



PRESS RELEASE

FIRST ASIA PACIFIC FESTIVAL OF ARTISTES WITH DISABILITIES CELEBRATES THE MOST EXCEPTIONAL TALENTS

11 JANUARY 2018, SINGAPORE—History is in the making. From 22-25 March 2018, Singapore will play host to **True Colours Festival** – the **Asia Pacific Celebration of Artistes with Disabilities**. Some 20 exceptionally talented artistes/troupes will converge in Singapore for what will be the first and largest gathering of artistes with disabilities to perform in an event in the Asia Pacific region.

True Colours is presented by **The Nippon Foundation (TNF)** and **UNESCO**, two international organisations which champion the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs). It is produced by **Very Special Arts Singapore (VSA)** and supported by many partners including Platinum Partner **DBS**, Venue Partner **Singapore Sports Hub** and the **Asia-Pacific Development Centre on Disability (APCD)**.

The festival comprises a ticketed multimedia indoor concert experience at the Singapore Indoor Stadium, a free admission outdoor festival village just a short walk away, and an international conference on arts and disability.

Multimedia indoor concert experience

This concert, which will be performed on three evenings, will present musicians, singers and dancers from the Asia Pacific, along with guest artistes from Canada, the UK, the US and Chile. They will perform to a total estimated audience of more than 12,000 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Specially commissioned for True Colours performances are new works by contemporary inclusive dance troupe, DAZZLE from Japan; wheelchair dancer Rodney Bell from New Zealand, a collaborative theatre production by Singapore's Very Special Theatrics and Australia's No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability. Japanese contemporary dancers Kazuyo Morita & Natsumi Sadayuki will also perform a special festival commission on the outdoor Festival Village stage while No Strings Attached will perform the World Premiere of its new work, *I Forgot to Remember to Forget*.

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Among the other highlights are Canadian virtuoso violinist Adrian Anantawan; crooner Tony Dee from Australia, star of the 2016 Rio Paralympics trailer *We're the Superhumans*; multinational crew ILL-Abilities, considered one of the world's most talented street dance crews; Drake Music Scotland's Digital Orchestra; and Alienette Coldfire from the Philippines, second runner-up in *France's Got Talent 2016* and Ma Li and Zhai Xiao Wei, the first pair of dancers with disabilities ever to enter China's CCTV national dance competition. It was in 2007 and they won the silver medal and the audience popular vote.

True Colours Festival Village

This free admission outdoor festival runs from 23-25 March 2018 and comprises a wide range of activities to appeal to many tastes and ages. Besides interactive experiences that allow visitors to experience and learn about various kinds of disability, the village will also offer up screenings of short films about disability, theatre performances, Paralympic Sports tryouts, an exhibition and sale of art, merchandise, food and drink.

Arts and Disability International Conference 2018

The Arts and Disability International Conference 2018, jointly organised by the National Arts Council (NAC) and Very Special Arts (VSA) Singapore, takes place on 22 and 23 March at Marina Bay Sands & Enabling Village. The Conference aims to provide insights on innovative ways to increase arts accessibility and facilitate sharing of best practices. Featuring a stellar line-up of international and local guest speakers and arts groups from Australia, Cambodia, Canada, Japan, Singapore and UK, they will address and interact with some 400 conference participants from overseas and Singapore, comprising social service professionals, disabled and able-bodied artists and policy makers. (Visit URL adic2018.sg for more information).

Says Mr Ichiro Kabasawa, Executive Director of TNF: "Our foundation has been supporting people with disabilities in Japan and around the world for more than 50 years. As the global population increases, including those ageing, we will all need to work harder to eliminate barriers and ensure accessibility, so that everyone is respected and able to play an active role."

As part of a long-term strategic undertaking, TNF presented the first three festivals of artistes with disabilities in Laos and Vietnam in 2006 and Cambodia in 2008. This was followed by an ASEAN edition held in Myanmar in 2014, featuring artistes from 10 countries who performed to a crowd of nearly 7,000. The momentum generated at True Colours this March will pave the way for a global festival event timed to coincide with the Tokyo Paralympics 2020.

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Adds UNESCO's Dr Indrajit Banerjee, Director of the Knowledge Societies Division in the communication and information sector: "Government policies, legislation and development planning help create more inclusiveness and opportunity but the arts have a power all their own. Performing arts celebrations such as **True Colours Festival** play an important role in effecting change in the social and cultural spheres of society too."

Mr Sim S. Lim, Group Executive and Country Head, DBS Singapore said that being part of the **True Colours Festival** is part of the Bank's vision to shape a better future for Asia with a focus on building a more inclusive society. "We believe that the **True Colours Festival** celebrates the strength of the human spirit. Through the medium of performing arts, DBS can help draw people across the region closer together as one community, bound by an appreciation of the resilience and depth of strength that lies within each of us. By supporting these exceptionally talented artistes, we are enabling the community to live their dreams and also nurture the next generation's mindset when interacting with persons with disabilities among us," Mr Lim said.

The **True Colours Festival** will also present other 'firsts', such as:

- A more inclusive seating plan. Ground level seats at the indoor concert will be configured to allow wheelchair users to be seated with or as close to their friends and loved ones as possible.
- A ticket sales campaign called *MyTreat* in which individuals and companies can purchase concert tickets via the True Colours website. These *MyTreat* tickets will go into a pool which will be distributed (via disability organisations) to persons with disabilities who cannot afford a ticket.
- A festival website that is screen reader-friendly to people with visual impairment, accessible to those with extreme mobility impairment, to the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing via closed captions and/or English subtitles for video content, and to the elderly and others with moderate visual impairment via customisable font sizes and colour contrast for easy reading of website information.

"VSA is exceedingly proud to be hosting and producing this historic event. The magnitude and scope of this Festival is unprecedented in the Asia Pacific and its successful outcome will help begin a new narrative about ability before disability in Singapore and the Asia Pacific," said Andrew Liew, Chairman of VSA.

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Note to editor

The Nippon Foundation was established in 1962 as a non-profit philanthropic organization, active in Japan and around the world. Initially our efforts focused largely on the maritime and shipping fields, but since then, the range of our activities has expanded to education, social welfare, public health, and other fields—carried out in more than 100 countries to date. Together with our more than 20 partner organizations in Japan and worldwide, we are funding and assisting community-led efforts aimed at realizing a more peaceful and prosperous global society. To know more about The Nippon Foundation, click: <http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/en/>

UNESCO's vision is the creation of knowledge societies that are inclusive, pluralistic, equitable, open and participatory for all citizens. Within the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO recognizes the need to, among others, prepare national policies and to strongly encourage local governments to introduce specific legislation to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities; develop national standards for public good in terms of products and services such as accessibility guidelines, recommendations, curricula and other mechanisms to ensure that these standards are maintained; adapt and personalize ICTs to the nature of specific disabilities; and enhance social and economic integration through improved access to information and knowledge.

To promote a better understanding of issues related to disability and mobilize support for the recognition of the dignity, rights and wellbeing of persons with disabilities, and of the benefits of their integration in society, UNESCO has undertaken an action plan centered around thematic priorities such as research and evidence-based data collection; development of policies and strategies on inclusion of persons with disabilities; and development of appropriate tools for inclusion. To know more about UNESCO, click: <http://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>

DBS is a leading financial services group in Asia, with over 280 branches across 18 markets. Headquartered and listed in Singapore, DBS has a growing presence in the three key Asian axes of growth: Greater China, Southeast Asia and South Asia. The bank's "AA-" and "Aa1" credit ratings, is among the highest in the world.

DBS is at the forefront of leveraging digital technology to shape the future of banking, and has been named "[World's Best Digital Bank](#)" by Euromoney. The bank has also been recognised for its leadership in the region, having been named "Asia's Best Bank" by several publications including The Banker, Global Finance, IFR Asia and Euromoney since 2012. In addition, the bank has been named "[Safest Bank in Asia](#)" by Global Finance for nine consecutive years from 2009 to 2017.

DBS provides a full range of services in consumer, SME and corporate banking. As a bank born and bred in Asia, DBS understands the intricacies of doing business in the region's most dynamic markets. DBS is committed to building lasting relationships with customers, and positively impacting communities through supporting social enterprises, as it banks the Asian way. It has also established a SGD 50 million foundation to strengthen its corporate social responsibility efforts in Singapore and across Asia.

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With its extensive network of operations in Asia and emphasis on engaging and empowering its staff, DBS presents exciting career opportunities. The bank acknowledges the passion, commitment and can-do spirit in all of our 23,000 staff, representing over 40 nationalities. For more information, please visit www.dbs.com.

The Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) is a regional center on disability and development. APCD was established in Bangkok, Thailand as a legacy of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). APCD is identified as the regional center on disability for the Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real, 2013-2022. To know more about APCD, click: www.apcdfoundation.org

Very Special Arts Singapore (VSA) is a local charity organisation dedicated to providing access and opportunities to the arts for people with special needs in our community. It is one of the first organisations to recognise the therapeutic value of the arts to persons with disabilities, and to harness the power of the arts to educate, communicate and entertain.

Established in Singapore in 1993 by Singapore's roving ambassador, Professor Tommy Koh, VSA offers a variety of visual and performing arts programmes to train, nurture and develop the talents of persons with disabilities. Recently, VSA augmented its programmes with the introduction of literary arts offering creative writing and poetry.

Tireless in its mission to bring arts to persons with disabilities, VSA is launching Very Special Theatrics, an inclusive theatre company comprising adults with special needs and seasoned theatre professionals. VSA is helping persons with disabilities to integrate into our society, derive commercial benefit from their talents, and to have careers in the arts. To learn more about VSA, click: <http://www.vsa.org.sg/about/>

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