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**MEDIA ALERT**  
**26 February 2024**

**“The people cultures of a national theatre”**

**7 March 2024**

**Live @ 72-13, Mohamed Sultan Road  
Singapore 239007  
Home of T:>Works**

**Free admission with registration [here](#)**

***T:>Works launches ‘The Season of Thought Leadership: in the Arts, by the Arts, with the Arts’  
with a public conversation on “The people cultures of a national theatre”.***

**The Season of Thought Leadership: in the Arts, by the Arts, with the Arts** is a year-long endeavour spotlighting thought leadership in the arts.

Kicking off the season is a collaborative public conversation featuring panelists **Kavitha Krishnan**, Co-founder of Maya Dance Theatre (MDT) and Diverse Abilities Dance Collective (DADC), **Medli Dorothea Loo**, actress and theatre-maker, and **Alfian Sa’at**, Resident Playwright of Wild Rice. The conversation also includes respondents **Ho Tzu Nyen** and **Deborah Arunditha Emmanuel** and is moderated by T:>Works Artistic Director, **Ong Keng Sen**.

From exploring the role of artistic leadership to addressing issues of diversity, accessibility, and representation, the conversation will provide a fascinating exploration of the complexities and possibilities inherent in fostering vibrant and coexisting people cultures within a national theatre endeavour. “What constitutes a national theatre project and what is expected of it? Who are ‘the people’ and who determines which people are represented in a national theatre project?”

T:>Works Artistic Director Ong Keng Sen, first proposed the idea of a national theatre as an exploratory project in 2021. It has taken two years to develop and conceptualise before its launch in 2024.

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Explains Ong, “The conversations on a national theatre project must go beyond hardware. We need to return to its core, and that is, the peoples. Central to this endeavour is collaboration, across diverse disciplines and genres, because the arts groups constitute different peoples with their respective publics that they cater to. This panel is the start of many more to come, to bring different peoples in the arts eco-systems together, to activate varied perspectives and to re-think what constitutes a national theatre. So, for me, the word ‘theatre’ in this case, is defined as a public forum which expands beyond the genres of performing arts to include visual, film, design, architectural, engagement, digital, as well as literary cultures. T:>Works is committed to engaging in this journey for a whole year, to explore, investigate and ruminate collectively.”

**The Season of Thought Leadership: in the Arts, by the Arts, with the Arts** will comprise the pilot Artistic Directors Academy (ADA) and the second Per°Form Open Academy of Arts and Activations (POA).

The Artistic Directors Academy (ADA) is a training hothouse to develop Artistic Directors in Singapore. The programme is intended to train up to 10 Singapore Artistic Directors over one year from April 2024 to March 2025. It will tap into international cultural changemakers helming masterclass modules, with individual mentoring to sharpen and intensify skill sets. Each participant will have an international and a Singaporean mentor. There will be a final public presentation in March 2025 by the 10 participants on their proposals for a national theatre.

Per°Form Open Academy of Arts and Activations (POA) will return for its second installation in April 2024. Per°Form is conceptualised and led by T:>Works Artistic Director, Dr. Ong Keng Sen. With Per°Form, T:>Works aims to cut across silos, disciplines, and fields to support contextualised research, situated practices, and translocal knowledge production as shared resources for the future. In particular, Per°Form focuses on the arts practitioner as a thought leader engaged in care and repair, actively bridging histories, the precarious present, and world-creating.

This year, POA expands its range beyond keynotes, workshops and 14-hour marathon that anchored the programme in 2023. With an 18-day programming, participants to POA are welcome to join the Global South Fellows, hailing from South Asia (Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), Central Asia (Uzbekistan), Africa (Egypt and Nigeria) and South America (Argentina and Guatemala) at three new platforms: Per°Form Open Academy Rave, Per°Form Open Academy Studios and Per°Form Open Academy Screenings. More details will be released on Per°Form soon.

“The people cultures of a national theatre” is presented by T:>Works, an independent and international arts company based in Singapore at its space, 72-13.

For media enquiries, interviews and images, contact Sarah Bagharib:  
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## Annex 1

### “The people cultures of a national theatre” Collaborators’ Bios

#### PANELISTS

##### Kavitha Krishnan



Kavitha Krishnan’s illustrious career encompasses her achievements as a dancer and her tireless advocacy for social causes, diversity and inclusion. As the co-founder of Maya Dance Theatre (MDT), she leads a non-profit organization dedicated to leveraging the arts for social change and positive transformation. In 2018, Kavitha utilized her training as an occupational therapist to establish the Diverse Abilities Dance Collective (DADC), as a community initiative of MDT, providing a platform for dancers with diverse abilities to collaborate with professionals. Since 2020, she has collaborated with filmmakers and mixed media artists to produce immersive DanceXR projects, illuminating poignant social narratives. In 2022, Kavitha was conferred the Natya Nipuna award by Bhaskar’s Arts Academy for her extensive contributions to the arts. Kavitha views dance as a powerful tool for communication and forging connections, further amplifying her impact on communities worldwide.

Kavitha will unpack notions of 'accessibility' and 'inclusion', and proposes a co-existing space for people with diverse abilities in the arts.

##### Medli Dorothea Loo



Medli Dorothea Loo is a 20-year-old actress and theatre-maker who first started performing professionally when she was 7-years-old in Ken Kwek's "Cartoons", introducing her to acting. She then continued to act and star in numerous television shows, movies and theatre productions for the rest of her childhood. Most recently, in her adult life, she had appeared in “Old Gaze” (2023) “Snow White and The Seven Dwarves” (2023) and “trans:mission” (2024) where she served as both a director and performer. In recent years she has also been a voice for the transgender community in Singapore, speaking at Pink Dot 2023 and various other pride and diversity engagements.

Medli will discuss trans:mission, a documentary theatre project which featured 8 trans performers engaging in intimate intergenerational conversations. The work explores how trans history is produced and transmitted across different eras.

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## Alfian Sa'at

Alfian Sa'at is the Resident Playwright of Wild Rice. In 2001, he won the National Arts Council Young Artist Award for Literature. He has been nominated 12 times for Best Original Script at the Life! Theatre Awards, winning for Landmarks (2005), Nadirah (2010), Kakak Kau Punya Laki (Your Sister's Husband, 2014) and Hotel (with Marcia Vanderstraaten, 2016). Alfian has also been awarded the Boh-Cameronian Award in Malaysia for Best Book and Lyrics for The Secret Life of Nora (2011) and Best Original Script for Parah (Wounded, 2013). His plays have been performed in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Melbourne and Berlin.

Alfian will examine the contestations over the word "people", as a form of majoritarian discourse wielded by the state, and that of a pro-democratic discourse expressed by artists and cultural workers.

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## RESPONDENTS



### Ho Tzu Nyen

Ho Tzu Nyen is a visual artist, theatre-maker and filmmaker whose work often explores the structure and power of myths and questions the construction of history. Since his first solo exhibition at The Substation in 2003, Ho has exhibited widely within Singapore and internationally. He has held residencies at the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program and at the Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong. Ho has also been featured in film, theatre and performance festivals such as Sundance Film Festival; Locarno International Film Festival; Cannes International Film Festival; The Kampnagel, Hamburg; TPAM, Yokohama and Theatre der Welt, Germany.



### Deborah Arunditha Emmanuel

Deborah Arunditha Emmanuel is a performance artist and writer working between poetry, sound, movement, and the dramatic arts. She has performed at many events and festivals locally and worldwide, winning poetry slams in Singapore, New Zealand, Germany and Australia. She has been a resident writer/artist at the Watermill Center in New York, Literarisches Colloquium in Berlin, and The Marpha Foundation in Mustang. She makes neo-shamanic tribal funk music with Mantravine and co-organises Opens, a para-academic forum based in Singapore.

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## MODERATOR



### About Dr. Ong Keng Sen

Dr. Ong Keng Sen is Artistic Director of T:>Works and artspace 72-13 in Singapore. Apart from creating renown productions, Ong founded Arts Network Asia, a micro-grant peer organisation, and the international Curators Academy focused on synergy between contexts and curation. His seminal work was nomadic artist residency, The Flying Circus Project, traveling international artists through Asia, sharing their contexts amongst themselves and young people in local sites. Ong became Founding Festival Director of Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA), directing four editions. He was awarded the prestigious Fukuoka Asian Arts and Culture Prize for his creations in Asian contemporary performance. A Fulbright scholar, he was bestowed a honorary doctorate by University of Arts London. He was guest professor at Institute of Applied Theatre Giessen University and Freie University Berlin. He earned his Ph.D. in Performance Studies from Tisch School Of Arts, New York University in 2019.

### 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 and vision are 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 histories, contemporary experiences, and situated art practices in the global south. T:>Works also serves to investigate the current urgencies of being located in Singapore, and larger Asia, through different creative expressions in the public sphere. It is a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Company Grant from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2025. T:>Works is an Institute of Public Character with charity status.