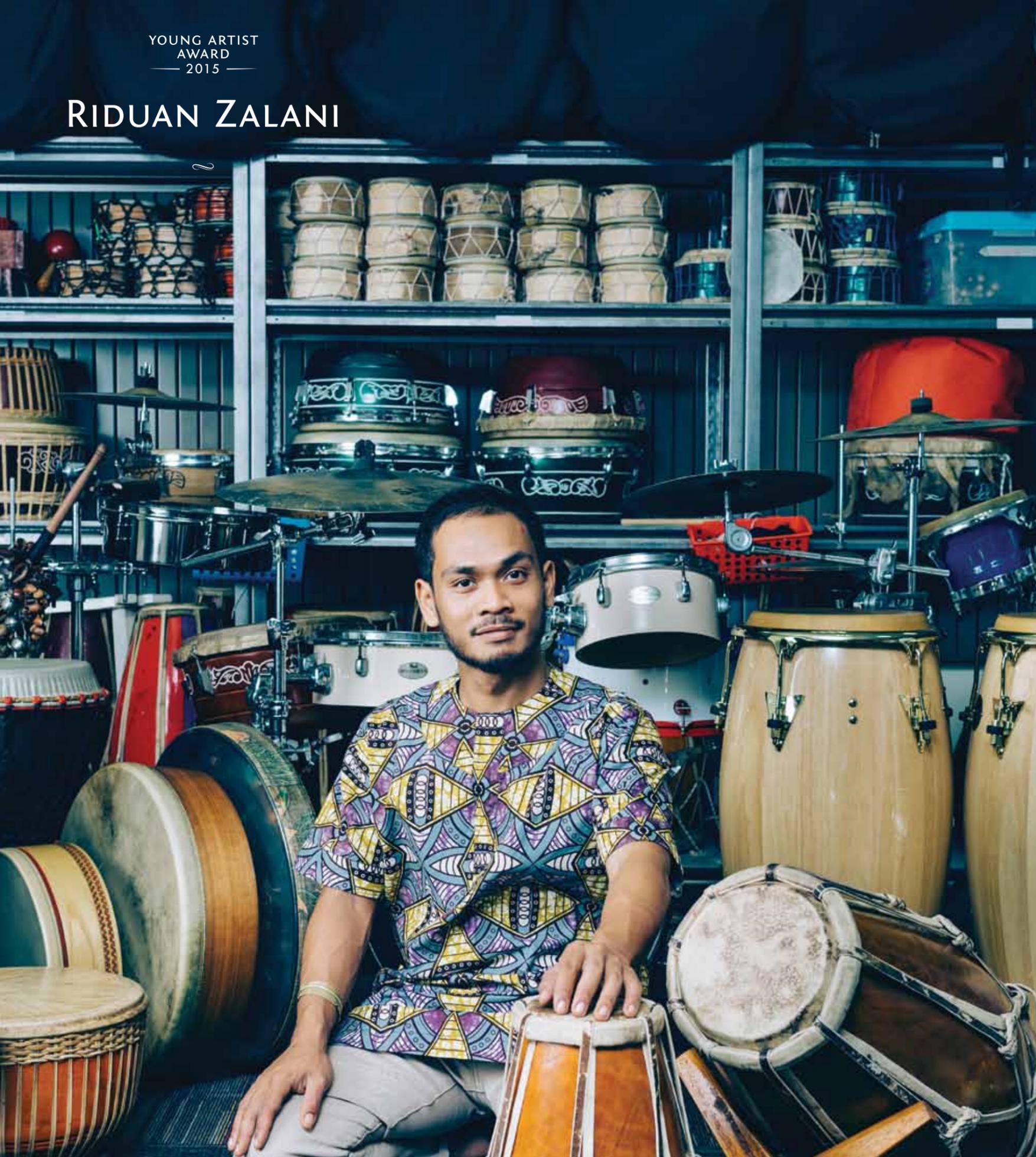


# RIDUAN ZALANI



Riduan presenting the cast of Himpunan Serumpun II (NADI Singapura's annual community engagement program). Photo courtesy of Riduan Zalani



Riduan playing the Jidor drum with NADI Singapura. Photo courtesy of Riduan Zalani

**R**iduan Zalani (b. 1985) is a percussionist. A music leader amongst his generation, Riduan began his music pursuits in *dikir barat* at the age of seven, and undertook formal music studies at LASALLE College of the Arts where he attained a Diploma in 2007.

Riduan is highly respected for his artistic excellence in the field of percussion. His dedication and commitment to deepening his craft made him an exemplary talent today in an array of percussion practices including Malay Archipelago, Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian drums. He performs globally from Japan to USA in renowned music, folklore and dance festivals including the World of Music, Arts and Dance (WOMAD). In Singapore, he performs regularly with various ensembles including Wicked Aura Batucada, Orkestar Trio, SONOFA, Keris Movements and Singapore Malay Orchestra. Riduan's versatile skills are evident in his solo and sessionist ventures with the Singapore Wind Symphony (2013), various MediaCorp programmes and in his collaborations with groups like Sa Trio (2014) and Bornfire (2006 – 2015).

In 2011, Riduan co-founded NADI Singapura to champion Malay traditional drums and percussion. Through NADI, he spearheaded collaborative projects like *Temasya Kampung Gelam* (2011) and *Himpunan Serumpun* (2014, 2015) that are multi-disciplinary in nature, and directed *Journey of the Pulse* (2013, 2014). In 2014, Riduan led NADI to launch its debut album, *KataKitaKota*. A truly young ambassador of Malay traditional music, Riduan's performances push creative boundaries and advocate multi-sensorial experiences.

Riduan is not only an excellent musician but has evolved to become a producer, creative director and leader, both locally and internationally. All these roles are imbued with a deep sense of responsibility to the community. In this regard, Riduan inspires his peers in projects such as *World Drum Night 2* (2013), *Chingay* (2015) and *Drum Gaia* (2015) where he led a contingent of several hundred drummers.

Riduan's innovations in the art of drumming and sensibility towards community engagement have made him a much sought-after performer, an advocate for the arts and an inspiration to young musicians. Riduan occasionally conducts motivational talks at organisations such as the Singapore Boys' Home and volunteers at the Spastic Children's Association of Singapore. Riduan's dedication to his music and community has won him accolades such as the Goh Chok Tong Youth Promise Award (2006), Yahoo! Singapore 9 Award (Entertainment) (2012), Singapore Youth Award (2013) and ASEAN Youth Award (2013).



Riduan With Orkestar Trio performing in Festival Lent, Slovenia. Photo courtesy of Riduan Zalani

## A CONVERSATION WITH RIDUAN ZALANI

*Tell us about your earliest memories encountering the arts. Who or what were your key influences?*

My earliest memories - the vital one, was of my uncle, Mr. Imran Ahmad, who would bring me along to his traditional Malay *dikir barat*, *tarian* and *kompang* ensemble practice sessions since I was seven years old. Attending them sparked my love for the traditional arts, unleashing my never-ending exploration and development till this very day.

*Despite being exposed to various types of percussions and music, what drives you to focus on developing the local Malay music scene and also promoting Singapore music?*

Busking in the streets of Orchard Road with Wicked Aura Batucada, playing melodic arabic tunes in a Hafila with a bellydancer, down with a group of dholi performing Bhangra or banging the *Da Gu* for a lion dance procession. These exposures were some choices I had taken to further understand the world of music and performance. The interactions helped me appreciate the sights and sounds of my homeland, and in particular, I discovered a sense of responsibility to proliferate Malay arts practices and keep the artistic creations alive, celebrated and honed by the community.

It will be depressing if none of us would ride on our diverse cultural inheritance. I believe that there is strength in our unique amalgamation and expressions. There is a sense of pride and responsibility as heirs and drivers of our music.

I have always believed that the artist is unique to his point of origin in the era he lives in.



*How do you hope to inspire the younger generation with your experiences and achievements?*

The stories I share will be a testament of struggles, conditions and tireless determination that shall accompany the youth in their artistic pursuit. Nothing is impossible.

A hobby that I was passionate about has evolved to become a career for me consisting performing, producing, composing, recording, teaching, collaborating and even travelling internationally. My experiences gave me a wider view of things and I know that there is actually more to be done and endless more to uncover. The youth will be future leaders bearing the same responsibility, bringing the arts towards another level.

*What advice would you give to students who want to pursue a career in your field?*

Carry out each and every work - no matter what the scale may be - with honesty and whole-heartedness. Be full of gratitude, forgiving and stay humble always.

*What are your vision and hopes for Singapore's arts scene?*

I hope the scene grows to become a full-fledged industry comparable to any international arts scene. For the supporting professional roles in the arts (e.g. management, communications, media, financial and fan base), I hope it gains traction and support, and eventually be top class to support artists.

I do believe that the world will turn to Singapore as an influential entertainment and cultural hub someday. In the area of Malay music and arts, I hope there will be an increase in academics and professionals who will dedicate themselves to build and formalise a Malay music and arts institution.

## Words of Appreciation

*My deepest gratitude to the Almighty for looking over me and blessing my days. Syukur Alhamdulillah.*

*Thank you LASALLE College of the Arts for the nomination and the National Arts Council for the award.*

*My sincere appreciation goes out to NADI Singapura, OrkeStar Trio, Wicked Aura, SONOFA, Keris Movements, De'Lima, Tribal Tide, Indigo, Sambiesta, Samba Masala, The Singapore Malay Orchestra, Batucada Sound Machine (NZ), fellow musicians and performing artists around the world, whom I had the chance to be on stage with. Thank you for sharing this passion, the trust and always creating momentous music together wherever we may be.*

*To my teachers and mentors - the late Mr. Iskandar Ismail, Mr. Imran Ahmad, Mr. Md Noor, Mr. Tamagoh, Mr. Maniam, Mr. Amit Gilboa, Mr. Zubir Abdullah, Mr. Din Safari, Mr. Ramli Sarip, Mr. Julian Wong, Mr. Qamar Baba and Mr. Yaziz Hassan who gladly took time to share part of their gift with me, generously guiding me along my journey. Not forgetting the ever calm, determined, critical and supportive manager for most of my engagements, Miss. Hamizah.*

*My various partners-in-action, Mr. Hazli, Mr. and Mrs. Roslan (O'lando Music), Mr. Kuzai (Greendoor Studios), Mr. Zulhelmi, Mr. Abu, Miss Xyn Foo (Bornfire), Mr Goh Lin Ping (Pantheon Percussion), Mr. Ismahairie, Mr. Alhafiz, Mr. Nizarfauzie, Mr. Saidrudy, Mr. Said, my early companions: Mr. Sharanpal, Mr. Matt and Mr. Jenson. Not forgetting my family of brothers and sisters, the pioneering members of Wicked Aura, SONOFA and NADI Singapura.*

*In addition, organisations and venue partners who have significantly contributed to my artistic growth - The Esplanade, People's Association, Kallang Community Centre, Malay Heritage Centre and Foundation, National Youth Council, and many more.*

*To all my students - for giving me an opportunity to share my insights, knowledge and experience, along with the daily dosage of inspiration.*

*To all friends, relatives and supporters - for making time to watch my performances, following my milestones, supporting and helping to improve and share my creations along the way. I will always appreciate the sincerity and kindness.*

*My late grandmother, Hajah Zainab bte Md Nor, for being the most influential figure in my life, instilling the values I hold on to dearly.*

*One of the most important pillars in my life would be my dearest family: Mdm. Hatijah and Mr. Zalani, together with Rizan, Nordiana, Nur Shakila, Amir and Izryan, for standing by me and pushing me on through the years to pursue my passion. I'm ever so thankful and grateful.*

*Last but not least, to my better half and life partner, Miss Nor'Ain. Thank you for the patience, faith and support. Hang on tight; the freeway is filled with deep bumps and steep hills for us to drive through hand-in-hand. I will continuously supplicate to the Almighty for many returns because with every hardship, comes ease.*

*I would like to seek forgiveness if I had crossed boundaries and unintentionally offended or caused harm to anyone along the way. I am far from perfect.*

*Once again, my sincerest gratitude to everyone.*