

Biographies of Artists

The Necessary Stage

Formed in 1987 by our current Artistic Director Alvin Tan, The Necessary Stage (TNS) is a non-profit theatre company with charity status. Our mission is to create challenging, indigenous and innovative theatre that touches the heart and mind. TNS is a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant FY2012/2013, and is also the organiser and curator of the annual M1 Singapore Fringe Festival.

For its Main Season, TNS produces an average of two plays a year at our black box and other venues. The plays are original, mostly devised pieces created in a collaborative process that is based on research, improvisation before scripting, and input from all members of the production. We are also committed to international exchange and networking between Singapore and other countries, though staging the company's plays abroad, inviting foreign works to be presented by the company in Singapore, through dialogues, workshops and training opportunities as well as creative collaborations leading to interdisciplinary productions. Our Theatre for Youth and Community branch actively engages young people, senior citizens and different communities in Singapore through workshops and process-based drama programmes that focus on personal development.

Theatre for Seniors

In April 2008, The Necessary Stage launched Theatre for Seniors (TFS) with support from partners including the National Arts Council, Council for 3rd Age and Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple. Senior citizens were trained by professional theatre practitioners in essential skills and knowledge in theatre-making including acting, playwriting and directing, as well as administration and technical work. The ground-breaking programme provides seniors an avenue to impart their personal stories, and adds new spectrums of looking at their life-history and cultural identity.

TFS has since performed for various events like PASSION Arts Month 2013, and at community venues such as the libraries, community centres and the Thye Hwa Kwan moral homes. Regular public showcases by the programme's graduates, also known as the *Encore* series, were also organised, with the latest installation being *Encore IV: Love Life* (2013).

8 seniors were also trained to conduct a 5-Session Basic Acting Workshop, which was subsequently delivered to more than 150 fellow senior citizens in collaboration with North East Community Development Council.

TFS continues to actively engage our growing population of seniors via drama. More so than ever, we look to provide opportunities for seniors to showcase their talents within and outside their communities.

Padma Krishnan

Actor

Padma fell in love with drama since she watched her first play in 1967, *Merchant of Venice*, at the Victoria Theatre. Her dream of performing on stage was fulfilled after retirement through the Theatre for Seniors programme. She has not looked back since, and has been actively involved in theatre with The Necessary Stage, where she completed a 3-year drama workshop, plus a Trainer's workshop to train other seniors in Basic Acting. Additionally, she has performed for all four *Encore* productions.

Padma acted in TNS' main season production *October* in 2012 and performed in *Old Flames* and *Match* for My Queenstown Festival in 2013. She was also part of a comedic skit, *Oh Singapore!*, by the Peranakan Siblings. Padma has also performed for campaigns promoting active aging, organised by the Health Promotion Board and the National Library Board. Padma was also a participant in Spell #7's *Open House*, *O Marina*, LASALLE College of the Arts' student production *Memorabilia* and raised funds for budding artists through T-shirt modelling.

For film, Padma acted in a number of short films for the Polytechnics and Chapman University. For local television, she was in *Incredible Tales* and the docu-drama *Letters to Heaven*. Padma is also an active member of The Necessary Stage's Theatre for Seniors Interest Group and has been involved with community outreach tours to homes and senior centres, putting up skits on current issues.

Thomas Lim Siang Seng

Actor

Thomas Lim's retirement took a drastic change after completing the Theatre for Seniors' three-year programme. He performed in *Bus Driver Bring Me To Die (Going Local 2)*, Buds Theatre Company). He was also a Playback Theatre actor in *Encounters On A Crowded Island*. In 2013, he also participated in The Necessary Stage's Theatre for Seniors' *Encore* performances, most recently in *Encore IV: Love Life*. Television credits include Channel News Asia's *The Vox*, Okto's *Dream School*, Channel 5's *Point Of Entry* and also *Incredible Tales*. He also appeared in commercials for ESPN Sports, the Health Promotion Board and short films for Tisch School of the Arts. Thomas also acted in the local movie, *Home Coming*. Other recent works include *Oh Marina 2013!* (Spell#7) and *And Then There Was One* (NUS Arts Festival).

To realize his childhood dreams, Thomas also attended Teochew opera lessons and had since performed at public events and Community Clubs. Thomas's most meaningful and rewarding role is acting as a Simulated/Standardized Patient for medical students at Medical Schools and Hospitals.

Paula Ng

Actor

A music instructor, Paula is an expressive individual. After the three-year programme conducted by The Necessary Stage, she learnt the ropes of stage management, voice

projection, blocking, lighting and other aspects pertaining to performance. She also participated in short-term workshops with the Theatre for Seniors. Through these activities, she was inspired, motivated and most importantly, enjoyed herself. "Just have fun" she said. The training also helped Paula to be more understanding towards other individuals, seniors and even her peers. She believes in not only thinking positively, but also in being active and cheerful.

Paula also participated in the Theatre for Seniors annual performance, *Encore II: Heartland! Heartland!*, *Encore III: Family Knots* and *Encore IV: Love Life*. Under the Theatre for Seniors Interest Group, she also performed short sketches at the public libraries and assisted at orientation workshops in drama for seniors in various community venues. She also participates in art events organized by the community clubs.

Irene Ong

Actor

Irene Ong is a Peranakan dramatist and restaurateur. Approaching her 60th birthday last March, she questioned her accomplishments from her past 30 years- Were there unfulfilled dreams and ambitions?

Acting came to mind. Following her debut in 2002 in a Peranakan play by Gunong Sayang Association, she realized, "this is it". She made one dream come true, despite having few lines. She performed with them until 2009. For television, Irene was notably in *Ways of The Matriach* (2003-2008), amongst others.

Irene joined The Necessary Stage's Theatre for Seniors in 2011, performing in *Encore III* (2011), *Encore IV* (2013) *October* (2012) . She also performs with the Theatre for Seniors Interest Group.

Irene never looked back: These days, she enjoys the rehearsals, music, dancing, and working with theatre professionals and like-minded friends. She is enjoying her last lap in life so that on her last days, she will be able to smile and say, "Indeed, I loved Life."

Eleanor Song

Actor

Eleanor joined The Necessary Stage's Theatre for Seniors programme in 2008 and acted in the group's performances, *Encore II*, *Encore III* and *Encore IV*. In 2012, she performed in *October*, The Necessary Stage's main season production, as part of the Kuo Pao Kun Festival. She is also actively involved in the Theatre for Seniors' Community Outreach Programmes, touring several drama skits to Senior Activity Centres, Community Centres, and libraries throughout Singapore. In September 2013, Eleanor acted in TNS Theatre for Senior's *Old Flames*, as part of My Queenstown Festival.

In January 2013, she participated in *Oh Marina!* by Spell#7, as part of the Oh! Open House Marina Bay, and in the *Oh Marina!* flash mob at the DBS Social Hub. In May



2013, she performed in Spell#7's *Family Duet*, at the Esplanade Theatre Studios and in October, in *Oh Singapore, a comedy by the Peranakan Siblings*. Eleanor's other experiences include acting in corporate skits in shopping centres, modelling to raise funds for budding artists, and providing voice over for audio walks.