

**RISE AND SHINE**



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

A vibrant city is an artistic one. Understanding this adage, the Ministry of Communications, Information and the Arts announced the Renaissance City Plan III (RCP III) in FY 2008, which details the next exciting chapter of Singapore's development towards a global city for culture and the arts. Over the next five years, the Singapore Government has earmarked \$115 million for development in three key areas of engaged community, distinctive content and dynamic ecosystem.

Then came the third quarter of FY 2008, when the global economy went into recession. Understandably, the crisis could have been curtains for RCP III. That didn't happen. Taking the long-term view, the National Arts Council (NAC) pressed on to launch three major initiatives: Arts For All – Community Engagement Plan, Arts Creation Fund and International Arts Residency Programme.

The Community Engagement – Arts for All Plan supports community-relevant arts programmes, encourages active participation in arts-making, and in the process fosters a sense of community and national identity. The Arts Creation Fund helps local artists create groundbreaking works by supporting the research and development process. Not least, the International Arts Residency Programme provides artists access to residencies in top institutions around the world.

Collectively, the initiatives dovetail into a three-pronged objective – to grow the local audience, local artists, and local arts. And this is only a prelude. Over the next few months, NAC will be rolling out more initiatives to buttress RCP III. While the future gets us excited, the present reality keeps expectations in check.

The economic downturn will exert a dampener effect on the arts: sponsors tighten their belts; arts organisations work with limited resources; and audiences spend less. Yet, the picture is far from gloomy.

The silver lining is that artists and arts organisations have an opportunity to reinvent themselves. Now is the time to improve processes, to put in much-needed systems and to send people for training. During this lull, artists and arts organisations should seize the opportunity to spring clean, to hone present skills and to learn new ones.

Looking back, Singapore has come a long way since the first Renaissance City Plan in 2000. Today, we have 27,000 arts activities a year, arts companies and societies numbered 800 and our arts industry employs some 21,000 people. One in three Singaporeans have attended at least one arts event in the past year. In addition, the School of the Arts and Tisch School of the Arts Asia have opened their doors, and the national monuments, Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall will undergo major refurbishment. Our artists garner international awards yearly and are sought after for overseas engagements, residencies and collaborations. While there is cause for us to celebrate our achievements, we have much to do in the journey ahead.

The counsel and guidance of our Board members have been vital to the work of the Council and I would like to thank all of them for their contributions. I would especially like to express my appreciation to nine members who have completed their term of appointment. They are Chua Thian Poh, Ho Peng, Philip Antony Jeyaretnam, Lee Tzu Yang, Lim Neo Chian, Ong Keng Sen, Vera Ong, Sarkasi bin Said and Dr Finian Tan. At the same time, I welcome our new members – Aw Kah Peng, Dr Chua Chee Lay, Iskandar bin Ismail, Isa Kamari, Kok Lee Kwang, Melissa Kwee, Venka Purushothaman, Ong Kim Seng, Ow Chio Kiat, Guy Harvey-Samuel, Nirmala Seshadri and Woon Tai Ho.

I would also like to thank the management, in particular, Lee Suan Hiang who has stepped down as Chief Executive after six years of service. He has been a steady hand at the tiller, and has guided the organisation through a significant period in its history. We wish him well as he exits right into the next act in his career with the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts.

Taking centre stage is Benson Puah who joined us as Chief Executive Officer on 1 August 2009. He is a man with deep roots in the arts scene in Singapore and I believe that he is well qualified to lead NAC and the local arts scene with renewed purpose and vigour.

Going forward, we will continue to invest in our people and our institutions. In tandem with RCP III, we will harness our rich multi-cultural heritage to produce a distinctive body of works. More resources will be devoted for capability development initiatives. We will enhance the community's access to the arts and champion active life-long engagement in the arts. With the support from our stakeholders and partners, we are confident that these strategies, when executed, will help make Singapore a vibrant global city for the arts.



**EDMUND CHENG**  
Chairman