

artjam

issue 51



NTU Cultural Activities Club



EDITOR'S NOTE

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WHAT'S GOOD FRIENDS!

My name is Nat and welcome once again to ARTJAM where we collect all the cool things that go down on our metaphorical island of NTU and the actual island of Singapore.

These are exciting times for our lil' publication: not only do we have a new family and a new journey to walk, but we celebrated our golden jubilee last issue and are now in our 51st edition. ARTJAM has come a long way since issue #1, so the question is: where do we go from here?

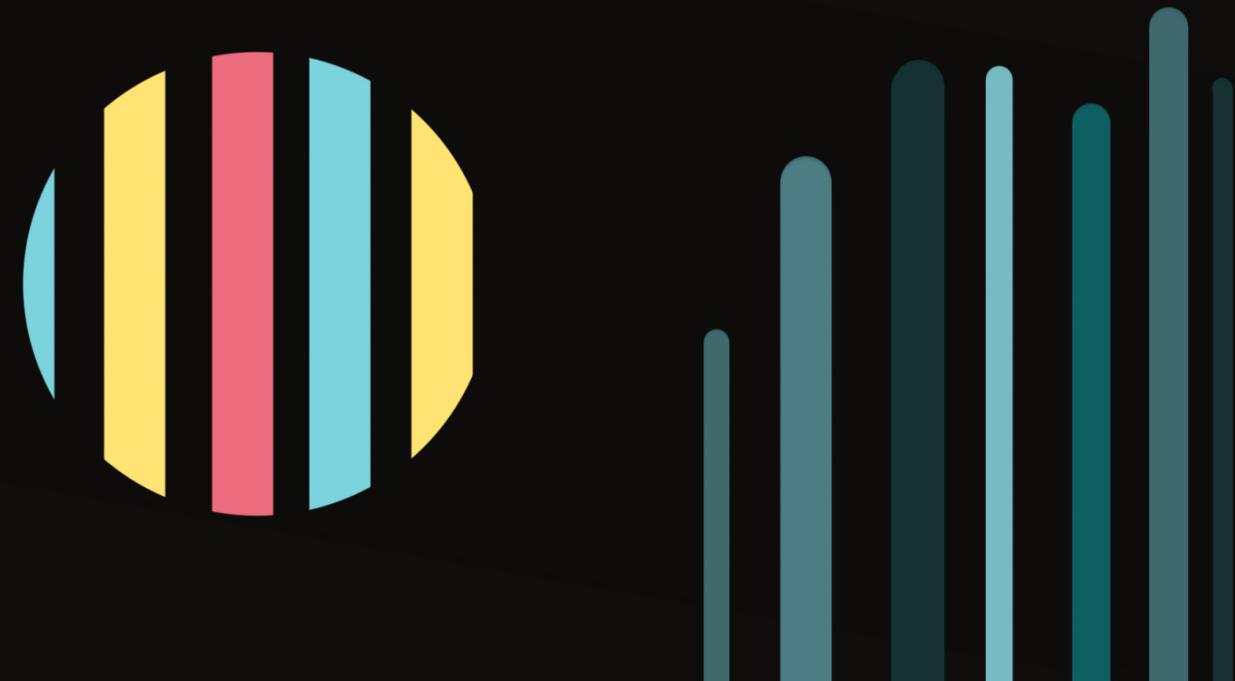
The answer to that is anyone's guess, but our team has taken it upon ourselves to try and push the envelope a little bit while we can.

For starters, we've tried to make more of a splash in the digital end of the pool by diving deeper into the recently-revamped artjamonline.com, where we're working on letting you in on everything that happens, as it happens. The downside of this is that only the early birds will get to catch the hardcopy worm, but hey! on the bright side this magazine is now a rare commodity AND we're doing our part to save the Earth too.

Another thing we've introduced as a pet project of ours is **artJAMS**, a fresh new column where we talk about fresh new music. The inaugural artJAMS has been printed within these pages, but stay tuned to our website (again) because we'll try to make this a monthly thing where we recommend you fire albums worth listening to.

There are so many other things I wish I could say here but I'm taking too long so I'll leave it to you to peruse at your own leisure. I sincerely hope you enjoy what the fam has made for you, and don't ever hesitate to get in touch if you want to be a part of this too!

NATHANAEL





A Bash To Remember

Written by **JILL TAN JING WEN**, **VELIA NG KYE LEA** and **THADDEUS JAYDEN LOW** (Ed.)
 Design **LIAW ZI YANG**
 Photography **IVAN LAM**

Razzmatazz. A night of glamour and a night of fun.

To commemorate the end of Cultural Activities Club's (CAC) Transition and Orientation Programme, orientation group members were brought together once again to reminisce about their fond memories of the camp, and to make even better ones. From loud cheers in the audience, to the crazy dancing along to the music, Yang Club had a first-class seat in witnessing our fellow CAC members raise the roof, enjoying a night of partying.

Needless to say, the main event of the night was the performances by the pageantees. Characterised by their individualistic personalities and unmistakable chemistry, each couple showcased their talents and left the audience captivated for the night. Couple 1 (M1 Tian Bao and F1 Phyoee) shined with their pink coordinated outfits and spectacular dance performances. On the other hand, Couple 2 (M2 Derek and F2 Rayne) did a comedic catwalk in which they performed the piece 'Anything You Can Do' from the musical 'Annie Get Your Gun'. They pretended to be better than the other at first, and it was only at the end of the performance where it became clear that they were meant for each other. Their performance was a unique twist away from the normal pageant performance, leaving the audience both captivated and impressed.

Couple 3 (M3 Ernest and F3 Lin Hui) impressed the audience with a sweet love story, wowing the audience with their mesmerising voices as they serenaded each other with love songs played on the guitar. Last but not least, Couple 4 (M4 Yu Fong and F4 Evelyn) wooed the audience with a lovely display of courtship and expertly choreographed dances which even involved one of the judges.



Apart from their couple acts, the pageantees also performed a mass dance together; a compilation of viral dance moves over the years, further livening up the mood and allowing the rest of CAC to groove along to their performance. In addition, couples were tested on their chemistry through a series of games and questions. Couple 1 and Couple 2 played a game of 'Would You Rather' where they were both given two choices and they both had to pick the same one in order to gain a point. It was fun to watch the pageants justify their chemistry (or lack thereof), as they answered the questions with witty answers which garnered raucous laughter from the audience. While Couple 1 won the game of chemistry, Couple 2 won the 'Pocky Challenge' where their Pocky stick was barely visible! Couple 3 and 4 played a game of 'Guess The Action', by using only sounds they could make as clues. It was certainly amusing watching the pageantees come up with innovative ways to interpret phrases such as 'Sitting on a Rollercoaster', and 'Angry Kitten'. While Couple 3 won by a huge margin for this game, Couple 4 nailed the 'Pocky Challenge', making the overall contest a draw for all.

With such amazing performances and genuine chemistry between the couples, the panel of judges had their work cut out for them in deciding the winners of the night. Mr Talented went to M4 Yu Fong and Miss Talented went to F3 Lin Hui. Couple 1 took home the title of best couple, while Mr Popular went to M2 Derek. Miss Popular was presented to F1 Phyoee. CAC's Prince and Princess were M1 Tian Bao and F4 Evelyn and finally, the title of King and Queen was brought home by M3 Ernest and F2 Rayne.

However, the night was not entirely about the pageants, as the emcees arranged a series of mini games to keep the audience engaged as well. It included a charade segment where teams



had to act out a scene, while the others provide witty guesses along with a variation of 'Simon Says' called 'BK Says' where participants were instructed to do nearly impossible tasks while they compete to be the last man standing. These light hearted games served as an entertaining break from the programme.

However, the end of the pageant only signalled the beginning of the night, as seniors and juniors alike began to fill their cups and return to Yang for an after-party. With music ricocheting off the walls and bodies moving as one, an overwhelming sense of fluidity took over the space, an experience that the party goers would remember for time to come. *Razzmatazz* was definitely a perfect closure to the end of a wonderful camp where diverse groups of individuals found their families and formed their own little communities. With such a high bar set in 2019, the next batch will have a challenging year ahead if they want to impress. But as we all know, CAC is never one to disappoint.



Aleithia

Cynosure Ball 2019

Written by **TAN XIN TONG** and **THADDEUS JAYDEN LOW** (Ed.)
 Design **LIAW ZI YANG**
 Photography **LOW ZHENG YU, EMIL NG** and **JONATHON LEE**



The Cynosure Ball 2019 was held on the 18th of August at the Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel. Organized by CAC's Social Committee, the Cynosure Ball is an annual awards ceremony dinner where we celebrate the efforts of CAC's various Member Clubs, Special Projects and Support Committees throughout the past academic year. Awards for Longest Service, Best Rookie and Best Committee, among others, were given out to recognise members for their dedication in promoting culture and the arts in the university. Even alumni members showed up to support their peers in Cynosure's main event – the Cynosure pageant, which featured a dozen of CAC's most charismatic members as participants. It really was a night to remember, as attendees enjoyed an array of sumptuous dishes, while cheering on their peers.

This year's Cynosure theme, *Aleithia* had us all feeling *curiouser and curiouser*. But we must really take our hats off to the Social Committee, for incorporating not one, but two hidden

messages in their chosen theme. *Aleithia* is not only Greek for "truth", highlighting the element of mystery that resonated throughout the night's activities, it is also the original form of the name, *Alice*.

That's right! The theme for this year's Cynosure Ball was *Alice in Wonderland*. Even before the doors were open to the attendees, the pre-event reception was already bustling with activity. Over the chatter, many committees could be seen taking pictures together at the beautifully-decorated photo booth, complete with quirky props, in their *Alice in Wonderland*-themed costumes.

As said by the Cheshire Cat himself, "People might think you're crazy for what you wear... but it doesn't matter!" Well, Cheshire would be proud of the several attendees who embraced the whimsicality of the theme with open arms. While many played it safe by dressing up as playing-card guards in monochrome



black-and-white, Ng Yong Sheng from the Nanyang Arts Festival committee took this inspiration to the next level. Embracing the theme to its fullest, he donned a home-crafted armour resembling a playing card, complete with a Spades headpiece and spear. Along with Serene Han, who resembled a real-life Alice in a demure dress and headband, the two were crowned as the best-dressed attendees of the night.

Of course, one cannot discuss Cynosure without highlighting its main event—the Cynosure pageant. *Aleithia* marks the first collaboration between Cynosure and the NTU designer showcase, which was an opportunity to support local artists. This year's pageantees doubled as models for products from the NTU designer showcase. Having dedicated their summer holidays to countless catwalk practices and rehearsals, the pageantees stepped out in their sparkly gowns and sleek tuxedos to promote a wide-range of hand-made designer products, from hand-crafted jewelry to leather goods. Videos featuring the pageantees dressed up as various iconic Wonderland characters were played to introduce the designer products to the audience.

Aleithia did not neglect to include the audience involved, solving a mystery related to the theme of the night. Each table was given a puzzle, with clues in the form of a poem. Using the clues from the poem, attendees crossed out grids on a puzzle map of Wonderland, to reveal the correct path to finding the designer products featured. It was a lot of fun to watch the attendees work together to decipher the puzzle — an activity which doubled as a great ice-breaker for attendees who may not have been familiar with those seated together at their table.

For the talent segment, this year's Cynosure had the contestants performing in three teams of four. Incorporating storylines and iconic scenes from the Taiwanese movie *Our Times*, Team A opened the show with a performance that tugged at the heartstrings of all in attendance. The contestants dressed up in old school uniforms, and their skit told a story of a 'love-quadrilateral', reminiscent of the characters from the movie. Bringing up nostalgic memories of one's first foray into love, the team finally concluded with an encouraging message for all the singles out there to wait patiently for their right Miss or Mr Right, ending their performance to the audience's rapturous applause.

On the other hand, Team B had humour on their minds, with F3 Cheyenne Chui and F4 Gina Peh stepping out as bridezillas

at a jeweller's, arguing with their fiancés over the size of the diamonds on their fingers. Launching into a spectacular dance routine, the members of Team B dramatized a petty confrontation between the two divas, Broadway-musical-style. M3, Ho Shao Wei Shawn, was the only contestant of the night to show off his vocal prowess, serenading his partner (and the audience) with a sweet love song.

Expectations were high for the last act of the night, but Team C did not disappoint. With their unique *siambu*-themed performance, the team brought the atmosphere to an all-time high. We really have to applaud the male contestants for being so committed to their roles, cross-dressing in colourful wigs and donning skirts. Challenging gender stereotypes with their performance, the boys definitely looked like they were having fun dressing up. The girls were also not to be upstaged, with both female contestants showcasing expert dance techniques in their elaborate routines.

M6, Michael Hsu, who represented CAC's Soul Funky Pop&Lock in the talent show, shared a few thoughts about his summer-long Cynosure journey:

"I initially opted to participate in the Cynosure pageant because I was hoping to meet new people and become more confident. It was tough in the beginning as I did not know how to model the products properly during the catwalk. But with the help of my teammates and the Social committee members, I grew more comfortable expressing myself on stage and Cynosure turned out to be a positive learning experience. I'm really thankful to my team, for making this experience so enjoyable for me."

It was an intense competition, but Team C's enthusiasm definitely paid off, as M5 Koh Eng Kang and F5 Dion Sng, managed to clinch the award for best couple with their amazing chemistry. Eng Kang was also crowned Cynosure King, alongside Cynosure Queen, F2 Wong Yun Xuan from the Nanyang Arts Festival committee, who stood out with her saccharine sweet image.

As per tradition, the Social Committee ended the night with everyone gathered together for a commemorative group photo. *Aleithia* 2019 was definitely a night to remember, as we all glowed with pride for our peers in the pageant, and thoroughly enjoyed the night with the friends we met while in CAC. Kudos to the Social Committee for making *Aleithia* such a success, and we look forward to next year's Cynosure Ball.





Written by **NATHANAEL CLIVE, SOON YING** and **THADDEUS JAYDEN LOW** (Ed.)
 Design **LEE WAN LIN**
 Photography **ONG YONG JIA**

Every one of us in NTU has probably heard of MJ Hip Hop before. As one of our pioneer dance clubs, MJ is at the forefront of the dance scene here, consistently drawing huge crowds whenever they make an appearance. On 24 and 25 August 2019, MJ showed once again why they continue to be so highly regarded at Dancetitude, their biennial production.

The 2019 iteration of Dancetitude, *Blue World*, was set during a brutal war in the fictional nation of Malkovia. As we progressed through the evening, each choreography added another little piece to the story, and it became evident that *Blue World* was not about war per se, but about the people caught up and struggling within it. The audience was introduced to five individuals, and we spent the evening tracing their trials and tribulations as people caught in the middle of a full blown war.

Young Kaleb and his sister Kiera provided much of *Blue World's* emotional impetus as we followed their harrowing journey on the run from the clutches of the encroaching Dorian Army. The sweet innocence that Leonard Low breathed into Kaleb was set against the compassion of Hazel Tan's struggling Kiera, lending gravitas to the difficult situations the pair found themselves in.

The commander of the Dorian Army, Hannes, strode in and out of the spotlight as he endeavoured to take over Malkovia. Nabeel Azhar's ruthless portrayal lent a menacing tint to Hannes' agenda before the cracks in his character started to show, and more was revealed than initially met the eye. In

fierce opposition was Jude, the leader of the Resistance. Fiery and forceful, the character was brought to life by Yeo Zhi Yi as the antithesis to the cold, unfeeling Hannes.

In the midst of these intertwined character arcs flitted Josie, a character with bouncy, upbeat energy as portrayed by Janice Goh. Kaleb's mysterious pal added another dimension to the story and stole the spotlight whenever she appeared.

We were introduced first of all to Kaleb. The first performance, "Forest Adventure", brimmed with imagination and whimsical spirits and fairies, giving us a first impression of a little boy and his ideas. Josie too, made an appearance here, setting up what would be a key pairing for the rest of the production as we see Kaleb having fun with his best friend. "Forest Adventure"'s idyllic scenes stood in stark contrast with the way we were introduced to Kiera. Her first appearance being in a cutscene, we saw her battered and bruised, frantically trying to escape from a Dorian attack.

In "The People", we saw for the first time the powerful Hannes, his brash personality commandeering the spotlight in a way that Kaleb and Josie would not. It would be awhile before we met his opposition, though. Melancholic but strong, "The People" was distinct from the cheery and high-energy opening, leading the audience to believe that the happiness was to be short-lived.

In "Fleeting Joy", we were pleasantly surprised with a contemporary dance. As the dancers poured their hearts in this piece, which was set to the strings (and thus much sadder) version of *Lost Boy*, the anguish of war could not have been better conveyed.

"Vices" gave us a unique glimpse into Jude's character whilst being undercover in a steamy nightclub, but it was in a later item "The Resistance" where we saw her in her true form — leading her forces against Hannes in a bloody confrontation.

A short break from the somber war, we were whisked away to paradise together with Kaleb and Josie in "Fiction", where we see how the friends reunite in joy. It was not long before they face another dire situation, however, as Kiera and Kaleb were separated from each other and thrown into "Camp XIII". As bleak as the future looked, the unity and energised shouts of the prisoners recharged us and gave us hope that not all was lost, just yet.

With the stage set and the main characters now familiar to us, the post-intermission portion of *Blue World* took a turn for the unexpected. Given a peek into Hannes' perspective for the first time, we see his loving relationship with his son and were made to reconsider what we know of the ruthless Hannes that we knew of. In "Paint For Me" especially, the impenetrable, unfeeling Hannes displayed a side of himself that had been hidden from the start. This softer, vulnerable side of Hannes added a different layer to what was probably the most complex character in the production; if anything, it was now harder to hate the man who had been introduced to us as a brutal, merciless killer.

"Hope" accurately depicted the calm before the storm as the prisoners fought for their lives, out of the camp, as the war came to an end. The happiness was not to be taken for granted,

however, as Kiera still failed to reunite with her brother. Believing that she had lost him to the war, the fate of Kaleb was always at the back of our minds despite the celebratory atmosphere of "New World".

The highlight of the second half was probably "Birthday", the penultimate item and emotional centrepiece of *Blue World*. With the stage split down the center, we see Kiera sharing a dance with a loose sweater representing Kaleb on one side, while pairs of dancers celebrated their reunion on the other side, showing us the what-could-have-beens for this pair of ill-fated siblings. The visions of Kiera grappling with the loss of Kaleb made this particular scene a piercing depiction of pain and grief, moving many in the audience to tears.

Fortunately, the sombreness of "Birthday" was not for long. The final performance provided a happy ending to Kaleb and Kiera's tumultuous adventure, ending on a markedly different note to an otherwise rather sombre story full of tragedy and loss.

Ultimately, Dancetitude 2019 was one of the most engrossing, exciting and well put together productions of the year thus far. It was sad that it wasn't longer, and it is sadder still that the next one wouldn't be for another two years, but until then I guess all we can really do is relive the adventures of *Blue World* via the recordings uploaded to Youtube. Till next time, then.

I COULDN'T BE MORE IN LOVE

THE 1975 LIVE IN SINGAPORE

UGH! The 1975's sold out show in Singapore left many anguished in the sweetest way possible. Here's a Brief Inquiry Into that magical Monday night on 16 September 2019 at the Star Theatre. Oh, beware of the song lyrics and references, I couldn't help it.

Do It Again

For the opening act, fans of The 1975 found it no surprise that No Rome kickstarted the show. Hailed as singer Matty Healy's "muse", the blue-haired Filipino musician set the tone of what was to come. The stage was hazy like a dream, painted like a lilac sky. We were 30 minutes into his performance and yet the actual performance had not begun. Nevertheless, the crowd's energy was already so high, it almost felt like that opening act itself was the entire show. The songs he played were *Do It Again*, *Saint Lauren*, *Cashmoney* and *Seventeen*.

go down, soft sound

There was a short intermission before The 1975 finally stepped on the stage, but we heard the familiar lyrics first, in the darkness. While the lyrics were simultaneously projected on the screen, us fans already knew the verses by heart.

Midnight Car Lights

The bright lights and lyrics flashed in white against the black stage and screen.

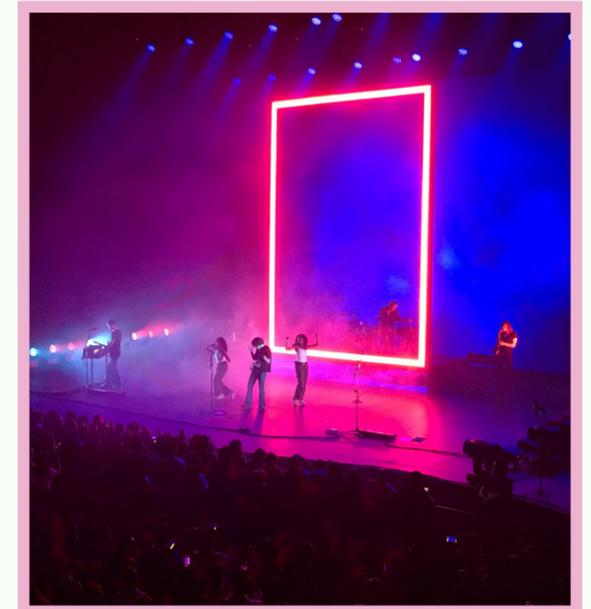
*Step into your skin?
I rather jump into your bones*

The crowd went wild.

Lights

If there's one thing to be said about The 1975's stage set-up, it was this: The stage was **minimal**, yet **memorable**. A fixed huge screen was anchored on set and it displayed multicoloured television static or occasionally, images of clouds or flowers which echoed the imagery of the songs played. The band's setlist featured their previous and upcoming sonically cohesive albums; and they brought their songs back to life by a simple switch in colour.

Midway through the performance, Matty spontaneously changed the setlist a bit, citing that this concert was the last show off their Asian tour. They inserted a crowd's favourite—*Paris*—and neon pink lights replaced the initial black and white aesthetic on stage. This is to represent the second album (my favourite): *I like it when you sleep, for you are so beautiful yet so unaware of it*. The songs from this album mirrored this similar aesthetic, such as the likes of *Somebody Else* and *Change of Heart*.



Climate Change

I found this absurd at first, but eventually deemed it to be fitting; in alignment with The 1975's rhetoric. In the theme of technology and modernity in this album, the clean white crisp flashes of white lights revealed a cutting take on the harshness of the 21st century. "*Modernity has failed us*", belted the rock band unapologetically in *Love It If We Made It*. This particular lyric hit ever so much harder listening to it live.

But the first single of their upcoming album featured a speech about climate change. The speech by 16-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg was played and a video-documentary accompanied the 5-minute track. This upcoming album (*Notes on a Conditional Form*) was foreshadowed in bright blinding yellow hues—with the song, *People*. Through this, we were no longer an audience, but part of humanity, with the band urging us to take action before it was too late.



The Classics

The audience—mostly packed with millennials (you can roll your eyes now)—stood, sang and screamed their hearts out to every song in the setlist: both 'the classics' and the new hits. So what are the classics? These iconic songs defined the band in the earlier breakout phase of their career. Think *Girls* and *Chocolate*. There was an air of nostalgia. Nothing compared to the performance of *Falling for you* and *Robbers*. The stage was filled with smoke, a memory of a not so distant past.

Afterthoughts

In a lot of ways, their music and aesthetic speak about the exasperation and experiences of youth. Someone in the crowd had the same replica of the rabbit-beanie Matty donned for his performance of *Sincerity Is Scary*. We are more alike than we seem, the band seemed to suggest cheekily.

*"So what about these feelings I've got?"
sang Matty.
And the crowd sang back,
"I couldn't be more in love".*

Written by **AMIRA YUNOS** and **THADDEUS JAYDEN LOW** (Ed.)
Design **SYAZA NISRINA** Photography **SYAZA NISRINA**

IN REMEMBRANCE

of
You



Written by **SOON YING** and **THADDEUS JAYDEN LOW** (Ed.)
Design **CHUA YONG QING**
Photography **XUAN ZHENG**

"One lives in the hope of becoming a memory." - Antonio Porchia

Sometimes, it can be painful to reminisce about what is left only in memories, especially when we are reminded of how things may never be the same anymore. However, NTU CAC Harmonix showed us with their second annual concert, *Remembrance*, that sometimes, nothing is more beautiful than keeping fond memories alive by holding them close to your heart.

Held on 20 July 2019 at the KC Arts Centre, Harmonix brought an assortment of songs alive. With a total of sixteen items ranging from classic pop songs, Disney favourites to original mashups, there was something for everyone that night. Presented by different combinations of vocalists—all of whom had intriguing and adorable team names—we were brought on a journey to explore the relationships around the narrative's characters.

With limited knowledge of a cappella, it is hard for me to critique the quality of vocals that night. What I do remember, however, is the variety of performances we were presented with. Starting the show with a bang, Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody", presented by the entire ensemble, was dark, compelling and memorable. Keeping to the show's introduction to 'look out for what's around you', the members were not just on stage, but surrounded the audience during this performance, adding to the enigmatic aura of the original.

An interesting mashup of *The Sound of Music* soundtrack and one of the latest releases from pop sensation Ariana Grande then followed (presented by Shirley Tempo). The creative arrangement was fitting, given that "7 Rings" samples heavily from "My Favourite Things", but what was unexpected was seeing how the two songs, which are similar in melody, could be so different in style and presentation. While the country style of "My Favourite Things" was retained, the transition into "7 Rings" was seamless, making the second half of the performance feel like a chic and modern rendition of the same song.



Undoubtedly, one of the highlights of the night was "Spooky Scary Selections", a piece presented by the vocal percussionists. It was fascinating to hear the plethora of sounds (which, as the name of the performers suggested, resembled the sounds of percussion instruments such as the bass, snares and hi-hats) that can be made just from the one's mouth, lips, tongue and voice. While not the most melodious, this item truly showcased what sets Harmonix apart from other choral performances.

If the first half of the concert successfully hinted at the bittersweet sides of relationships, the performances after the intermission were great at revealing the ugliness that could ensue from a broken relationship. In a set of consecutive performances — "Tiptoe through the Tulips" (by Voices), "Heartless Medley" (by granola) and "Turning Tables" (by Shirley Tempo), a similar set was used, but depicted a linear flow of time. Detailing the two characters as they aged, fought, broke up and ultimately broke free from each other, it was certainly thought-provoking to see such a realistic situation unfold on stage.

As we approached the finale of the concert, we were once again reminded of the theme, *Remembrance*. As the name suggests, the night was one meant to commemorate and relive precious memories, especially the time spent with our loved ones. For the finale, ensemble returned to deliver a stirring tribute to a friend, rounding the night on a poignant but touching note.

Watching them immortalise the show and their feelings of the night, with the final piece and the curtain call reminded me once again how compelling the stage can be, for both the people on and in front of it. For a second time, Harmonix has staged a concert which was certainly entertaining, impressive and touching all at once. May Harmonix continue to serenade and bring its audience the same warmth and satisfaction with future concerts!



At the time of publishing, *Permanence*, *Ashes, Ashes*, and *Random Access Memory* have already been staged. Stay tuned to our coverage of these plays on artjamonline.com!

WRIGHT STUFF FESTIVAL PRESS CONFERENCE

On the 16th of July, the Toy Factory Productions Ltd theatre company held their very first press conference introducing this year's *Wright Stuff Festival* at Hotel G's Ginett Wine and Bar Restaurant. We were warmly welcomed by the playwrights and directors, who introduced us to *The Wright Stuff Festival 2019*.

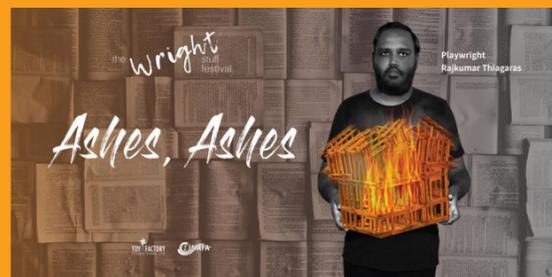
First held in 2017, *The Wright Stuff* is a biennial playwright-mentorship programme where amateur playwrights submit their scripts to an open call. Three playwrights then receive the opportunity to undertake an intensive six-month scriptwriting programme, receiving professional mentorship coaching them to learn and grow as playwrights.

Following the success of its inaugural season, this year, Toy Factory Productions Ltd is collaborating with the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), which will also be hosting the festival at its studio theatre. The festival will kick off with a familiar face, as 2017's mentee Gina Chew will be returning to restage her play *Permanence* to a bigger stage and audience. Beating out a dozen other hopefuls, Rajkumar Thiagaras, Mark Cheong and Titus Yim emerged as the three new play-writers selected this year to undertake the scriptwriting programme. We sat down with the playwrights and directors present at the press conference to learn more about their plays and *The Wright Stuff* experience.

PERMANENCE BY GINA CHEW

One of the winners from *The Wright Stuff's* inaugural season, Gina Chew is back with her play entitled *Permanence*. The play follows the character Blanche, who is tired of running away and, wanting more, returns to the old life she left behind. Colliding with toxic relationships and her fear of falling into a domesticated life, the play weaves through Blanche's life at different points in time, following her struggle to survive as new doubts about her life unfold.

Permanence will be staged from the 10th to 13th October 2019.



ASHES, ASHES BY RAJKUMAR THIAGARAS

Ashes, Ashes tells the story of an elderly Indian woman, Janaki, who revisits her childhood home for the last time in an attempt to reconcile herself with the lifetime of trauma she spent coping with the devastating loss of her siblings. A fellow NTU student, playwright Raj is about to further his studies with a Masters in English Literature. When asked about the challenges he faced while working on the script, Raj pointed out the casting of the actors as a step out of his comfort zone. The premise of *Ashes, Ashes* represents the life of an Indian family, and Raj's own culture. Due to a lack of suitable Indian actors however, Raj and director Andy Pang made the bold creative decision to stage the play with an entirely non-Indian cast. Still, despite the Anglophonic tones, Raj is confident that the essence and dynamic of the Indian family featured in the play will reach his audience.

Ashes, Ashes will be staged from the 17th to 20th October 2019.

If the choice was up to you, would you erase every memory you don't wish to remember? *Random Access Memory* (RAM) poses this question to us, as the main characters RAM and GIG – two inseparable parts in charge of memory in a computer – are encumbered with the task of deciding which memories of a dead boy are worth keeping. As they struggle with the weight of the impossible job, the play pushes us to contemplate what it means to be human, and the value of memories.



RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY BY MARK CHEONG

It was a pity that Mark was not present at the press conference to promote his play. But we did get to speak to Stanley Seah, director of *Random Access Memory* (RAM) and Associate Artistic Director of Toy Factory Productions with regards to his first impressions of *RAM*. "When I first read *RAM*, I quickly realised that it is not only a page turner, with very witty writing," said Stanley, "It also has a lot of heart. And I think audiences will really gravitate towards its emotional themes."

Random Access Memory will be staged from the 24th to 26th October 2019.

The Wright Stuff Festival

Written by **TAN XIN TONG** and **RYAN PHUA** (E.d.)
Design **LEE WANYI**
Publicity Materials **TOY FACTORY PRODUCTIONS LTD**

Seventeen-year-old Titus had already written his script when he came across *The Wright Stuff* competition. The Hwa Chong Junior College student had initially intended on funding his production out of his own pocket, but had trouble finding the right cast. Through *The Wright Stuff*, Titus managed to juggle his duties as an A-Level student while making improvements on his script over the past year. His play, *The Puppet King* tells the story of an abandoned toy shop. Once a place of joy, it is now the final resting place for 5 defective toys, ruled by an elusive Puppet King. With a demolition notice looming over their heads, the toys soon turn against each other and through their disagreements, they discover the true meaning of their existence.

Although it is a Chinese play, English subtitles will be present for non-Mandarin-speaking audiences.

玩具王 (*The Puppet King*) will be staged from the 1st to 3rd of November 2019.



玩具王 (THE PUPPET KING) BY TITUS YIM

The press conference not only gave us a preview of what to expect from the upcoming festival, it was also an appreciation to the months of effort that went behind preparing for it. Goh Boon Teck, Chief Artistic Director of Toy Factory Productions and mentor to *The Wright Stuff* playwrights admits that "planting seedlings is tiring and time-consuming, yet it is a most sacred and important duty to begin cultivating the forest of tomorrow, today." Indeed, it takes a lot of patience to dedicate oneself to the theatrical arts in Singapore, but we are glad that Toy Factory Productions took it upon themselves to promote the *Wright* cause. We would like to thank Toy Factory Productions for inviting us to their press conference. We really enjoyed interviewing the playwrights and directors and we look forward to the festival this coming October.

WALKING WITH DINOSAURS: THE LIVE EXPERIENCE

This article was originally published on Artjam Online on 5 September 2019

Get ready to travel back in time—65 million years to be precise—and experience a world where dinosaurs are king. Walking with Dinosaurs: The Live Experience is bringing 18 types of prehistoric pals to life in the Singapore Indoor Stadium from 31st August to 8th September 2019. For our readers who normally watch concerts or musicals, this is truly a unique live experience that is not to be missed!

Walking with Dinosaurs is known to many as a popular BBC documentary series. The Live Experience brings these same dinosaurs to the stage with the help of gigantic animatronics and amazing life-like dinosaur suits. This live show costs over \$20 million to produce and has been seen by more than 9 million people (and counting!) in 250 cities around the globe. Hosted by a character, Huxley the Paleontologist, the live show continues to present information in an engaging way. The audience will be able to learn more about the world and its inhabitants from a time before humans walked the earth. They will also learn all sorts of facts about dinosaurs and the environment they lived in, from how flying dinosaurs were able to exist, to how fossilised footprints allow palaeontologists to learn about dinosaurs millions of years after they went extinct.

The techniques used to bring these creatures to life are truly incredible and the show is constantly updated to keep with the times. For example, the Baby T-Rex now sports a feathery coating, as suggested by the latest developments in palaeontology. These dinosaurs are true to size and absolutely gigantic, pretty much filling up the entire stage at the Indoor Stadium. Smaller dinosaurs like the Raptors or a Baby T-Rex are puppeteered by fantastic actors whose swift movements and sharp noises will make you feel like there's a real dinosaur right in front of you.

The larger dinosaurs are piloted by a team of 3 people—one to control the dinosaur's head and tail movements, one to control its sounds and smaller actions, and another to drive the entire beast. The largest of them all is the adult Brachiosaurus at 11 meters tall and 17 meters long.

Surely, these dinosaurs are awe-inspiring on their own but what truly makes the Walking With Dinosaurs live show so theatrical and engaging is the fact that each major scene has an overarching storyline. For example, audiences will get to learn about the Torosaurus and watch a fight for domination between two Torosaurus. Watch the Brachiosaurus in action as she protects the baby Brachiosaurus in a showdown with a well-known, carnivorous predator. Which dinosaur? Who wins the fight? What happens next? Find out at Walking With Dinosaurs: The Live Experience.

Written by **TERISHA TAN** and **THADDEUS JAYDEN LOW** (E.d.)
Design **LEE WANYI**
Photography **TERISHA TAN**



Singapore Night Festival 2019

Written by **TERISHA TAN** and **THADDEUS JAYDEN LOW** (Ed.)
Design **CHUA YONG QING**
Photography **TERISHA TAN** and **YEO HAW LIN**

Once again, the night was lit up over the Bras Basah-Bugis district, with art installations and live performances as part of the highly-anticipated, annual event—the Singapore Night Festival. Stretching from Dhoby Ghaut Green to Raffles City Shopping Centre, the festival spanned across most of the arts and heritage district, encouraging Singaporeans to explore this significant district and its unique charms.

Of course, there were the festival's signature gigantic projections—colourful, moving visuals projected onto the facades of iconic buildings. There were images of cultural elements and beautiful landscapes on the facades of the National Museum, CHIJMES and the Stamford Court clocktower.

Another highlight of this year's edition was the pipe organ demonstration held at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd. The church's organist took the crowd through a quick history lesson about this specific pipe organ and how it had been upgraded over the past century, before launching into his musical programme. Veering away from the church's usual fare of sacred music, the organist played classics such as "The Phantom of the Opera" and local favourites such as "Home" and "Singapura, Oh Singapura". Upon hearing these familiar tunes, the massive crowd went wild with cheers. There was also the church's yearly display of candles spelling out the words "Peace and Harmony".

The National Museum also had its fair share of insta-worthy installations. A notable display was a tree outside the museum which had the story of the Indian epic, *The Ramayana*, being projected on its facade. A personal favourite of mine is the *Disco Walkway* at the walkway along Stamford Road leading up to Raffles City Shopping Centre, where silhouettes of people boogied down to popular disco hits.

Over at Armenian Street, a crowd gathered to buy indie goods and listen to live music. We got to see *The Rejects*, an art exhibition at The Substation selling works of art that had been rejected from various open calls. Accompanying each piece's description was a short writeup on how each artist dealt with their respective rejections.

From printed poems going for just \$1, to wall-sized sketches of blogger queen Xiaxue, *The Rejects* had a wide variety of pieces available. At the end of the exhibition, visitors are invited to write about one of their own rejections and to add it to the wall of rejects. The premise itself is an interesting one as it invites us to question our own abilities to deal with rejection and how we decide to reject something as 'not good enough'. Let's hope that *The Rejects* becomes popular enough to warrant a second edition next year.

Late Night Texting

We're also back at this year's *Late Night Texting* held at Centre 42. From dramatised readings to short performances, *Late Night Texting* gave the crowd a glimpse of what the Singaporean Theatre scene had to offer.



A highlight of this was the short performance, *@THISISEMERALDGIRL*. Written as a contemporary response to Stella Kon's classic one-woman play, Emily of Emerald Hill, *@THISISEMERALDGIRL* is a one-girl show starring Singaporean YouTuber, Brenda Tan. In it, Tan stars as Elisabeth Gan, great-granddaughter of the original Emily, as she works to preserve her grandmother's beloved house and her family's legacy through her social media channels. It was an interesting experience to see a modern version of this classic play, and Tan pulls off the role of a social media-savvy socialite extremely well.

As usual, the Singapore Night Festival's diverse offerings promises something interesting for everyone. See you at the Night Festival's 2020 edition!



art JAMS

Hello! Welcome to the aptly titled artJAMS, a monthly column where we talk about fresh new music and do our best to recommend you stuff worth listening to. Enjoy our inaugural edition and stay tuned to artjamonline.com for next month's entry!

Design **LEE WAN LIN**

False Alarm

The Irish rock band Two Door Cinema Club is no stranger to those of us who ventured into the basement of indie music in our earlier years. In fact, "What You Know", a track from their first album *Tourist History* (2010), has been one of my favourite indie songs long before I got into the genre itself (only a few short months ago), and some of my fondest memories are of my friends and I jamming to it.

This June, the band dropped their fourth studio album titled *False Alarm*. It consists of twelve tracks, with "Satellite" and "Talk" already having been released as single edits before the album's official launch.

False Alarm sports catchy, mellow beats that you'll definitely end up tapping your feet or nodding your head to. Digging deeper into the lyrics of the songs, you discover powerful, albeit brief phrases which carry much more weight than you'd think at first glance. "Nice To See You" speaks of an unwanted reunion and how there are just some things that don't change. "Break" seems to be one of those filler tracks that, well, breaks. (No, literally, it suddenly breaks off at the end.)



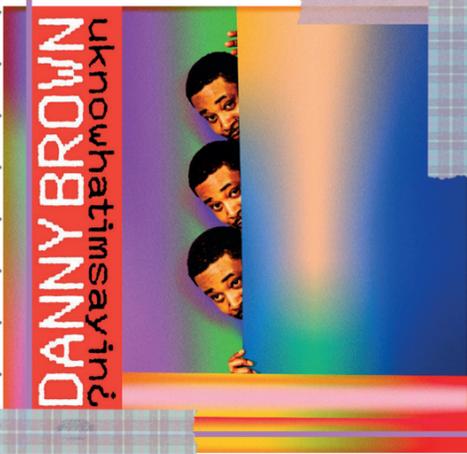
Written by **OH QIAN YI** and **MAISIE LOY** (Ed.)
Album Art © 2019 PIAS Recordings

I've had this album on almost every day. I love the sci-fi vibes of "Satellite" that are befitting of its title, and it quickly became a favourite of mine. Another song that stands out is "Dirty Air", with its gorgeously quotable lyrics, the song paints an accurate picture of what society has created. If you have the time, check out the music videos that come along with the tracks! They're mostly short clips featuring pop graphics that aren't too far out on the abstract spectrum.

uknowhatimsayin'

Danny Brown sounds like a cat. There's no other way to describe it—his high-pitched, scratchy voice is exaggerated by his penchant for yelling on the beat. Wielding this unconventional weapon of choice, the former black sheep of hip hop has spent his career squeezing himself into the genre's inner circle with humour, affability, and rhymes that are undeniably well-constructed and surprisingly thoughtful. Brown's debut *XXX* was not only an early-career high-water mark for him but one of the unlikely classics of the modern era.

Written by **NATHANAEL CLIVE** and **TEH CHER HUEY** (Ed.)
Album Art © 2019 Warp Records



uknowhatimsayin' is Brown's fifth album, and after all these years he has certainly changed: all his missing teeth have returned and he's settled on a sensible, close-cropped hairdo. This carries over into his music: gone are the uncomfortably jagged edges that lacerated *XXX*. Instead, *uknowhatimsayin'*'s "Savage Nomad" grooves irresistibly while "Dirty Laundry" slides in and out beneath his feet like an ocean wave.

Of course, the cat voice remains, even if it's tamer now. Traces of the greasy old Danny Brown can still be found on the lurching "3 Tearz" and the ignorant "Belly of The Beast". More importantly, his writing remains as sharp as ever, especially on the album's beating heart "Best Life". Indeed, a considerable amount of time on *uknowhatimsayin'* is spent gazing at painful memories in sobering detail. This has always been the draw of Brown's music: beneath the antics, there has always been a compelling story and it's hard not to root for him.

Ultimately, *uknowhatimsayin'* is neither a rehash of Danny Brown's earlier stuff nor a career u-turn for the longtime weirdo. Instead, it's a step forward for one of the most unique and underrated musicians of our era working near the top of his game. It's weird and unusual, but the voice in Danny Brown's head is worth listening to as much as the one in his throat.

the masquerade

Featuring pretty pastels and her low, lyrical voice, *the masquerade* is mxmtoon's official debut album. mxmtoon (real name Maia) started out anonymously, recording her songs late at night after her parents had fallen asleep. She quickly amassed a large following of listeners drawn by her emotional depth and honest sentimentality.

In *the masquerade*, Maia's playful use of unconventional backing instrumentals such as typing noises and the triangle gives the album a particularly refreshing and different twist from her pre-debut songs. What remains unchanged, however, is a confessional style of lyric writing and self-deprecating humour—mxmtoon's music shows off an unaffected openness which automatically gains the trust of listeners. The self-restrained and passive persona Maia constantly portrays in her music makes its unrestrained honesty even more striking. I personally find it amazing that the artist is able to give off an illusion of intimacy like that which is shared between best friends despite never having met the listener. This reflects the sheer power of her blatant and unapologetic honesty and the way in which it is expressed.

Musically, the upbeat tune lends texture to the slow and dreamlike vocals all while retaining acoustic interest well. Tracks in *the masquerade* sound almost like free verse poetry in the form of music. Repetitive note sequencing forms a stable foundation for Maia's immersive storytelling; the way she sings lightly and the conversational style of her lyrics complement the lullaby melody, overall forming a harmonious relationship.

For instance, when Maia sings "a sheer joy so childlike" in the track "Dream of you", the lyric flows with the tune and creates a melodic caress that carries her feelings gently to the audience. Carefully written lyrics like these seem to float off the tip of the tongue, especially when they are conveyed in her iconic husky voice. The deceitfully upbeat music almost downplays her lyrical honesty—all in all, mxmtoon's *the masquerade* is a must-hear melodic reinforcement for the passive persona who has difficulty admitting her feelings to the people around herself.



Written by **SUSAN SOO** and **TEH CHER HUEY** (Ed.)
Album Art © 2019 mxmtoon

VAMPIRE WEEKEND



SONY MUSIC

Father of the Bride

I think if you asked me who Vampire Weekend was six years ago, I wouldn't know how to answer you. Where were they anyway? They'd finished up their third album, *Modern Vampires of the City*: a touching tribute to New York, lost flames and the viciousness of a silent God.

Today, the now 7-strong band has come a long way from the tantalizing anthems backed by a Philharmonic's worth of melodies in "Mansard Roof" and "Oxford Comm". With the departure of Rostam Batmanglij (the creative force behind the band's riffs and beats of "Diplomat's Son" or "A-Punk") in 2016, a dilution of their trademark sound was almost certain.

But they returned with *Father of the Bride*, described by band frontman and lead singer Ezra Koenig as "a little more springtime" than usual, and he's not wrong. In this album, Vampire Weekend brings back the pop-like diversity they were known for while balancing a precarious sense of self awareness by keeping their characteristic sense of abstract introspection as they flit between the synth-heavy tracks of "Bambina" and laid back vocals of "My Mistake". Still, the band finds a way to bridge the gap between its one-of-a-kind sound and a deeper philosophy on the album's stand out track "Sympathy".

Written by **NIGEL GOH** and **MAISIE LOY** (Ed.)
Album Art © 2019 Columbia Records

Vicious, variegated, and voluptuous, "Sympathy" works stripped down vocals into relentless riffs and unforgiving synth lines. The track is a veritable treat for longtime fans of the pitch-bending and relentless rhythms that were a product of the band's experiments in high-tempo tunes such as "Diane Young". The album is peppered with Koenig's signature croons from "Flower Moon" and "How Long?", rocking us gently on the crashing waves of the tempo and timbre. The tunes flower into unforgettable anthems, offering a bittersweet retrospective on the undertones of banal mortality and unending regret:

Being able to look at life, history, and everything in between with such keen reflection while being colored by upbeat trills, this new album truly reflects Vampire Weekend's status as a driving force in the existing canon of indie rock. And they're here to stay.

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