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MEDIA RELEASE

The Future is N.O.W.: Festival of Women: N.O.W. 2020 celebrates diverse voices and experiences virtually

SINGAPORE, 4 June 2020 – **T:>Works** (formerly known as TheatreWorks) presents the second edition of the **Festival of Women: N.O.W. 2020** from 15 July to 2 August, led by N.O.W. Artistic Director Noorlinah Mohamed. In line with T:>Works’ new mission statement to investigate current urgencies of being located in Singapore through different creative expressions in the public sphere, N.O.W. 2020 will be a free and virtual interdisciplinary festival, with an anchor exhibition, livestreamed performances, a digitalised competition, aurality projects, video narratives, conversations, and workshop to be made accessible for all online. Livestreamed events will be available for catch-up viewing on T:>Works’ dedicated YouTube as well as SoundCloud channels.

Conceptualised by Noorlinah in 2019, N.O.W. presents diverse narratives of women from across different sectors, connecting arts to life. Created and developed completely by women, it celebrates alliances and solidarity between women through engagement and collaboration works that educate, generate awareness, and start dialogues on the pertinent issues of today.

Noorlinah says: “N.O.W. celebrates the diversity of the female experience focusing on concerns that sit at the intersections of class, race, gender and highlights the structures, systems that perpetuate inequalities. For example, this year, we work with non-citizen migrant married women performing verbatim accounts of transnational divorce narratives, as well as the researchers who did the field work. In doing so, we ask ourselves, what is

this society we live in and how can we make and hold space for others who do not fit in? Who has a voice and who gets heard? And how do those with access amplify, make, and hold space for others who may not enjoy the same privilege? These are questions that thread through the programme of N.O.W. 2020.”

N.O.W. 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

1 *Women of N.O.W. 2020 Digital Exhibition: Art and Life crossings*

N.O.W. 2020 has over 10 events and one of the highlights is the ***Women of N.O.W.*** digital exhibition. Noorlinah leads this project, the second in a series of three, which began with the 2019 exhibition ***Power of Letters***. The *Women of N.O.W.* digital exhibition features interviews with over 25 women from different sectors. From social services to social cohesion, from education to advocacy, from migrant worker rights to resource management, these women exemplify the commitment to raise awareness of the overlooked gaps in our society. They do this with ingenuity, humour, reflexivity, and creativity, each finding different ways to achieve what they need to benefit the communities they work with.

2 *An Interdisciplinary Platform*

Collaborations across disciplines is a key interest of N.O.W. The verbatim documentary performance ***Entangled Intimacies: Transnational Divorce Narratives*** is one such example. This performance, constructed from research on the topic dating back 2012 till the most recent in 2020, explores the lives of non-citizen migrant married women, their liminal experiences with limited financial access, as well as the everyday creative strategies to negotiate the marital and institutional frames that impede them. Featuring verbatim accounts of transnational divorce narratives performed by women from the community, the performance also includes a dialogue with sociologist Dr. Quah Ee Ling Sharon, lawyer and poet Amanda Chong, and AWARE researcher Chong Ning Qian, all whom are involved in the field of transnational marriage and divorce research.

Unseen Labour – the making of, conceptualised by **Ginette Chittick** and **Hazel Lim**, is an exhibition transformed into video narratives where the usually unseen processes of the making of an exhibition are privileged and given visual space and time. *Unseen Labour* translates narratives of unpaid labour of care and intimacy performed by women, into patterns or designs. These patterns are then crafted as cross-stitch as well as a

combination of different techniques such as tapestry weaving, latch hooking, and embroidery.

Gender and Body Politics is the theme of the digital debut of **King**, written and performed by actress and playwright **Jo Tan**. This one-woman show about a typical Singaporean “OL” (office lady) who cross-dresses as a man for an office party, reveal with satire and wit the accesses and limits of male privilege. The telecast of *King* is supplemented by post-show dialogues with the show’s creators Jo Tan and director **Jasmine Ng** on the intricacies of developing a virtual performance, as well as a livestream talk with queer art-makers **Liting Tan** (a.k.a. Southside Tingles) and **Stephanie Chan** (a.k.a. Aloysius D) on transgressive performance in *Fit for a King*.

N.O.W. 2020 culminates in its third and final week with programmes centered around the concept of aurality and the voice. Highlights include the radio play *The Book of Mothers* written by **Eleanor Tan** and directed by **Edith Podesta**, with sound design by **Inch Chua**, about the difficult choices women face with regards to career and motherhood. The closing week of the festival also includes contributions from three recent graduates of LaSalle College of the Arts (B.A. in Acting) **Lauren Sim**, **Chaya Gonzales**, and **Shahid Nasheer**. Their work, *Sound Stories* is an experiment in telling stories using largely sound effects, in response to artworks by women artists that have been overlooked or forgotten in history. Meanwhile, *Sound Sense* is by musician and sound artist **Inch Chua** and sound designer, re-recording mixer and foley artist **Lim Tingli**. Both award-winning artists with extensive experience in their respective fields, this talk unpacks their experiences of telling an immersive story through sound. Finally, we end the aural-related theme with *Carving Space Underground*. This talk with video features female musicians in the punk and hardcore scene – **Fuse**, **E-thereal**, **Radigals** and **Obstacle Upsurge** – on the multiple roles they play within the band and within society as women, mothers, and musicians. The event is moderated by film producer **Panuksmi Hardjowirogo** and includes guest speaker **Nina Chabra**.

3 *Writing in the Digital: Reinventing the Familiar*

As part of N.O.W. 2020, T:>Works will also be organising *Writing in the Digital*, a performance writing and creation workshop focused on digital storytelling. The aim is to consider the melding of forms and experimenting with the notion of inventions. “We are not

asking for what innovations can be made using technology. We are in search of playful and inventive ways in which something familiar can be re-imagined anew,” says Noorlinah. The workshops will be led by industry practitioners: writer **Nabilah Said**, playwright and director **Kaylene Tan**, and producer/filmmaker **Jasmine Ng**, who are also judges of the 24-Hour Playwriting Competition. Additionally, there will be an in-conversation event with practitioners from Singapore and beyond on the final day of the workshop. *Writing in the Digital* will be held from 22 June to 27 June on Zoom.

The **24-Hour Playwriting Competition** will be held in a virtual space for the first time, exploring the relationship between storytelling, the immediacy of performance, and the nature of digital platforms. In 24 hours, participants are invited to create a 10 to 15-minute performance piece that can be presented on either one of multiple digital platforms (e.g. on social media or Zoom), or a hybrid work that is written for a real-life and virtual stage. Not only is the virtual site a new addition to the 24-Hour tradition, this year’s competition judges will also act as facilitators. Kaylene, Nabilah and Jasmine will be available at specific points during the 24 hours to be a sounding board for the participants’ story ideas. Going digital offers possibilities to review and experiment with a popular form. At the same time, entering the digital realm has made it necessary to re-evaluate the technological alienation, by opening up channels of support through building a sense of cooperative community. The competition will take place on 18-19 July on Zoom and WhatsApp. Participants can take part in two categories - Open (for those aged 19 and above) or Youth (for youths aged 15-18) – and stand the opportunity to win up to S\$500 worth of cash prizes.

4 T:>Care

In Solidarity and Alliance

In solidarity and alliance, T:>Works establishes and administers T:>Care – a Creative Action Resilience Enabling initiative to support **projects created and developed by women** to make positive change in our communities. This year’s projects include some of the causes and organisations that are featured in the *Women of N.O.W.* digital exhibition.

An anonymous donor has pledged, up to S\$10,000, to match donations to this campaign, dollar for dollar. Upon your donation to the T:>Care initiative by **10 August 2020**, T:>Works will divide your contributions **equally** to donate to the following urgencies and projects:

- Taking Care of Basic Needs:

Keeping Hope Alive – a volunteer-run group that dedicates visits to different low-income estates in Singapore to meet the needs of the residents.

- Children and Families:

3Pumpkins – a non-profit arts company that builds positive community relationships that benefit children and families through the arts.

- Access through Technology:

The Codette Project – a non-profit group that empowers minority/Muslim women through technology.

- The Vulnerability of Marginalised and Discriminated Women:

Project X – a non-profit organisation that fights violence against and exploitation of the sex worker community in Singapore.

- Rejecting Segregation and Economic Apartheid as a Way of Life in Singapore:

- **Its raining raincoats** – a ground up movement, with over 500 volunteers, that spreads kindness to migrant workers in Singapore.
- **Project Chulia Street** – a ground up initiative that serves the migrant communities by building bridges and friendships between our migrant friends and Singaporeans.

- Building Solidarities and Alliances for Women Championing Women:

N.O.W. – a Festival of Women that champions the work of women from diverse disciplines, across the arts and social sectors.

Noorlinah concluded: “N.O.W. 2020 is an event that highlights the connections between the

arts, life, and society. T:>Works, with the establishment of the T:>Care initiative, signals its commitment to champion cross-sector and interdisciplinary collaborations that go beyond the arts. Such endeavours bring about creative possibilities of making positive change in society, laterally.”

For more information, please refer to the Annex – Information on T:>Care.

Donations can be made [here](https://www.giving.sg/theatreworks-singapore-limited/tcare). (<https://www.giving.sg/theatreworks-singapore-limited/tcare>)

For more information on N.O.W. 2020 programmes and schedules, please visit <https://www.notordinarywork.com/festivalofwomen>. For more information on the collaborators, please visit <https://www.notordinarywork.com/collaborators>. Press materials can be accessed [here](#).

T:>Works Social Media Channels

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TWorkssg/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TWorkssg>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/tworkssg/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheatreWorksSG/>

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About T:>Works

Established in 1985, [T:>Works](#) is an independent and international arts company based in Singapore at its space, 72-13. It is currently led by Artistic Director, Dr. Ong Keng Sen. T:>Works’ mission is the pioneering of thought leadership in the arts focused on transdisciplinary, transcultural, and inclusive processes. To this end, there is a strong educational perspective with research and discourse contextualising the histories, contemporary experiences, and art practices of South East Asia. T:>Works also serves to investigate the current urgencies of being located in Singapore through different creative expressions in the public sphere. It is a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Company Grant for the period from 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2022. T:>Works is an Institute of Public Character with charitable status.

About Festival of Women: N.O.W. 2020

The Festival of Women: [N.O.W. 2020](#) is about women championing women presented by T:>Works. It was initiated by theatre artist Noorlinah Mohamed in 2019. As an all-women platform in Singapore, it amplifies the work that women creatives, change makers, and social champions do to advance issues affecting women at the intersection of gender, class, and race. A relevant platform in the ecosystem, it privileges collaborations

across different disciplines and social sectors. N.O.W. positions engagement with concerns women are passionate and creative about.

About Noorlinah Mohamed

An award-winning actress of stage, television and film, Noorlinah Mohamed has worked in Asia, Europe and the US. She is also a teaching artist, and a consultant in arts pedagogy with a PhD in Arts Education from the University of Warwick. Noorlinah is a recipient of the JCCI Cultural Award (2008) and the Women's Weekly Women of our Time Award (2005) for her contributions to the arts. In 2019, she is one of the featured women artists in TheatreWorks 2019 season of Women & Voice.

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