

For Immediate Release
30 August 2023

“I love to be manipulated!”

A single phrase that birthed The Finger Players' most eclectic triple-bill performance yet

THE
FINGER
PLAYERS
BREATHING LIFE, IMAGINING WORLDS

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Three incredible acrobats dream up a stunning creation that insists on co-creating with them. A mannequin faces public flogging whenever the model and seamstress fail to measure up to a cat's superior fabric scratching skills. An eight-legged octopus dance coach receives an unexpected lesson from a four-legged cat and dog who combine their limbs in a surprising way, creating a sum greater than its parts.

Step into ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre and embark on a journey through three whimsical and self-deprecating tales set in a pre-war Anglo-Chinese school. **Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX: Persona Paradox** marks Oliver Chong's inaugural production as Artistic Director, bringing together fashion maverick Max Tan, avant-garde artist Rizman Putra, and daredevil Xyn Foo from Bornfire Circus for an extraordinary triple-bill.

Prepare to be captivated as they weave a narrative that unravels the complexities of identity and defies expectations through the art of puppetry.

The Finger Players celebrates its 24th birthday with the annual Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX held at its artistic home

Perched on a little hill, ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre has been home to The Finger Players since 1 September 2000.



The colonial-era building was originally erected in 1928 to house the Anglo-Chinese School (ACS). It also served as a school during the Japanese Occupation and later became the Teachers' Training College (TTC) in 1949. It remained a centre of education when the Adult Education Board (AEB) (later known as the Vocational and Industrial Training Board (VITB)) occupied the premise from 1968 to 1984. Today, ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre sits amongst a stretch of condominiums along Orchard Road and serves as an artistic home to The Finger Players and their neighbours—Teater Kami, The Arts Fission Company, Echo Philharmonic Society, and ACT 3 International.

These companies have grown over the decades in tandem with the building, adding to the cultural significance and the value of the arts in Singapore. From the weathered brick architecture and doors coated in striking yellow hues, to the walls with layered and splotchy white paints (as a result of painting over different areas at different periods of time), each corner of the heritage building is filled with nostalgia, history, and soul.

Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX, as an annual offering of The Finger Players, aims to deliver original, edgy, and contemporary stories right within the building where the magic happens.



The big bang of new-age puppetry performance

The *Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX* series focus on creating original and ground-breaking stories by using existing puppets from the Puppet Origin Stories repository. This fulfils The Finger Players' promise of preserving their puppets and the puppets' history, as well as fostering sustainability and creativity in theatre-making.



Significantly, it is also a chance for The Finger Players to collaborate with artists from disciplines that they would not otherwise encounter in their usual puppetry productions. *Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX: Persona Paradox* will feature fashion maverick Max Tan, avant-garde contemporary artist Rizman Putra, and daredevil Xyn Foo from Bornfire Circus, all of whom have been hand-picked by Oliver Chong for this triple-bill performance.

The selected artists have chosen the puppet(s) from the Puppet Origin Stories repository to be incorporated in their performance. They will recontextualise the origin stories of the chosen puppet(s) and create a new story inspired by the puppet(s).

The collaboration bestows an alternative lens to puppetry performances as the artists leverage on their specific disciplines to interact with the art form of puppetry. This is in line with The Finger Players' constant efforts to reframe the public's perception of puppetry as not just child's play.

Max Tan, true to his niche, will be creating a fashion show commenting on social perception and the concepts of beauty, movement, and style. Rizman Putra is creating a fantastical story that invites the audience to regard and appreciate puppets in movement. Xyn Foo from Bornfire Circus will spotlight Sponge Girl, one of TFP's iconic puppets, in an acrobatic theatrical show that will incorporate sponge materials inspired by the puppet.

Curated by Oliver Chong, *Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX: Persona Paradox* is the veteran's inaugural production as Artistic Director of The Finger Players. Drawing from his experience and perspective as a dramaturg, he has identified the common threads which the artists sought to explore. From this process, the show is unified under the theme of challenging our ideas of our own bodies and identities.

As such, this unorthodox puppetry performance dreams to be unpredictable and eye-opening for both audiences and puppetry theatre-makers.

The stories that fill the interlude

Audiences who attend Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX: Persona Paradox will find themselves awash with stories to take in throughout the night.

Alongside each artist's individual pieces being given time to shine, during each break, The Finger Players' friendly Front-of-House guides will regale the guests with not-so-friendly paranormal anecdotes—tales about spooky beings and phenomena that occupy the spaces at ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre. Weaving together the fictional and non-fictional histories of the building, the interludes are curated to provide guests with an immersive spine-chilling experience. After all, one cannot spell *experiential* without *eerie*.

Additionally, various puppets extracted from Puppet Origin Stories, The Finger Players' vast repository, will adorn the liminal spaces in the building, allowing guests to take in the sentimental history and technical background of each puppet as they roam these puppets' home. In keeping with the ambition of Puppet Origin Stories, these puppets will not just be laid out in basic displays, but will also be recontextualized by the physical spaces at ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre. The team at The Finger Players will take part in their own creation of new stories by finding unique ways to allow these puppets to inhabit new locations, and in doing so find new meanings and reveal new interpretations for them.

Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX: Persona Paradox strives to turn ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre into a living museum of Singapore's puppetry history, with performing arts elements.

Performance Details

Title: ***Puppet Origin Stories @ ONE-TWO-SIX: Persona Paradox***

Dates: Wednesday, 25 October 2023
Thursday, 26 October 2023
Friday, 27 October 2023
Saturday, 28 October 2023
Sunday, 29 October 2023

Time: 8pm

Duration 1 hr 30 mins with no intermission

Capacity 60 pax per show

Venue ONE-TWO-SIX Cairnhill Arts Centre
126 Cairnhill Road, Singapore 229707

Language English

Ticket Pricing \$38 (Standard)
\$30.40 (Students, Senior Citizens and NSF)

Ticket Link <https://fingerplayers.com/production/puppet-origin-stories-one-two-six-persona-paradox/>

IMDA Rating TBA

Disclaimer Please note that this performance is a rain or shine event. As the venue does not have accessibility-friendly amenities, patrons are advised to exercise discretion before purchasing tickets. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

School Booking For every 20 tickets purchased, schools will be entitled to **one** complimentary ticket (subjected to booking fees).



About The Finger Players

The Finger Players is one of Singapore's leading theatre companies, best known for inventively fusing puppetry elements into its visually-arresting productions, and its strong advocacy of puppetry. Founded in 1999, The Finger Players strives to be a centre of research and development for the creation and performance of puppetry in Singapore.

In 2019, The Finger Players became the first arts collective in Singapore to operate on a rotating artistic director model, with each Artistic Director helming the fort for a stipulated tenure.



The Core Team of The Finger Players

Left to right: Myra Loke, Loo An Ni, Daniel Sim, Oliver Chong, Lam Dan Fong, Ellison Tan, Chong Tze Chien

Not pictured: Sindhura Kalidas, Tan Xiang Yi, Ong Kian Sin

Photo by Tuckys Photography

The company currently operates four branches:

(1) Main Season

Through constant invention and innovation, and the fusion of traditional and contemporary puppetry forms, our main season aspires to be the maverick in employing puppetry through our edgy and original theatre offerings.

(2) International Season

Promoting Singapore's brand of Puppetry internationally, the company is one of Singapore's most prolific international touring companies, and has actively been touring its productions since 2000.

(3) Outreach Season

Puppetry gives voice to the silenced, and is a medium to connect and engage. The company reaches out to an average of 25,000 students and members of the public annually, through puppetry performances and workshops with schools, communities and institutions.

(4) Capability Building

Through creating meaningful programmes that respond to the needs of the industry, we commit to make our processes and our art better, by empowering everyone we work with.

The Finger Players is a non-profit organisation with Institution of Public Character (IPC) status, a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2023.

For past works and press reviews, please visit our website <https://fingerplayers.com/production>.



Credits

Performing Artistic Team	<i>PRETTY UGLY</i>	
	Lead Artist	Max Tan
	Performers / Puppeteers	Ellison Tan
		Jo Kwek
		Angelina Chandra
	Puppets	Ah Where
		Ru Xin
		Meow Meow (Cat)
	<i>AN OCTOPUS, A CAT AND A DOG WALK INTO A BARRE....</i>	
	Lead Artist	Rizman Putra
	Performers / Puppeteers	Yazid Jalil
		Darren Guo
		Rachel Nip
	Puppets	Octopus (Version 1)
		Chewy
Angel (Cat)		
<i>I AM, WHO I AM NOT.</i>		
Lead Artist	Xyn Foo (Bornfire Circus)	
Performers / Puppeteers	Myra Loke	
	Nachos	
	Lina Heng	
Puppet	Sponge Girl	

Credits

Creative & Production Team	Artistic Director / Dramaturg / Set Designer	Oliver Chong
	Lighting Designer	Faith Liu Yong Huay
	Sound Designer	Ng Jing
	Sound Associate	Ashley Fong
	Set Coordinator	Bernice Ong
	Costume Coordinator & Prop Master	Loo An Ni
	Puppets Maintenance	Myra Loke
	Production Manager	Lam Dan Fong (The Backstage Affair)
	Technical Manager	Peter Chi
	Production Coordinator	Cheow Jiong Ling (The Backstage Affair)
	Stage Manager	Keira Lee
	Assistant Stage Manager	Marilyn Ang
	Crew	Georgia Sim (The Backstage Affair)
		Kareen Low (The Backstage Affair)
	Technical Crew	Ashley Fong
		Zamier A Bakar
		Darren Lee
Key Visual Photographer / Photography Archival	Crispian Chan	
Key Visual Design	Sim Xin Feng	
Videography Archival	Jai Rafferty	



Biographies of Performing Artistic Team

PRETTY UGLY by Max Tan

Max Tan started his eponymous label MAX.TAN upon his breakout collection at the Singapore Fashion Designers Contest in 2007, where he received an award recognition. What began as creating capsule collections to meet increasing interest, then became a full-fledged debut, with the S/S 2010 collection being featured as one of the top ten collections globally on premier trend forecasting report - Stylesight.com, alongside fashion powerhouses such as Alexander McQueen and Valentino. Over the past decade, Max has been recognised for his innovative designs that challenges fashion trends while incorporating his Asian roots. Max also lectures at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Singapore), and enjoys partnering with theatre groups in Singapore to design costumes for their key productions. MAX.TAN is represented by Boon showroom (Paris), and has started making inroads onto the international fashion design scene.

Ellison Tan Yuyang is a Singaporean-Chinese performer, playwright and educator. She was Co-Artistic Director of The Finger Players from 2020-2023, and also a Core Team Member. She is Co-Founder of The Wanderlings, the first Singaporean collective to create baby theatre. Ellison's background is in puppetry, playwriting, the Suzuki Method of Actor Training and Viewpoints. Notable acting credits include: *Off Centre* (The Necessary Stage), *Art Studio* (Nine Years Theatre and Singapore International Festival of Arts), *I Am Trying to Say Something True* (Esplanade: The Studios). Notable writing credits: *The Bench* (The Finger Players), *All The World is One's Stage* 《一个人的舞台》 (Toy Factory and Esplanade: Huayi), *The Dragon's Dentist* (Esplanade: PLAYtime!). She was conferred the National Arts Council Arts Scholarship in 2020, and graduated from Rose Bruford College with a Masters in Theatre for Young Audiences (Distinction).

Jo Kwek has been actively participating in numerous theatre productions, television dramas and films. Her stage credits include *Chachambo – Taking Flight*, *The Ageing Artist*, *The Puppets Are Alright*, *Kingdoms Apart*, *The Puppeteer Prepares*, *Murder at Mandai Camp*, *Peepbird*, *Body X – The Culprit*, *Citizen Dog*, *The Crab Flower Club*, *The Next Generations*, *The Moonstory*, *Drift*, *0501*, *I'm Just A Piano Teacher*, and many more. Her TV/TVC/Film credits include *Am I Here*, *Andrew*, *From Victoria Street To Ang Mo Kio*, *The Veiled Willow*, *Filial Party*, *Ilo Ilo*, *YOG-A Girl's Hope*, *Letters To Heaven - Love never ends*, *Beautiful Connection* and *Katong Ms Oh*.

Angelina Chandra graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts (Musical Theatre) with a big passion for Theatre for Young Audience and Puppetry. Upon graduation, she participated in Indonesian Arts Festival in which she collaborated with Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta to develop *Chest of Shadows – A Musical* under the mentorship of Gloria Tan and Gianti Giadi. The team was praised for innovative collaboration of Wayang Kulit and Musical Theatre. Her other puppetry works include *东郭与狼* (Paper Monkey Theatre), *The Puppets are Alright: Parting* (The Fingers Players), and *Journey to the West: White Bone Fiend* (Paper Monkey Theatre). Angel hopes to become an artist that explore and showcase our diverse cultural identity with sincerity and honesty.

AN OCTOPUS, A CAT AND A DOG WALK INTO A BARRE... by Rizman Putra

Rizman Putra graduated with Master of Arts (Fine Arts) from Lasalle College of the Arts in 2007, and has been actively straddling between performance, visual arts and music for the last two decades. He was the co-founder of the now dissolved arts collective, Kill Your Television (KYTV), which was awarded Winner of Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (JCCI) Singapore Foundation Arts Award in 2005. He is also well the co-founder of electronic duo, NADA. Rizman has performed and exhibited his works locally and internationally. He was one of the four artists selected for the President's Young Talents Exhibition (2005) and the Fukuoka Triennale (2005). He received the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) Most Outstanding Award 2002-2003. His works were exhibited at the inaugural Singapore Biennale 2006. Rizman is currently an Associate Artist with Cake Theatrical Productions.

Yazid Jalil graduated from the Intercultural Theatre Institute. He also received theatre training in France at the École Philippe Gaulier, and has a First-Class Honours Theatre Arts Bachelor's degree from the University of Essex / NAFA. As an actor, director, writer, and devising collaborator, he has credits in over 50 professional theatrical productions in the last 17 years. He was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the 11th Life! Theatre Awards for his role in *Charged* (Teater Ekamatra, 2011). When not performing, Yazid enjoys sharing his knowledge and experiences with students. He is currently an adjunct lecturer at NAFA and Lasalle.

Darren Guo is a bilingual theatre practitioner who graduated with a BA in Theatre Arts from the University of Essex. He was last seen in the restaging of *Straight Acting* by Wild Rice and was humbled to be nominated as Best Actor for The Straits Times Life Theatre Awards. Other notable credits include *Art Studio* by Nine Years Theatre, *Citizen Dog* by The Finger Players, *Lao Jiu the Musical* by The Theatre Practice, *December Rains* by Toy Factory, and the *Offstage* series by Emergency Stairs. Aside from working as an actor on stage and on screen, Darren also teaches Drama and does creative work including playmaking and directing. Darren's love for coffee saw him picking up skills as a barista, and now, when he's not busy in the performing world, you may occasionally find him brewing coffee behind his mobile coffee cart @kofiecart. More about Darren: <https://darrenguocw.mystrikingly.com/>

Rachel Nip is a choreographer and performer who enjoys creating site-specific dances and devised theatre. She is part of the collective Hello, How Do You Move? with Ameezy, a Deaf artist. They create works inspired by Deaf culture and perspectives, including *Tell-Tale Signs* (ART:DIS), *KINetic*, a VR dance with The Doodle People and Ang Ga-Young. They are also currently developing *Watch Me*, *Watch You* at The Artground, a new work performed in Singapore Sign Language and English. Other favourite projects of Rachel's include *Where Are You?* (W!LD RICE), *Hello, How Do You Move?* (The Theatre Practice), *The Puppets Are Alright* (The Finger Players).

C H A O S by Xyn Foo (Bornfire Circus)

Xyn Foo (X̣) is a multifaceted artist who works as an independent artistic director, producer, and community organizer. She is the founder of Bornfire Singapore, a vibrant community of artists, and also serves as the artistic director for Bornfire Circus. Xyn graduated from Lasalle College of the Arts, where she majored in contemporary dance. She has seamlessly integrated her dance background into her circus practice over the past 16 years. Throughout her career,

Xyn has been the driving force behind numerous initiatives, including 11 practitioner-run circus festivals, SPROUTS intensive circus training programs, circus interest groups, two community puppetry festivals, and a series of film screenings.

Bornfire is a social circus dedicated to bridging differences through the joy of circus in Singapore. Since its inception in 2006, Bornfire has partnered with arts groups locally and internationally to facilitate cross-disciplinary exchange between passionate practitioners of various art forms by hosting industry talks and panel discussions.

Myra Loke is a director, puppeteer / performer, designer, maker and educator. She started her journey in Singapore's theatre 17 years ago. Now, Myra is part of the core team of The Finger Players. She led the company as Co-Artistic Director from 2020-2023. Myra has directed productions such as *The Bench*, *No Disaster on This Land*, *Little Mournings*, *The World of Our Own*, and *Peepbird*. She has also contributed as a performer and Puppet Designer and Maker for productions such as *Kingdoms Apart*, *OIWA – The Ghost of Yotsuya* (Singapore International Festival of Arts 2021), *The Flying Dutchman*, *Turn by Turn We Turn*, and several others. In 2018, Myra co-founded an arts collective, The Wanderlings, where she continues her work in engaging the neurodiverse community, from ages 0 and up.

Nachos is a Circus Performer and Coach. He specializes in Acrobatic Tumbling and also various forms of Juggling. Nachos' style of circus is heavily influenced by his humble beginnings as a Parkour Coach, combining and interweaving various disciplines and textures are his interest and specialty. After two years of self-practice, he was sought out by local circus groups to perform for them. His notable performances are *The Circus of Altrades: Christmas Edition* by Circus of Altrades and *Forget Me Not* by Bornfire Circus as part of the Esplanade Flipside Festival 2023. Nachos is currently building his repertoire of skills to put into new shows.

Lina is a versatile circus practitioner skilled in juggling, group acrobatics and the Cyr Wheel. Influenced by her architectural background, Lina perceives objects in connection to spaces, guided by the question of "how does it want to move". This creative process involves combining traits of objects and rhythmic elements to create a personalized movement vocabulary. She has actively contributed to choreographing and performing in circus productions for Esplanade's Flipside Festival. Her past collaborations include projects with performance groups such as Nadi Singapura and Acro Polates. She is currently venturing into street performances, striving to bring circus arts closer to the audience.

Biographies of the Creative Team



Oliver Chong is a multi-award-winning and published playwright, director, actor, and designer. Some of his memorable works include *Every Brilliant Thing*, *A Fiend's Diary*, *Roots*, *I'm Just A Piano Teacher*, *Cat*, *Lost & Found*, *The Book of Living and Dying*, *Citizen Pig* and *Citizen Dog*. His numerous nominations at The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards include Production of the Year and Best Director for *I'm Just A Piano Teacher*, Production of the Year for *Off Centre*, Best Director and Best Script for *Citizen Pig*, Best Director and Best Actor for *Every Brilliant Thing*, Best Actor for *Roots*, *Invisibility/Breathing* and *Art*, Best Supporting Actor for *ITSY- The Musical*, *Flare*, Best Ensemble for *Senang*, *Shit Hole*, *First Family*, *Rashomon*, and *A Cage Goes in Search of a Bird* respectively, and Best Set Design for *Twisted*, *Citizen Dog* and *A Fiend's Diary*. In 2011, he won Production of the Year for *A Cage Goes in Search of a Bird* with *A Group of People*. In 2013, he won Production of the Year and Best Script for *Roots*. The production has since toured Hong Kong and Taiwan to critical acclaim. *Roots* was also read and staged in New Zealand by Proudly Asian Theatre. In 2016, he was invited to perform in a site-specific, 108-hour durational one-man show *Time Between Us* at the Singapore International Festival of Arts. In 2017, he was selected to perform in the international premiere of *Blood and Rose Ensemble* in Taipei, directed by Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group's Director Wang Chia Ming, a co-commission by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and Taiwan National Performing Arts Centre Innovation Series Theater Festival. In 2020, he won Best Actor for *A Fiend's Diary*. To date, Oliver has performed at international arts festivals with touring productions in Paris, Myanmar, Barcelona, Budapest, Ankara, Bangkok, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan. He has conducted playwriting, directing and acting Masterclasses in Hong Kong and Singapore, and has been committed to helping practitioners fine-tune their crafts since 2014. Oliver was the Resident Director of THE FINGER PLAYERS (2004 – 2018), currently the Artistic Director of the company. He is also the founding member of A GROUP OF PEOPLE (2008 – 2012) and the founder of ODDCROP Productions (2019 – present). His published works include *Roots*, *The Book of Living and Dying*, *I'm Just A Piano Teacher* and *Cat*, *Lost & Found*.

Faith Liu Yong Huay trained at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in Lighting Design (2016), under the National Arts Council Arts Scholarship (Postgraduate). In September 2017, she co-founded 微 Wei Collective with theatre practitioner Neo Hai Bin. They were commissioned at the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2022 presenting *Being: 息在*, where she designed the set and lights. She is interested in how breath is given to spaces, objects and bodies with light. She is honoured to have worked on numerous theatre and dance productions in Singapore. Portfolio: liuyonghuay.tumblr.com

Awarded the National Arts Council Scholarship, **Ng Jing** graduated with first class honours from Rose Bruford College (UK) specialising in Performance Sound. Having designed for various companies and productions over 10 years of practice, he aspires to provide a wholesome sonic experience for the audience - what, why and how you listen through a live performance. He was nominated for Best Sound Design in the 2014 Off West End Theatre Awards, and the 2018, 2022 & 2023 Singapore Straits Times Life Theatre Awards. As an arts educator at NAFA since 2017, Jing has been teaching the core principles and techniques of sound design production. He designs these sound modules to foster future practitioners in developing a deeper understanding of sound in various artistic mediums and discovering the infinite possibilities of sonic arts. It has not only enriched his personal artistic journey but also fuelled his exploration of innovative approaches

and methodologies that facilitate engaging presentations and immersive experiences. Previously supported by National Arts Council's Self-Employed Person Grant, Jing is currently developing future iterations of his installation work - *Distance Makes The Heart Fonder*. It examines the intimacy of our physical and emotional connections we associate with one another, and with the trees around us - through the juxtapositions and associations of sounds and our natural environment. Website: www.jingnsound.com // www.soundcloud.com/jingsound



Press Information

Press Images

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Caption: Image(s) courtesy of The Finger Players.



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