation's interactive tour 'An Artist's Journey: You are Obviously in the Right Place'.

Digital Stories

22 August 2022 – 31 March 2023

This year, StoryFest reconnects with our local and overseas audiences through both in-person and digital iterations of *The Singapore Showcase*. Catch our six storytellers tell bite-sized versions of their stories in these videos, specially curated for digital viewing.

Contemplate the modern-day implications of ancient and contemporary folklore as you listen to stories about things seen and unseen. Uncover the virtue of patience with Hafiz and Verena, navigate familial bonds with Daryl and Melizarani, and reexamine the birth of urban legends with Stephanie and Wesley.

Get caught in the web of tales!

These videos will be available for free on the StoryFest YouTube channel (youtube.com/c/StoryFestSingapore) until March 2023.



Story Talk

Welcome to *Story Talk*, a series of short interviews about the different facets of storytelling. Our StoryFest community has learned and grown from the global sharing of practice – and we hope to continue fostering these conversations with this online series.

Join StoryFest's Creative Producer, Kamini Ramachandran, as she speaks with Singapore artists working with different mediums of storytelling.

For storytellers, writers, poets and those who work with narratives, be inspired by these creative conversations. For producers and arts managers, these videos will support your understanding of the literary arts and its many modes of expression.

Story Talk is a free access online resource bank on a diverse range of storytelling related topics available at [youtube.com/c/StoryFestSingapore](https://www.youtube.com/c/StoryFestSingapore)



MELIZARANI T. SELVA

How do the stories we absorb in our formative years shape our perceptions of gender norms? In this episode of *Story Talk*, Kamini chats with spoken word artist Melizarani about positioning women and exploring identity in mythology and culture



DARYL QILIN YAM

Where do myths come from? One writer thinks they come from folktales, passed on through generations. Like a game of telephone, little pieces get lost in the mix, until we are left with nothing but the essence of the story.



VERENA TAY

What kinds of stories do we grow up listening to and how do they inform the people we become? Do those stories have the room to change and evolve? Storyteller Verena proposes new ways to look at tales as old as time.

STORYFEST 2022

STORY TALK



WESLEY LEON AROOZOO

How does the medium influence the way a story is told? As adults, how do we make sense of and reinterpret urban legends that scared us as children? Filmmaker Wesley discusses these questions and more with Kamini.



STEPHANIE DOGFOOT

What kinds of stories do we tell ourselves, and how can we use those to bridge the gap between different communities and identities? Writer and spoken word artist Stephanie shares with Kamini what her open mic experience has taught her about the tales people like to tell.



HAFIZ RASHID

Have you ever taken a closer look at the elaborate symbols printed in batik? Museum docent Hafiz guides Kamini through a few of such motifs, and shares that there is a tapestry of stories in every piece of fabric.



**Kamini
Ramachandran**

CREATIVE PRODUCER

A pioneer in the field of storytelling in Asia, Kamini founded and runs the non-profit organisation The Storytelling Centre Limited to advance the art of storytelling, and is the creative force behind MoonShadow Stories.



Tabitha Surita

FESTIVAL MANAGER

A graduate of NAFA's BA Arts Management programme, Tabitha is currently the Assistant Manager at The Storytelling Centre Limited and MoonShadow Stories Pte. Ltd.



Zane Motalif

DIGITAL PRODUCER

Zane's passion for the arts has led him to be part of the team for RIF 2019 and AWLI 2020, and develop his skills in digital content creation.



Amali S.

PROJECT COORDINATOR

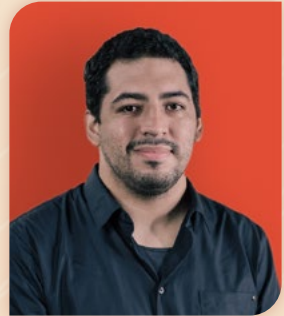
Amali is a graduate of the BA Arts Management course in LASALLE, and most recently curated and managed various exhibitions at Kamal Arts Limited.



**Mruthika Priya
Raman**

PROJECT MANAGER

Thika is a BA (Hons) Arts Management student at LASALLE, and a growing multi-disciplinary arts practitioner and manager with a focus on accessibility.



Oscar Larrea Guija

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

A BA (Hons) Film graduate, Oscar is an aspiring writer whose interests include history and languages, research and production design.



The Storytelling Centre Limited

The Storytelling Centre Limited is a non-profit organisation based in Singapore. Our core mission is to foster and advance the art of storytelling through performances, collaborations, artistic exchanges, mentorships, training and community outreach.

The Storytelling Centre Limited firmly believes that stories are storehouses of Singapore's unique multidimensional legacy. The oral traditions of folktales, mythology, legends and fables are avenues for preserving, showcasing and developing Singapore's rich and diverse heritage. Our focus is on ensuring the sustainability of the art form by nurturing emerging Young Storytellers.



The Arts House

Occupying the almost 200-year-old building that was home to Singapore's first parliament, The Arts House continues in the distinguished tradition of this gazetted national monument and now plays a key role in the country's arts and creative scene. The Arts House at the Old Parliament, as it is affectionately referred to, promotes and presents multidisciplinary programmes and festivals within its elegant spaces. It focuses in particular on the literary arts, celebrating the works of written and spoken word artists from Singapore and beyond. The Arts House is run and managed by Arts House Limited (AHL).



Arts House Limited

Arts House Limited (AHL) is a not-for-profit organisation committed to enriching lives through the arts. AHL is the cultural place manager of Singapore's Civic District. It manages two key national monuments – The Arts House, a multidisciplinary arts centre with a focus on literary programming, and the Victoria Theatre & Victoria Concert Hall, a heritage building that is home to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. It also runs performing arts space Drama Centre as well as three creative enclaves for artists, arts groups and creative businesses – the Goodman Arts Centre, Aliwal Arts Centre and Stamford Arts Centre.

AHL organises the Singapore International Festival of Arts – an annual pinnacle performing arts festival; as well as the Singapore Writers Festival – a multi-lingual festival presenting the world's leading literary talents. In addition, AHL manages Our Cultural Medallion Story – the showcase on Singapore's Cultural Medallion recipients at The Arts House.

AHL was set up in 11 December 2002 as a public company limited by guarantee under the National Arts Council and was officially renamed Arts House Limited on 19 March 2014. For more information, visit artshouselimited.sg

storyfestsg.com
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