

Centre 42 presents
THE VAULT

THE INTERCHANGE

By For Your Consideration

Sat 13 Nov, Sun 14 Nov
8pm - 9.30pm
Black Box @ 42 Waterloo Street



SYNOPSIS

All aboard the Waterloo Express! The year is 2065 and time travel has just arrived in Singapore. Take a journey to visit the cultural landmarks of Singapore through some of our most classic plays.

The Vault: The Interchange is a performance that revisits classics from the Singaporean theatre canon and explores the shared theme of losing culturally significant spaces. Just as Singapore's landscape has been fast changing, so has its theatre reflected the transformation of these sites and how it has impacted our collective cultural memory. The performance takes us through these sites by reimagining these locations, some of them found in plays such as *The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree* by Kuo Pao Kun and *Emily of Emerald Hill* by Stella Kon.

Beyond the realm of fiction, *The Interchange* also explores the displacement of our theatre venues and spaces by featuring the old National Theatre, The Substation, as well 42 Waterloo Street. As the Waterloo Express veers off track in their tour of the past, *The Interchange* asks if it is too late to save what we have lost and are about to lose.

Created by For Your Consideration, a collective formed by its key members Damien Ng, Hilary Armstrong, Kimberley Ng and Yuri D Hoffmann.

IMDA Advisory: Some Mature Content

ARTISTS' MESSAGE

“Mostly it is loss which teaches us about the worth of things”
- *Arthur Schopenhauer*

Loss has been at the forefront of many of our minds from the year 2020. Compounded by the concurrent looming losses of theatre spaces in Singapore, we were urged to take a look at what else our country has lost over the years. Our focus narrowed down to the preservation of cultural and artistic spaces and communities, and the impact that these losses have made on our nation as a whole. By understanding what has happened in the past, we hope to prevent it from happening in the future.

By For Your Consideration: Damien, Kimberley, Hilary and Yuri

PROCESS

Q&A With For Your Consideration

The collective discussed their process of creating this work under The Vault Residency, their personal connections with the locations they've chosen for their play, and collaborating in the age of Zoom.

When did the idea for this project first emerge?

This project first materialized last year when Centre 42 reached out to us about participating in The Vault. Initially, we were deeply interested in working on the history of Bugis Street, but then we began to hear about the news of Centre 42, Substation, and TNS facing the loss of their spaces. We saw a common thread amongst these losses, which drove us to look into other places that had been either destroyed or displaced as well. Our connection with this project was further fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic and how it impacts our lives as actors and theatremakers. Hence, the idea of loss and mourning emerged.

What was your research process like?

It took us quite a while to find our way into this project. We read articles, watched interviews, and videos about the people, plays, and places that are in this first showcase. However, we didn't seem to find our voice within the project. There was a lack of artistic input and emotional connection between us and the project. Eventually we realised we were approaching it as if it were an academic paper - so we decided to put all the research aside and simply write.

How was your process of working on the script together online?

It was through this collaborative writing exercise that everything started to make sense. Some may call it a collective chaos to have four people working on one script, but it worked for us. It's also worthy to note that half of our team is currently overseas with Hilary in Canada and Yuri in Brazil. So you can imagine how that made things slightly more difficult, but also more interesting. We believe our process was quite unique and fundamental to our long journey towards becoming better theatre makers.

How was your experience working with other collaborators?

It's been a completely new experience for us to be working with our dramaturg Juliet Chia. We are truly lucky to have someone with such vision and generosity assisting us in this project. There were a lot of doubts and concerns we had about our research and the script itself, but Juliet was able to understand and help us work towards refining our work. Our lighting designer, Merissa Tang and sound designer, Te Hao Boon were also crucial in helping us create the world in which our story unfolds; creating beautiful visual and audio effects respectively which we feel would captivate our audience and help them experience the world of the Interchange. Both of them also provided wonderful feedback and ideas throughout the rehearsal process which we definitely value in this collaboration.

PROCESS

Q&A With For Your Consideration

What are the plays that you have chosen to respond to?

Through our research and readings of multiple plays, we were drawn to the four plays as we felt it represented different kinds of loss and how each loss has the common thread of memory. In *The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree*, the character of the girl is driven by personal loss, having lost a friend in the tree. *Emily of Emerald Hill* addresses Emily's personal loss of her house but also how her family slowly fades away around her. And with *Boom* we see the dead and living face these memories too. This gave us an array of entry points into loss and triggered our response.

How have you selected the spaces that appear in *The Interchange*?

The locations that appear in *The Interchange* are closely linked to the plays that we respond to. Additionally, we also chose locations that were close to the people in the theatre scene and locations that had parts of their histories forgotten.

Do you have any personal memories of these spaces?

Hilary: I have distinct memories of dragon head playgrounds from my childhood, and one of Mallory's monologues is essentially a personal recollection of one of many weekends spent playing at one with my cousins. We would monkey around the structures after family dinners while our parents sat and watched, scolding our horseplaying. This is a memory that grounds me to Singapore as the place I come from, despite having moved around so much since then.

Kim: As someone queer, ever since I learnt what Bugis Street actually was before the "clean up", I could never walk through the street without feeling bittersweet knowing that this was once such a hub for the community, a place to gather among others like yourself. And I had to walk through that street to get to class everyday. That and I spent a lot of my teenage years walking around looking for the most ... "stylish" clothes. Compounded by the fact that even today we still don't have many spaces for us to get together and meet others, I always imagine what it would be like if we could ever get that space back. Knowing that it's going to undergo more renovation in the coming years, I fear that this special origin story will get lost to the younger people within the community.

Damien: Growing up through my young and teen years, Bugis has always been a big part of my life. I remembered going there almost every weekend, shopping at Bugis Street as well as hanging out at Bugis Junction. Bugis Street was such a big thing back in my younger days and one of the cool places to be. I remember the days before Bugis+ was even built and I can't believe how much Bugis has changed from when I was younger till now.

Yuri: As a foreigner who only lived in Singapore for four years, my experience is slightly different in comparison to my peers. Singapore marked the beginning of my acting career, and Centre 42 had a big part in that as they always opened their doors and welcomed us in their space. Which is why I am so glad Centre 42 is back to the blue house. Their generosity and love will always stay in my heart.

RESOURCES

Works referenced

Kuo Pao Kun, *The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree*, 1987.

First staged in 1987, the tale of a girl and her tree by the doyen of Singapore's theatre was first staged by The Theatre Practice in 1987, and has since enjoyed multiple stagings throughout the decades, with different theatre companies reimagining this classic play.

Stella Kon, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, 1982.

A universal tale of a woman's heartbreak and survival, set against the rich backdrop of Peranakan culture and society in the 1930's, *Emily of Emerald Hill* was first staged in November 1984 by Five Arts Centre in Malaysia. The play then made its Singapore debut in September 1985 at the Singapore Drama Festival, at the Drama Centre. It has since been continually staged throughout the decades, most notably with Singaporean theatre company W!ld Rice, with Ivan Heng as the titular Emily.

Jean Tay, *Boom*, 2007.

Written by economist-turned-playwright Jean Tay, the seminal play was first conceptualised at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 2007, with Singapore Repertory Theatre first producing it in Singapore in 2008. Now an 'O'-Level and 'N'-Level literature text in local schools, *Boom* has been staged across multiple tertiary level institutions with the latest staging by the Yale-NUS theatre group (aside) in 2017.

Click on each of the production titles to view related artefacts on the C42 Archive.

RESOURCES

Audio recordings from the National Archives of Singapore referenced

Joanna Wong - Chinese opera singer, actress and director.

Wong remembers the grand opening of the National Theatre in 1963. She also recalls the “\$1 a brick” fundraising campaign for the National Theatre as well as the design of the venue.

Chua Soo Pong - Founding director of the Chinese Opera Institute (COI) of Singapore, an adjunct professor of Southeast Asian theatre.

Chua talks about the old National Theatre and what they were told in school – buying a brick for \$1, as well as various activities that were organised around the venue.

Lim Siam Kim - Principal Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Culture from 1973 to 1976 and Director of National Theatre Trust from 1974 to 1981.

Lim talks about the building of the National Theatre, the subsequent venue management of the National Theatre, as well as a particular incident where the police turned up to investigate the noise from the theatre which has been disrupting the then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew’s work at the Istana.

Alfred Wong - Architect of National Theatre.

Wong talks in detail about the design brief for the National Theatre, how his design was ultimately accepted but had to be adapted and reworked.

Chek Kok Leong - Helped out at National Theatre where his brother worked as chief usher.

Chek speaks about his experience working at the National Theatre and describes the venue in detail.

Click on each of their names to view the audio recordings.

RESOURCES

Defunct Theatres in Singapore

A common story of Singapore's progress is the continual replacement of the old with the new. Amidst the shifting physical and economic landscape of Singapore, various theatre venues have had to be demolished or repurposed to make way for new infrastructure or to support new policies. The arts and cultural activities have had to constantly adapt to this state of affairs, keeping only the memories of significant spaces as they move forward

Here are three notable theatre venues that have since gone defunct.

- 1) National Theatre**
- 2) World Trade Centre Auditorium**
- 3) Fort Canning Centre**

RESOURCES

1) National Theatre



Credit: <https://www.roots.gov.sg/places/places-landing/Places/historic-sites/national-theatre>

First Built: 8 August 1963

Last performance: 15 January 1984

Demolished: August 1986

Time Existed: 23 years

Notable for: First national arts venue

Today: Fort Canning MRT Station

"The theatre provides a good example of how the success of any effort depends ultimately on the co-operation and dedication of people from all walks of life."

With these words, the then-Minister of Culture S. Rajaratnam formally received the keys to the National Theatre on 14 May 1964. The five pointed facade of the building and the outdoor fountain represented the five stars and crescent moon of the National flag. The venue hosted many artistes from around the world, as well as important functions such as the National Day Rally.

By the early 1980s though, the fully open-air concept of the National Theatre that had no side or rear walls led to its declining use with the rising popularity of air-conditioned spaces. When structural defects that were found in the building and the proximity of the proposed Central Expressway were considered, the government decided to demolish the building in 1984. The site has been marked as a Heritage Site with two historical markers, but even those had to be removed to make way for the Fort Canning MRT Station which began construction in 2011 and opened in 2017.

RESOURCES

2) World Trade Centre Auditorium



First opened: 1981
Time Existed: 23 years
Notable for: Hosting Singapore Arts Festivals
Renovated beginning: January 2000
Today: HarbourFront Centre

Credit: <https://www.singaporememory.sg/contents/SMB-293d36c5-2059-4ecb-8c3c-fcad743bba8>

“\$10m WTC auditorium booked before it's ready”

The Straits Times article headline boasts with these words in the run up to the opening of the World Trade Centre Auditorium, a 988-seater theatre situated on the 11th floor of the World Trade Centre. The WTC Auditorium would be a staple for hosting performances during the Singapore Arts Festivals from the 80s through to the 90s.

In January 2000, renovations to the aging World Trade Centre began. The newly renovated building reopened in 2003 as HarbourFront Centre, with a connection to the new Harbourfront MRT station. However, the WTC Auditorium was left unmentioned without any news of its reopening, even though the physical space still remains. Since then, it has quietly gone defunct.

RESOURCES

3) Fort Canning Centre



Credit: <https://www.singaporememory.sg/contents/SMB-293d36c5-2059-4ecb-8c3c-fcad743bba8>

First established: 1980
Cultural Centre established:
October 1990
Time Existed: 12 years
Notable for: Home of
Theatreworks from 1990 to
2002
Closed: 15 July 2002
Today at: National Museum of
Singapore, Singapore History
Gallery

“It’s well and good to have a drama promotion scheme to subsidise productions, but we also need a permanent building where all those interested in drama productions can come together,” said Mr Sng Boh Khim, the Ministry’s [of Culture] assistant director.”

With these aspirations, the Drama Centre at Fort Canning Rise became established as the launching pad for many theatre companies, such as The Necessary Stage, Theatreworks and Drama Box, presenting early works such as *Lanterns Never Go Out* (1990), *Lao Jiu* (1990), *Off Centre* (1993) and *Leng-Geh-Mng* (1998). In 1990, the Drama Centre was revamped as an arts centre to house Theatreworks and Singapore Dance Theatre.

But yet again, merely twenty-two years after its opening, the Drama Centre at Fort Canning had to go too. In its place today is the Singapore History Gallery of the National Museum of Singapore. The Drama Centre shifted its location from Fort Canning to the new National Library in Bugis, but it was no longer the home of Theatreworks and Singapore Dance Theatre.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DAMIEN NG | Cast

Damien Ng is an actor who enjoys collaborations and being with a community of people. He hopes to continue working on his craft and is interested in learning and understanding new perspectives other than his own.

His most recent works include *Resistance* (Darryl Lim), *House: Audio Play* (Rayann Condy).



"This project is truly an international collaboration, and as an artist, the process has been both inspirational and a learning journey."

KIMBERLEY NG | Cast

Kimberley Ng is a freelance actor based in Singapore. She graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts with a Diploma in Performance (2017) and a BA (Hons) in Acting (2020). She was most recently heard in the audio play adaptation of *House*, an original script by Chong Tze Chien.

She is thankful to have been able to work with Centre 42 for The Vault, and to explore what it means to call a place home.



"The journey has been a twisting and turning road, with new things to be learnt at every corner."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

HILARY ARMSTRONG | Cast

Hilary Armstrong is a Singaporean-Canadian stage and film actor passionate about art that amplifies voices of underheard communities. Being multicultural herself, she loves the possibilities that performance offers for cultures to connect. She is delighted to have had the chance to deepen her own connection to her Singaporean heritage through The Vault.



"It has been an insightful process of exploring our passions not only as people but performers, and how we can utilize the stage to bring change to our collective concerns."

YURI D HOFFMAN | Cast

Yuri D Hoffmann is a stage & film actor very much driven by curiosity. Curiosity that led him to live 15,868km away from home in order to attend LASALLE for an honours degree in Acting. As an honorary Singaporean, Yuri is glad to be part of The Vault where he could learn more about Singapore and deepen his connection with the country.



"It has been beautiful working with people who, just like you, truly care about the industry and want to be able to move theatre forward."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

About The Collective, For Your Consideration

For Your Consideration is a collective created from LASALLE College of the Arts' Bachelors in Acting 2020 cohort. They aim to create work that can challenge audiences' notions and preconceptions of the world and art around them - leaving the final judgement to their consideration. Their most recent work was an adaptation of Chong Tze Chien's *House* that was originally for the stage into an audio experience. They hope to continue to interweave theatre with multimedia thereby engaging the senses to create theatrical experiences.

The four creatives behind ***The Vault: The Interchange***, Damien, Kimberley, Hilary and Yuri are part of For Your Consideration.



@foryourconsiderationsg

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Production Credits

Cast

Emma Tee (Voice) / Jennifer - Kimberley Ng

Igor (Voice) - Yuri D Hoffmann

Mallory (Voice) - Hilary Armstrong

Little Girl/ Emily / The Caretaker / Ben - Damien Ng

Lighting Designer

Merissa Tang

Sound Designer

Te Hao Boon

Dramaturg-in-training

Juliet Chia

Juliet is currently participating in Centre 42's Dramaturgs' Practice Development programme 2021.

FURTHER READING

National Theatre

Wikipedia: [National Theatre, Singapore](#)

World Trade Centre Auditorium

The Straits Times, 16 Sep 1981: [WTC Auditorium booked before it is ready](#)

The Straits Times, 17 Feb 2003: [WTC is now HarbourFront Centre](#)

Wikipedia: [HarbourFront Centre](#)

Fort Canning Centre

The Straits Times, 7 Jul 1980: [Cultural Centre's new name, image and purpose](#)

The New Paper, 23 Feb 1990: Arts explosion at Fort Canning

Timeszone Central, 27 Sep 1990: Theatreworks finds a home

The Straits Times: Weekly Overseas Edition, 15 Jun 1991: New cultural centre opens at Fort Canning

The Straits Times, 29 Aug 2001: It's curtains for Drama Centre

Roots.sg: [Fort Canning Centre](#)

ABOUT CENTRE 42

CENTRE 42

Centre 42 is a non-profit arts organisation with IPC status committed to the creation, documentation and promotion of text-based works for the Singapore stage. As a theatre development space and intermediary, we incubate original writings for the stage, support the development of artists and new works, and develop and maintain a functional archive documenting the histories and processes of Singapore theatre.

As a registered charity, Centre 42 relies on public contributions to keep going. If you're able to, please make a donation to support our work in Singapore theatre.

WEBSITE:
centre42.sg



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THE VAULT safe-keeps Singaporean works dating back to our early theatre years. The platform does not merely document the past but manifests as contemporary responses to these works presented at Centre 42 premises. The Centre invites artists and practitioners to respond critically and personally to canonical Singapore classics, lesser known pieces and rarities, reworks and adaptations, and cross-cultural and cross-genres works.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For Your Consideration and Centre 42 would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the following individuals and groups for helping to make ***The Vault: The Interchange*** possible.

Jean Tay, Stella Kon and The Theatre Practice for their kind permission for the use of excerpts from their texts.

Chaya Gonzales for starting this project with us and providing us with immense support.

Juliet Chia for her generosity and willingness to help us improve our story.

Te Hao Boon for his exciting ideas and for helping bring this story to life.

Merissa Tang for her eagerness and for always going out of her way to help us when we seemed lost.

The technical officer on-site and the security guards at Centre 42 for their kindness and hospitality.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to Zoom and Discord. Without these two platforms, we wouldn't have been able to create this work across three different countries.

And most importantly, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Centre 42 for giving us the opportunity to be part of this beautiful project and for their continuous encouragement. Yanling, Eugene, Charlotte, and, of course, Shu, thank you for believing in us. We are very proud of how far we have come and we have you to thank for.

FEEDBACK FORM

The team behind ***The Vault: The Interchange*** would like to hear your comments about what you have just experienced via the written format.

Please scan the QR code to fill out the questionnaire.



bit.ly/interchangeff

Thank you for attending ***The Vault: The Interchange***!