



For immediate release

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Asia-Pacific's first TRUE COLOURS Festival for Artistes with Disabilities to take place in Singapore

Get ready to be inspired as the TRUE COLOURS Festival for Artistes with Disabilities takes centre stage in Singapore. The 4-day festival – from 22-25 March 2018 – will feature a line-up of highly talented local and international artistes with disabilities: singers, dancers, musicians, theatre practitioners and more. They were either born with or developed disabilities at some point in their lives.

These talented artistes are gathering in Singapore to perform in a unique indoor concert that will showcase their talent and creativity, while inspiring audiences and proving what the human spirit can achieve when it pushes against perceived limitations.

The TRUE COLOURS Festival presenters, The Nippon Foundation and UNESCO, along with Festival producer Very Special Arts Singapore, partner Asia-Pacific Development Centre on Disability and venue partner Singapore Sports Hub, are spearheading this drive to change negative mindsets about disability. They are looking to shatter misconceptions and negative stereotypes of persons with disabilities. At this festival, the focus will be talent, ability and the power to inspire.

Australian singer **Tony Dee**, the face and voice fronting the highly successful “We’re the Superhumans” video campaign promoting the Rio 2016 Paralympics, is among the first international artistes to confirm his participation at the Festival. The stirring 3-minute video, sang to the infectious toe-tapping cover “Yes I can”, has been viewed by millions around the world.

Besides being the lead singer in the video, Dee is a successful professional entertainer at home in Australia, loved for his warm voice and Sinatra-inspired singing style.

Multi-talented Singaporean **Danial Bawthan**, an a capella beat-boxer, beat and hip hop music producer, wheelchair rugby player and former WCMX (a wheelchair sport likened to a cross between skateboarding and dirt biking) rider is another artiste scheduled to perform at the concert. The 23-year-old is currently putting together his first original EP album.

Other Singaporean artistes in the work-in-progress line-up include hearing-impaired virtuoso pianist **Dr Azariah Tan** and deaf dance troupe, **Redeafination**. Cambodian inclusive arts organisation **Epic Arts**, Malaysia’s award winning **Caliph Buskers**, a Malaysian band comprising visually impaired musicians, and **Digital Orchestra**, Scotland’s first orchestra of musicians with disabilities who perform exclusively on electronic instruments, and **Jumping Jellybeans**, a Malaysia theatre company awarded for its work with children with special needs and learning disabilities since 2001, are also on the list of performers invited to be part of this first-ever festival.

TRUE COLOURS is aiming to confirm a line-up of more than 20 acts mainly from Asia-Pacific countries, with up to 3 guest artistes from non-Asia-Pacific countries by the middle of 2017. The concert, which will be directed by

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Artistic Director Hossan Leong and Music Director Sydney Tan, will be staged at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.



Said Mr Shuichi Ohno, former Executive Director of The Nippon Foundation and current President of the Board of Trustees for the Sasakawa Peace Foundation: “The Foundation has for many years been engaged in initiatives to support people with disabilities, within Japan and overseas. In many parts of the world, people are unable to live life to their fullest potential because of disabilities, poverty, diseases or the circumstances of their birth.

“We strive to eliminate social, attitudinal and environmental barriers so that everyone is respected and able to play an active role. The TRUE COLOURS Festival is a continuation of this legacy to build a more inclusive global society. The momentum generated by the Singapore festival is important in helping to set the stage for a global event that showcases a person’s ability, determination and courage, and timed to coincide with the Tokyo Paralympics 2020.”

Dr Indrajit Banerjee, Director of the Knowledge Societies Division of UNESCO in the communication and information sector, believes that an initiative like the TRUE COLOURS Festival can play a significant role in changing mindsets by creating newfound awareness about persons with disabilities and witnessing the courage to believe that nothing is impossible.

“The challenge today is to mainstream a disability perspective in all actions, including legislation, policies and programmes in all areas and at all levels of development planning. This should encompass social and cultural aspects like accessibility to the arts, which we believe can play a pivotal role in shifting human behavior,” said Dr Banerjee.

“In that sense, artistes can play an important role to effect change behavior and attitudes. Those with disabilities will be inspired by the Festival’s artistes to push beyond perceived notions of their limitations and feel good about themselves, and those without disabilities get to know persons with disabilities better, while at the same time, experiencing the inspiring achievements of these artistes.”

Added Mr Akiie Ninomiya, Executive Director, APCD: “Music is empowerment of persons with disabilities. Music is the voice of persons with disabilities. We hope this Festival will help to make these voices louder so that they can be heard. No one in a community should be excluded from development for any reason.

“The end result of this is the creation of a society that is inclusive. We believe this can happen – but only if we all take conscious steps to ensure development schemes and programmes are inclusive right from the start.”

Besides the indoor concert, the TRUE COLOURS Festival will feature outdoor performances and interactive activities at OCBC Square at the Singapore Sports Hub, within walking distance of the concert venue. The outdoor activities are free for the public while prices for tickets for the indoor concert experience will be kept as affordable as possible.

Mr Manu Sawhney, Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Sports Hub said: “We are glad to be part of the TRUE COLOURS Festival as the Venue Partner. The Singapore Sports Hub places a high priority on supporting such events that bring our community and Singaporeans from all walks of life closer together, and we hope that these talented artistes will inspire all of us to build a more inclusive society.”

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The organisers aim to offer audience members enough reasons to not just attend the concert, but to enjoy performances outdoors, learn more about different disabilities in Singapore, take part in some experiential activities and come away with a newfound respect and awareness of persons with disabilities.

The TRUE COLOURS festival also includes a 1-day professional conference on arts and disabilities. The conference will bring together international experts from around the world to share and exchange best practices, new approaches, studies and new technologies in the field. Producer VSA is looking to attract professionals from around the region to attend as delegates.

“We are exceptionally proud that Singapore has been chosen as the host venue for Asia Pacific’s first TRUE COLOURS Festival, and for VSA to be appointed the producer of what is a major event of its kind in the region,” said Andrew Liew, Chairman of VSA.

“For VSA, this is a ringing endorsement and recognition of the good work that we have been quietly doing for the last 24 years to provide access and opportunities to the arts for people with disabilities. We plan to leverage on the heightened awareness generated by the Festival to play a greater leadership role, and to raise the standards and quality of instructors and curriculum for all forms of arts to benefit and empower the larger community.”

To date, the TRUE COLOURS Festival has won the support of the Singapore Sports Hub, National Arts Council and the British Council. VSA is keen to engage more organisations from the public and private sectors, as well as individuals to come on board as partners to make the festival even stronger.

The Festival is also seeking volunteers from all walks of life to come forward and play a part in the successful organisation of the event. Interested volunteers will undergo a selection interview, and those selected will be provided with training.

Those who are interested to partner, volunteer or who want be kept updated on news related to the Festival can visit the TRUE COLOURS website: www.truecolours.sg

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.

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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>



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

Singapore Sports Hub is Singapore's premier sports, entertainment and lifestyle destination, with integrated community programming. Consisting of a unique cluster of world-class sporting and leisure facilities within the city, it is located on a 35-hectare site in Kallang.

The Sports Hub campus includes a 55,000-capacity National Stadium, the iconic Singapore Indoor Stadium, a 6,000-capacity OCBC Aquatic Centre, a 3,000-capacity OCBC Arena with multiple halls, a Water Sports Centre and the Kallang Wave Mall, including an indoor climbing wall and Splash-N-Surf facility as well as the Singapore Sports Museum, Sports Hub Library and Shimano Cycling World. There are also community facilities and activities including beach volleyball courts, hard courts (for futsal, basketball and netball), lawn bowls, giant chess, a skate park and running & cycling paths.

The Singapore Sports Hub, managed by SportsHub Pte Ltd, is one of the largest sporting Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects in the world and also Singapore's largest flagship PPP project of this nature. To know more about Singapore Sports Hub, click: www.sportshub.com.sg.

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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