

**SHINE A LIGHT**



If the Republic radiates artistic fervour, it is because the right components have clicked. Just what are they? Innovative artists and arts groups are one. Engaging, exciting and inspiring works are also indispensable. World-class events that draw practitioners and audiences from around the world complete the jigsaw. We have achieved all these, largely with the impetus from the original Renaissance City Plan (RCP) in 2000 and the second phase in 2005. The two plans have enabled 27,000 arts activities annually, 1.5 million ticketed attendances each year, and an industry that employs over 20,000 people.

Left



*A Million Kisses to my Skin* by Singapore Dance Theatre at Singapore Arts Festival 2008.  
(Photo by Tan Ngiap Heng)



To beam Singapore's arts scene up into the stratosphere, the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) launched Renaissance City Plan III in FY 2008. And with it, the commitment to invest \$115 million over the next five years. RCP III has three new areas: to create distinctive content; to create a dynamic ecosystem for the arts; and to grow an engaged community in Singapore.

To get there, the National Arts Council (NAC) has forged ahead with its key thrusts. One is to drive content creation and distribution. Another is to nurture artists and facilitate global connectivity of arts from the Republic. Engaging communities, especially children and youth, will be another focus. And to create a dynamic ecosystem for the arts, NAC will develop capabilities and infrastructure, and engage in arts advocacy.

### GLOWING CONTENT

Creating distinctive content, and having a conducive environment to do so, is paramount for any art form, which explains NAC's two new RCP III initiatives. The first is the \$3.5 million Arts Creation Fund which supports artists doing original work during the germination stage. More precisely, the fund underpins the research and experimentation phase of developing new works, including the performing arts, literary arts, visual arts and multi-disciplinary art forms. About 90 artists applied for the first grants following the launch of the Fund in November 2008.

The other initiative is the \$2.5 million International Arts Residency Programme introduced in February 2009. A residency overseas at a major arts institution allows artists to immerse themselves in new experiences and obtain fresh vantage points, as they exchange ideas with other artists. The programme also helps arts institutions that are keen on developing and hosting residency programmes in Singapore.

**Top left** ..... Wit Pimkanchanapong's *Singapore 2008*, Singapore Biennale 2008.  
**Bottom left** ..... Arts for All – Community Engagement Plan, *Let's Drum*.



To have an inspiring arts environment also means developing strong cultural institutions that are centres of creation, research and exchange in the arts. There are plans to refurbish Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall as part of a broader strategy to better synergise and promote cultural institutions in the city area. In the near future, the two historic arts venues will see the upgrading of facilities and equipment, as well as the enhancement of existing space to accommodate rehearsal needs and more arts activities.

### KINDLING THE SPARK

Nothing animates the arts scene better than widespread participation. To this end, NAC launched the Arts for All – Community Engagement Plan in October 2008. As the name suggests, the invite goes out to all audiences, giving everyone the privilege of creating art. It aims to bring about deeper engagement and ownership of the arts and culture among Singaporeans. The \$5 million plan has two pillars – ArtReach for the general audiences; and ArtLink, targeting specific demographics or groups.

ArtReach aims to increase community access to quality art experiences. The three initiatives under this programme are the Community Participation Grant; the Arts Community Tours; and Arts 101.

The Community Participation Grant funds projects that enable members of the community to be involved in the creative process. To date, Arts Theatre of Singapore, Geylang Serai Community Club Youth Executive Committee, Maya Dance Theatre, The ARTS FISSION Company and The Necessary Stage have received funding support under this scheme. The Arts Community Tours, on the other hand, enables professional arts companies to tour the heartlands and get community involvement. Finally, Arts 101 consists of workshops and talks by professional artists and award-winning artists. These talks are designed to educate and familiarise the laymen with the basic skills and vocabulary of various art forms.

- Top left** ..... Arts Where We Eat at Tampines Round Market & Food Centre.
- Bottom far left** ..... Students holding their artworks, *When I Grow Up*, Kids' Biennale 2008.
- Bottom left** ..... SPIN A TALE Storytelling Competition, KIDSFEST.

While the programmes within ArtReach cast a wide net, the programmes within ArtLink are tailored specifically for different groups. Currently, there are three schemes within ArtLink – the Silver Arts Programme, Youth Engagement through the Arts, and Artists in Community.

The Silver Arts Programme has taken off with a bang. It seeks to enrich the lives of senior citizens by encouraging them to pursue their artistic interests and bond with one another through the arts. This programme began with a series of drumming workshops for some 180 seniors from six grassroots organisations. After hours of practice, these seniors subsequently staged a successful performance for their friends and families. Since then, more and more seniors have formed groups and are banging their own drums.

At the other end of the age spectrum is Youth Engagement through the Arts. In this programme, NAC works with partners such as \*scape, the People’s Association and Republic Polytechnic to develop and sustain the artistic energies and skills of youth.

The last initiative, Artists in Community, strives to bring artists closer with the community vis-a-vis public arts projects. For example, artists will work with organisations such as Singapore General Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital to connect healthcare workers and patients with regular arts activities.

These RCP III initiatives, along with others in the pipeline, will hoist the torch that lights up Singapore’s arts landscape.