

# CHACHAMBO

TAKING FLIGHT

4 - 6 AUG, VICTORIA THEATRE



**ART:DIS** | 30  
ARTS & DISABILITY  
SINGAPORE

years of  
advancing  
disability  
inclusion

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I recall during one rehearsal for *Chachambo* we asked Timothy, an actor with down syndrome, to repeat a jumping dance step. When he consistently failed, I had an epiphany, "Did we realise he can never do what we're asking because he has a flat foot?" Quickly, we adjusted the choreography and we saw Timothy beaming instead of blaming himself. The fact is, he has always been a great dancer if he is not subjected to any impositions.

This journey as a director and performance coach has been colossal, yet humbling. Featuring the professional work of ART:DIS's first cohort of BEYOND DIS:PLAY, a theatre training programme which I oversaw, this performance bears the fruit of two years worth of labour.

When people tell me, "Oh, you are so noble doing what you do." I will always reply, "No, I am very selfish" because I am preparing the arts scene to employ or work with me when I become disabled. Not a taboo, really. But a reality because quite frankly, we are just not-yet disabled. Embracing this demands a change of character and a radical shift in perspective.

After months of toiling together, each of the 10 main performers with disabilities have shaped himself/herself to have character, both in the artistic and personal sense. Almost all of them are performing characters from everyday life – a father, a mother, a guardian, an entrepreneur, a lover, a dreamer, a rebel, an infidel and more. We dug deep into these characters and every day, we learn more about what it means to be truly human.

To subvert the stereotype that this is a 'charity' show, we raised the bar of what is expected professionally from artists with disabilities and this demanded lots of character, specifically guts and resilience. It also necessitated trust in partners who enabled them with purity of intentions. In my heart, all of them are quiet champions with understated character.

To the community-driven, ground-up performance groups, kudos for recognising that everyone in the room is an asset, never a deficit. It beckons us to actively listen, sense and see, instead of label, assume and overcompensate. To the younger aspiring Deaf and disabled from schools and social service agencies, bravo for believing that the stage should mirror life and that it belongs to anyone.

To all our allies, funders, supporters, volunteers and audiences, thank you for investing in this shared space of dreams & possibilities. After the show is over, let's continue to build each other up and leverage our shared vision to empower alternative/authentic perspectives and lived experiences. This is what we lack right now in the world – to break through binaries and surpass boundaries. Only together, can we turn the key to unlock the possibilities and build a genuine character in each other, celebrating humanity.



With my very best, Peter Sau

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

ART:DIS celebrates our 30 th anniversary this year with the return of our signature 'Welcome to My World' performance platform. I remember attending the 2013 edition as an audience member. It was then held at the Republic Polytechnic's Cultural Centre, and was a concert format featuring different performing groups within the various SPED schools. It was the SYF of the SPED community, and I thought to myself how important it would be for the best of these talents to come together someday, to present a professional full-length performance in a mainstream arts venue, performing to regular theatre goers (beyond the close-knit disability community).

I am glad to see this come to pass in this year's exuberant edition with *Chachambo* at the Victoria Theatre, lead by 10 outstanding disabled individuals anchoring the stage, buoyed further by the ensemble support of 90 over other members from different community groups. So much of what we perceive of deaf, disabled and neurodiverse persons is informed by what we see in the media and popular culture – but also what we do not see.

Each of the disabled main cast members performing on stage have continuously pushed themselves to do more, to do better, to shatter the glass ceiling they and their families have of themselves. I am immensely proud of the journey each of them have taken to arrive at this destination, and the courage it takes to put themselves out there. It is first a glass ceiling for themselves, before it is for the audience. But it is also the audience who gives them the chance to believe that they can.

Thank you for being an audience to their dreams today. I leave you with a powerful and moving quote, shared by one of our main actors during rehearsal:

*"The amount of words I have to speak, is more than what I have to speak in everyday life."* -Luo Mang

Yours Sincerely, Angela Tan



Actors Luo Mang & Jun  
Wei jiving to Elvis Presley's  
*Jailhouse Rock*



## ABOUT ART:DIS

Formerly known as Very Special Arts Singapore, ART:DIS is a non-profit organisation established in 1993, championing the learning and livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities (PwDs) in and through the arts.

We provide a wide range of programmes to enable PwDs to develop their artistic interests, grow their self-confidence and engage them as active members of a supported community, outside of and beyond formal education.

Our parallel professional development pathways further supports sustainable & meaningful impact for PwDs to gain work experience, empowering them to live independently in the community.

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## SYNOPSIS

A tribute to the past, a moving story of forgiveness, the fate of an entertainment club rests solely on the shoulders of a visually-impaired girl. From battling against revolting employees who challenge her at every turn, to discovering her mother's struggle to raise her to stand tall, this music theatre piece written & performed by persons with disabilities reminds us to always have hope and to never stop dreaming.

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### SCENE 1

Bao Yu, the lady boss of an entertainment club passes on and her visually-impaired daughter, Ming Zhu, attempts to revive it to its former glory.

Featured songs:

- *Habanera* from the opera *Carmen*
- *Jailhouse Rock* by Elvis Presley

### SCENE 2

Ming Zhu's attempts fail and the club's employees blame it on her inadequacy. Frustrated, she seeks solace from her guardian Tao Jie, who recounts Bao Yu's life story.

### SCENE 3

A young Bao Yu meets her first lover, who is a dancer. Smitten, she gives her life savings to him but he runs away. Having lost both her dancing partner and money, she swears to never rely on anyone else ever again.

Featured songs:

- *春风吻上我的脸* (*Spring Wind Kissing My Face*) by 姚莉 (Nancy Yao)
- *相思河畔* (*Missing Each Other By The River*) by 崔萍 (Tsui Ping)

### SCENE 4

Tao Jie encourages Ming Zhu to accept her mother's scholarship to study abroad because education is the pathway to success. Ming Zhu resents her mother's way of love.

Featured song:

- *三年* (*Three Years*) by 李香兰 (Yoshiko Yamaguchi)

### SCENE 5

Ming Zhu recalls her own first romance to Deaf dancer, Ali (below). Connecting through touch, they dance and fall in love. Sadly it was not to be for her mother Bao Yu forcibly separated them.

Featured songs:

- *Right Here Waiting* by Richard Marx
- *Getaran Jiwa* by Tan Sri P. Ramlee

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*intermission*

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### SCENE 6

As a successful performer, Bao Yu is never short of suitors. However with a heart of steel, she turns everyone away. Slowly but surely though, her doorkeeper Lucky Liu melts her heart and she falls in love once more.

Featured song:

— *All I Have To Do Is Dream* by The Everly Brothers

### SCENE 7

Bao Yu discovers she is pregnant. Lucky Liu, the father of the baby, tells her to abort the baby and focus on her career. She refuses and discovers him flirting with a younger dancer. Betrayed, she throws him out of the club.

Featured songs:

— *我爱恰恰恰 (I Love Cha Cha Cha)* by 葛兰 (Grace Chang)

— *玫瑰玫瑰我爱你 (Rose, Rose I Love You)* by 姚莉 (Yao Li)

— *我要你的爱 (I Want Your Love)* by 葛兰 (Grace Chang)

— *Both Sides Now* by Joni Mitchell

### SCENE 8

Ming Zhu empathizes with her mother, who further confesses via tape recording to feeling guilty of birthing Ming Zhu with a visual impairment.

Together, mother and daughter reconcile.

Featured song:

— *不了情 (Love Without End)* by 顾媚 (Carrie Koo)

### SCENE 9

Ming Zhu accepts her mother's plans to study abroad and promises to return to the club as a better version of herself.

Featured song:

— *梦 (Dreams)* by 顾媚 (Carrie Koo)

### SCENE 10

News channels applaud Ming Zhu as a shining new star. She returns to the entertainment club with plans to turn it into a performing arts centre.

Featured song:

— *说不出的快活 (Chachambo)* by 葛兰 (Grace Chang)

Actors Yeo Yann Yann & Claire Teo  
act out a scene as Brian Gothong  
Tan films



## CAST

Ammar Amezzy	Jaspreet Kaur Sekhon
Choo Jun Wei	Jo Kwek
Claire Teo	Luo Mang
Germaine Goh	Timothy Lee
Grace Ng	Wan Wai Yee
Ivni Yaakub	Yeo Yann Yann

## COMMUNITY PERFORMERS

ART:DIS Cajon & Choir	Lighthouse School
APSN Tanglin School	Spring Wind Divas
Ageless Bridge	Yong-en Active Hub
Down Syndrome Association	Y-Stars

## CREATIVE & ACCESS TEAM

<b>Director</b> Peter Sau	<b>Playwright</b> Claire Teo
<b>Assistant Director</b> Su Paing Tun	<b>Costume Designer</b> Max Tan
<b>Music Composer, Song Arranger &amp; Sound Designer</b> Dr Philip Tan	<b>Multimedia Designer</b> Brian Gothong Tan
<b>Vocal Artist</b> Sky Shen	<b>Lighting &amp; Set Designer</b> Dorothy Png
<b>Production &amp; Stage Manager</b> Charlinda Pereira	<b>Sound Engineer</b> Joel Fernandez
<b>Lead Choreographer</b> Zulfikar Ali	<b>Choreographers</b> Adele Goh, Nur Arianty & Xenres Kirishima
<b>Hair &amp; Makeup</b> Grace Meng	<b>SgSL Interpretation</b> Azzam Akbar & Shawn Fang
<b>Caption Designer</b> Shai	<b>Caption Assistant</b> Courtney Mae Lim
<b>Creative Narration Writer</b> Su Paing Tun	<b>Creative Narration Advisor</b> Claire Teo & Peter Sau
<b>Original Concept</b> Dr Dawn-joy Leong	<b>Photography</b> Poh Yu Khing
<b>Videography</b> Studio W	<b>Contributing Writer</b> Jade Ow





Photographer Yu Khing taking a shot of Grace Ng while she is dressed in character as Tao Jie



**ABOVE**

Actor Germaine getting her make-up done before headshot photography

**RIGHT**

Production & Stage Manager Charlinda plotting cue points during rehearsal

**BELOW**

Director Peter Sau giving the cast a pep talk with SgSL interpreter Azzam



**RIGHT**

Lead Choreographer Ali leading all 90+ performers for the finale dance item 说不出的快活 by 葛兰



Dancers from Down Syndrome Association grooving to evergreen Mandopop tune 我爱恰恰恰 by 葛兰



ALI

CHACHAMBO



## CHARACTER PROFILE

Born Deaf, Ali is a passionate street dancer who uses his body and hand gestures to communicate. A romantic at heart, he falls in love with Ming Zhu's singing. Together, their clandestine love affair unfolds through music and dance. Will the love birds have a happy ever after?



### RIGHT

Ali teaches Ming Zhu how to write his name in the air



### LEFT

Ali and Ming Zhu embrace as he teaches her how to song sign to *Getaran Jiwa*

# BAO YU

CHACHAMBO



## CHARACTER PROFILE

A popular singer & dancer, Bao Yu rose through the ranks to become the lady boss of an entertainment club. However, the road was fraught with bitter betrayals, leaving her heart hardened and soul weary. To spare her daughter Ming Zhu from such misery, she is draconian in her upbringing, demanding exacting standards from a young girl who only wishes to be loved.



### FROM CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT

- Bao Yu (reverie) sobs in the privacy of her dressing room in regret.
- Bao Yu (late-30s) catches Lucky Liu flirting with Rosy Rose.
- Bao Yu (late-20s) plays a duet with Lucky Liu during their courtship.
- Bao Yu (teens) impresses audiences with her dance.

# CONCIERGE

CHACHAMBO





## CHARACTER PROFILE

Concierge is an old-timer of the club, a guardian of secrets as she is confidante to everyone. She witnesses the ups-and-downs of the club, as well as its ins-and-outs. Craving for love, she kindles the romance between Ming Zhu & Ali under the watchful eyes of Bao Yu.



### ABOVE

Concierge addresses the audience, welcoming them to the club before the performance commences.

### LEFT

Concierge shares gossip and internal monologues of the club's employees for audiences.

# TAO JIE

CHACHAMBO



## CHARACTER PROFILE

A stalwart figure, Tao Jie appears stern but in front of loved ones, her cool exterior belies a warm heart. Born Deaf, she has worked at the entertainment club since its humble beginnings, witnessing its splendour under Bao Yu's leadership. As guardian to Ming Zhu, she aches at the girl's loneliness but like her mother, yearns for Ming Zhu's success.



### ABOVE

Tao Jie tries to calm Ming Zhu down by embracing her

### BELOW

Tao Jie reasons with a stubborn Ming Zhu, who is adamant to fight against her mother's wishes even in death.



# LUCKY LIU

CHACHAMBO



## CHARACTER PROFILE

As a doorkeeper for the entertainment club, Lucky Liu has witnessed many of Bao Yu's glamorous stage moments, as well as her private struggles behind closed doors. Persistent in his affections, he wins over her heart and helps Bao Yu elevate the club to become the most renowned in the region. Ambitious and enterprising, he is disappointed when she makes the decision to put her career on the back burner to be a mother.



### ABOVE

Lucky Liu (late-20s) musters his courage to initiate first contact with Bao Yu.



### LEFT

Lucky Liu (late-30s) flirts with Rose after drinking one glass too many.

# LOVER

CHACHAMBO



## CHARACTER PROFILE

Lover is a dancer and Bao Yu's first love. They were engaged to be married (right) but unfortunately, Lover had a vice. A regular at the gambling dens, he racked up massive debts and needed an escape route. In the face of self-preservation, he abandoned Bao Yu.



### ABOVE

Lover expresses his undying love for Bao Yu, proposing to her during their courtship.

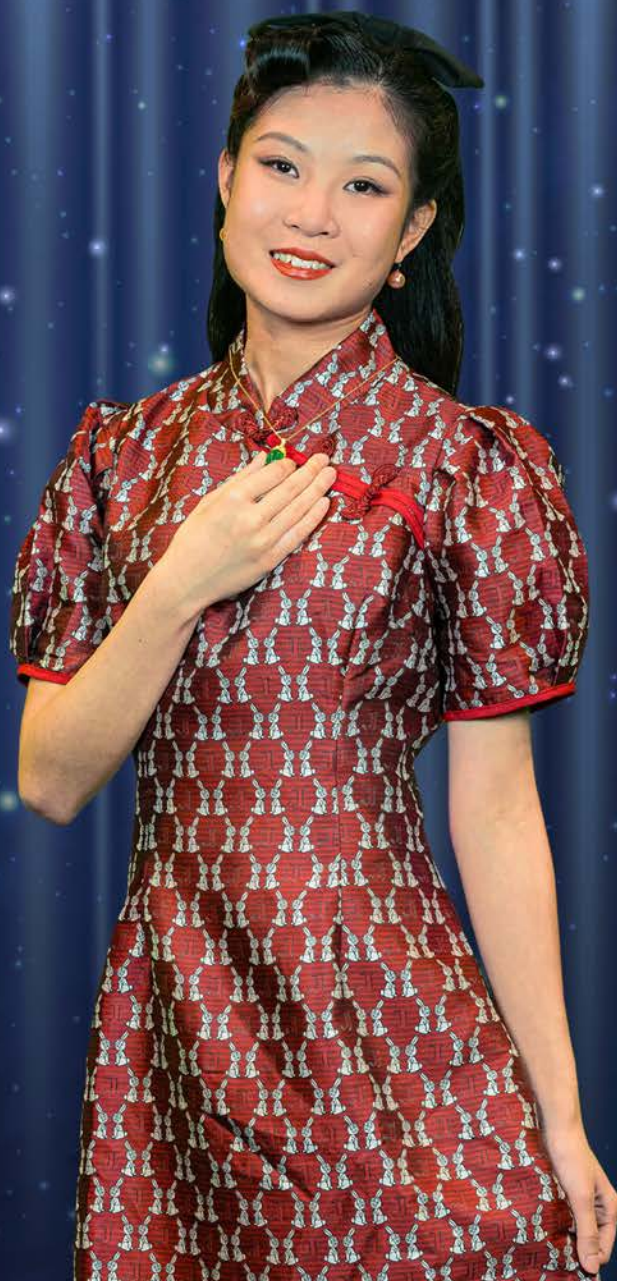
### BELOW

Lover supports Ming Zhu whenever they dance a duet, enabling her to shine on stage like a star.



# MING ZHU

CHACHAMBO





## CHARACTER PROFILE

A young girl who grew up in the entertainment club, Ming Zhu is the daughter of Bao Yu. Brought up in her mother's shadow, she is a talented singer and dancer but is starved of affection. Struggling to hold the club together after her mother's passing, she feels defeated and lost.



### RIGHT

Ming Zhu performs to an almost empty club, as the business competes to gain a footing in the entertainment industry.



### LEFT

Ming Zhu mimics the ferocity with which her mother would berate her, no matter how small the wrongdoing.

# ROSE

CHACHAMBO



## CHARACTER PROFILE

Rose is a flirtatious dancer of the entertainment club, known for her alluring movements. Though she tries to be discreet, many are aware of her fondness of Lucky Liu. Her colleagues have tried many times to dissuade her of this puppy love but to no avail.

## RIGHT & BELOW

Rose openly flirts with Lucky Liu, ignoring the admonishments from others as she has indulged too much in her drink.



Seniors from Yong-en Active Hub playing  
evergreen Mandopop tune 我爱恰恰恰 by  
葛兰 on the ukulele



## INTERVIEW

Like all good plays, it all begins with an idea. From there characters materialise and the story unfolds. But even before the ink is dry, the script evolves as the actors journey through the production. We speak with Director Peter Sau and Playwright Claire Teo on the process behind this landmark music theatre work, with anecdotes from the main cast.

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### What was the creative process behind *Chachambo*?

Claire: Writing for a disabled cast is very different from writing for the mainstream. We started off by identifying who were our actors and what their strengths were, and then how else Peter would like to push them further in their practice.

We had about 6 re-writes because between Peter and myself, we were devil's advocates as we kept striving for better – to bring out more of the story, more of the actors' strengths.

Peter: For instance, there are two autistic actors who aren't very eloquent when they're speaking. And so we kept on saying how do we create a story around them still being themselves and a character – a solid one, not a decorative character.

So it's about their other skill sets such as dance or music. If they can play a violin, then we make sure that the violin can carry the narrative. If they are dancing, we make sure that the movements itself is actually telling the story of the scene.

So that's how exciting it can be. We're challenging ourselves to not just do spoken text theatre, which is quite the conventional norm in Singapore, but to look at things from an interdisciplinary angle that is an amalgamation of all the elements of live performance.

### RIGHT

Luo Mang rehearses a dance sequence in a scene that illustrates even though Bao Yu is a talented dancer, she is still only human and yearns for companionship.

*"I'm feeling excited about this play because I get to be a different person. I need to speak many lines, which is more than what I have to say in everyday life."*

—Luo Mang



Is there a message behind *Chachambo*?

Claire: When I first wrote the play, I was thinking about were human relationships and their complexity. I wanted to bring out how we should cherish every moment we had with our loved ones. At that time, I'd just lost my grand uncle whom I was really close with. He always remind me '有今生沒來世' and so it felt important to write this story about familial ties and forgiveness.

Peter: I think the audience should come because we have an intergenerational ensemble from as young as 13 to as old as 72. And we also have an all inclusive casting, which means disabled and non-disabled individuals performing together. It is a spectacle but yet it is with substance. There is great storytelling, a very moving plot. It is all about how can we create a better place for coexistence so even though the play is fictional, it carries so much truth in what we need to establish in society.



*"Acting is more fun when it is on stage. You feel the spotlight on you as the character. When I give my best, I feel that both myself and the audience are enjoying it."*  
—Jaspreet

**ABOVE**

Jaspreet dances with the Spring Wind Divas as the Ageless Bridge ukulele musicians play 我要你的爱 by 葛兰

Any challenges, memorable moments or artistic breakthroughs during rehearsal?

Peter: Working with a pan-disability cast at this degree of intensity for this scale of performance has been very invigorating because it pushes every once of me to think of different ways to work with artists of different disabilities. I try my best to tease & coax out the different strengths of each of them and this has been very exciting.

Anyway, I think if there was one memorable moment, it would be when one of our neurodivergent actors, who was so triggered and stressed by the amount of big emotions he was feeling, he became very unstable. The breakthrough came when his other co-actors, who are also disabled, calmed him down by telling him that it was all part of a performance.

This experience is a reminder of why a pan-disability model should be what we strive for in our ecosystem, in order to be called truly inclusive.



*“The most challenging part is figuring out the correct steps like when to enter the stage, or which words are the cues for me to strum the ukulele.” —Jun Wei*

**ABOVE**

Jun Wei portrays despair as his character, Lucky Liu, has been ignored and rejected by Bao Yu for the umpteenth time.

Claire: Wearing the heels because I cannot walk in them [laughs]

But in all seriousness, it was challenging letting go of my distaste for my character. I have never felt so useless and lost working on a production and this surprised me because last year, when I played the victim of abuse and violence in a solo show, it came more naturally to me than playing this 15 year old entitled brat in *Chachambo*. With practice, I think I'm getting there.



**LEFT**

Grace, facing a projected image of Bao Yu, signs how the lady boss was not as infallible as her daughter thinks.

*"This is my first time acting with a visually impaired person and one of my main concerns with Claire was whether she was safe (i.e. navigating the stage on heels). There were a lot of awkward moments but after spending time together, we managed to make it work."*

—Grace



**LEFT**

Timothy in character as the lover, having just declared his unwavering affection for Bao Yu.

*"It's challenging to move to the correct position to deliver my lines. Sometimes I move to Ivni's side, then I move to Ammar's side, then we must move together to show interaction. I must also remember all my lines."* —Timothy



Why should audiences watch *Chachambo*?

Peter: I say already just now. Your turn, Claire.

Claire: [laughs] I feel this is why you should come because none of us are afraid to fail and none of us are afraid to keep giving our hearts and souls into this project.

This show was never about us – it was always about setting a new benchmark for excellence in the arts & disability sector. So come because you will experience beautiful song & dance from the 1960s, come because you will experience a captivating & heartwarming story, and come because you'll witness 90 individuals fighting to keep their dreams alive.



**LEFT**

Germaine, as a young Bao Yu, is touched by the ardour with which her lover expressed his affections.

“My character loves dancing just like me. I really enjoy rehearsals as I get to perform with my friends and express myself on stage.” —Germaine



**LEFT**

Ali, who is played by Ammar, stares at Ming Zhu in sadness. Even after attesting fiercely that he will fight to protect their love, she pushes him away.

“Mainstream audiences seldom get to witness a stage where different persons with disabilities come together as one. This is why I’m excited to be part of this production as I’d like to show the world that such a show is possible.” —Ammar

Hong Mei Gui, one of the ensemble characters played by Wai Yee, lays it out for Ming Zhu if she wants to be accepted as the new lady boss – either she studies abroad or become the mistress of Boss Huang.





## **AMMAR AMEEZY**

*Ali*

A visual creator both on the dance floor and through the lens, Ammar pushes boundaries with his craft. Growing up in both Deaf and Hearing worlds, he is passionate about integrating both. The resident choreographer for Deaf hip-hop dance crew Redeafination, as well as a cinematic filmmaker, Ammar views art as a powerful medium that transcends language. For his strong advocacy of Deaf culture, Ammar received the Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards (UBS Promise) 2022.



## **CHOO JUN WEI**

*Lucky Liu (mid-20s) / Ensemble*

Jun Wei is an all-rounded performer who started learning the electone at 4 years old. In primary school, his CCA was Chinese dance and he participated in the Singapore Youth Festival for 4 years. During secondary school, Jun Wei picked up the French horn and continued to be part of the brass line into his ITE days, eventually joining The Purple Symphony in 2017. Through the arts, Jun Wei feels empowered and enjoys performing on community and professional stages.



## **CLAIRE TEO**

*Ming Zhu*

Claire is the first visually impaired person to graduate from a professional theatre course from LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. Beyond acting & singing, she has conceptualised and directed inclusive art projects such as *Move For?ward* that was part of the Light to Night festival 2022.

Claire works full-time at Methodist Welfare Services, and also teaches drama at MINDS and Lighthouse School. In 2022, Claire received the Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards for her enduring advocacy of the disabled community.



**GERMAINE GOH**

*Bao Yu (teen) / Ensemble*

Germaine is a talented dancer who displays excellent balance, coordination, rhythm, grasps dance techniques quickly and is highly expressive in her movements. Following years of training, Germaine's movement vocabulary has expanded tremendously, enabling her to use the body to express herself confidently.

A passionate artist who sees beauty and endless possibilities in dance, Germaine hopes to forge more meaningful relationships with people through movement.



**GRACE NG**

*Tao Jie*

Born deaf, Grace loves to read manga, take photos and watch movies. Inspired by Deaf actress Marlee Matlin, Grace began to explore acting, honing her skills through online courses and ART:DIS's theatre programme.

This opened up opportunities for her to perform *Between Us* for Singapore Writers Festival 2020, and a collaborative staging of *The Lunar Interviews* with playwright Verena Tay in 2022. Grace plans to further her training with ART:DIS.



**IVNI YAAKUB**

*Lucky Liu (mid-30s) / Ensemble*

Since 1998, Ivni has been a musician and guitarist. He has released an EP with heavy metal band Helm's Key, and performed with Music Theatre Limited and The Purple Symphony.

In 2020 he formed a busking band StrawberryStory with fellow visually impaired singer, Wai Yee, and performs frequently at corporate events. Supported by ART:DIS, he is now learning vocals and acting and hopes to share his music and impact more lives.



## **JASPREET SEKHON**

*Rose*

Jaspreet is a passionate advocate for persons with intellectual disabilities, having spoken at the United Nations in New York on World Down Syndrome Day 2014, Having a Say Conference 2018 in Australia, and at the We Are Able 2018 seminar where she shared about the importance of empowerment. She has worked as a teacher's aide for 16 years, and today is a dancer and teacher for Diverse Abilities Dance Collective. In 2022, Jaspreet received the Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards (UBS Promise) 2022 for her advocacy work with the disabled community.



## **JO KWEK**

*Concierge*

Jo has been actively participating in numerous theatre productions, television dramas and films since graduating from theatre school.

Her recent stage credits include *Peepbird*, *Citizen Dog*, *The Crab Flower Club*, *The Next Generations*, *The Moonstory*, and the *I'm Just A Piano Teacher*. Her recent TV/film credits include *From Victoria Street To Ang Mo Kio*, *The Veiled Willow*, *Filial Party*, *Ilo Ilo*, *Letters To Heaven*, *Beautiful Connection*, and *Katong Ms Oh*.



## **LUO MANG**

*Bao Yu (late-20s) / Ensemble*

Luo Mang is an energetic and lively young lady who is immersed in the creation process of the performing arts. The arts has enhanced Luo Mang's confidence on stage, as well as in her social life.

Through arts, Luo Mang received hope and the confidence to express her thoughts, feelings and emotions. A skilled violinist, pianist and dancer, Luo Mang is a proud recipient of the Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards (UBS Promise) 2022.



**SKY SHEN**  
*Vocal Artist*

Sky is an artist with Muscular Dystrophy. He began writing lyrics at 13 and released cover music on YouTube. He further led the Temasek Polytechnic Chorale as Vice-President, and has performed on many stages including the Community Chest Awards 2022.

That same year, he realised his dreams by launching a debut EP *Wheel You Love Me?*, detailing the romantic experiences of PwDs. Looking ahead, Sky is currently working on his second EP about mental well-being.



**TIMOTHY LEE**  
*Lover / Ensemble*

Timothy Lee is an actor and dancer with Down Syndrome. At ART:DIS, he trains in Cajon, dance, acting and has performed in numerous grassroots and prestigious events. He was the first actor with a disability to be on national television, acting in Mediacorp's Channel 5 long-form drama, *Kin*.

In 2019, Timothy won the inaugural Goh Chok Tong Enable Award and he hopes to inspire other young people with disabilities to pursue their dreams and live life to the fullest.



**WAN WAI YEE**  
*Bao Yu (late-30s) / Ensemble*

Wai Yee is a talented and experienced singer who has been performing for since 1995. Her repertoire consists of popular music and Broadway songs, and has also done voiceovers and concerts under The Purple Symphony.

In 2019, she underwent her first vocal examination in Musical Theatre Grade 5, conferred by the London College of Music, and earned a distinction. She is always seeking ways to strengthen her vocal technique, and is currently exploring storytelling and acting with ART:DIS.



**YEO YANN YANN**

*Bao Yu (reverie) / Reporter*

Yeo Yann Yann is a versatile actor and theatre performer who has built a successful career across the mediums of film, television and theatre. She is one of those rare talents who enjoy both critical acclaims and popular star appeal. Her career reached a new height when she was awarded a Golden Horse Award for 'Best Actress' for her striking performance in *Wet Season* (2019) and a Golden Horse Award for 'Best Supporting Actress' (2013) in the Cannes Camera d'Or winning *ILO ILO*, both directed by Anthony Chen. For *ILO ILO*, she was also named 'Best Supporting Actress' at the Asia Pacific Film Festival, and multiple 'Best Actress' awards in India, Russia and Dubai.



**ABOVE**

Ali & Ming Zhu dance in unison to *Right Here Waiting* by Richard Marx

## **APSN TANGLIN SCHOOL**

Established in 1976, APSN is a social service agency that provides special education, vocational training and employment support for individuals with mild intellectual disability. Benefiting over 2,200 beneficiaries each year, APSN operates four Special Education Schools (Chaoyang, Katong, Tanglin and Delta Senior), an APSN Student Care Centre for children and an APSN Centre for Adults for persons from 18 years and older.

APSN adopts a holistic approach in their curriculum, comprising academic, vocational and social skills, which are important for open employment and lifelong learning. APSN seeks to enable persons with special needs to be active contributors to the society, and is committed to inspire and develop the capabilities of our partners and community to build an inclusive society.

## **AGELESS BRIDGE**

For years, this fun-loving group of seniors connect through their common love of ukulele, singing and grooving. Their youthful energy, zest for life and happy tunes are well-loved by many who have watched them perform.

Their performance in *Chachambo* marks their second collaboration with ART:DIS, having performed inclusively with the non-profit's Cajon team for the PAssionArts Festival at Tampines Changkat Community Centre in 2022.

## **DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION**

Borne out of love and devotion by a group of parents of children with Down syndrome, Down Syndrome Association (Singapore), is primarily a self-funding, non-profit social service agency established in 1996 to support and educate families, professionals, and the public about the genetic condition.

The Association is committed to providing holistic support for families and caregivers; facilitating a person with Down syndrome to attain his or her full potential; and enabling them to contribute back to the society.

## **LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOL**

Lighthouse School promotes a safe, caring and closely-knit environment where students play, learn and grow holistically. Established in the 1950s, it was then known as the Singapore School for the Blind. In the 1980s, the school was renamed as the Singapore School for the Visually Handicapped

Since 2007, Lighthouse School, as it is currently known, stands for its unique position of catering to two main groups of students – 7 to 18 years old individuals with Visual Impairment or Hearing Loss.



## SPRING WIND DIVAS

Formed out of a lifelong passion for dance and active aging, these four female senior citizens gather to learn, grow and perform a dazzling range of dance genres from Ballroom, Indian fusion, Chinese ethnic, Line Dance etc. From pageants, charity shows, anniversaries as well as free community performances, the Spring Wind Divas demonstrate you can shine on any stage at any age as long as you have a fiery heart.

## Y-STARS

A ground-up, parent-driven dance team affiliated with and supported by YMCA, Y-Stars is group of dancers with down syndrome. Having performed on many occasions and on stages, big and small, their mission is to spread the word of about inclusivity in Singapore with the purity of hearts and bravado in spirit.

## YONG-EN ACTIVE HUB

Yong-en Active Hub offers elderly care and family support services, encouraging seniors to age actively through a holistic approach, stimulating their minds and engaging their hearts and spirits through workshops, talks and activities.



## ABOVE

Students from Lighthouse School song-signing to *All I Have To Do Is Dream* by The Everly Brothers

## **BRIAN GOTHONG TAN**

*Multimedia Designer*

Brian Gothong Tan is one of the leading creatives in Singapore and is best known for his cutting-edge and highly engaging works in theatre, film and installation art. He graduated from California Institute of the Arts in 2005 under the Shell-NAC Scholarship. His works have been featured in numerous productions which have toured successfully in Italy, USA, Korea and the United Kingdom. His eclectic use of multimedia in theatre earned him the “Best Use of Multimedia” in the 2005 Life! Theatre Awards, as well as “Best Multimedia Design” in 2008, 2012 and 2016.

A Young Artist Award recipient in 2012 and Singapore Youth Award recipient in 2015, Brian’s notable film credits include *Pleasure Factory*, in which he was the Director of Photography and Editor, and was screened in Cannes Film Festival 2007 under the Un Certain Regard section, and his first feature film *Invisible Children*, which has travelled to many film festivals around the world.

## **DOROTHY PNG**

*Light & Set Designer*

A lighting designer by profession since 1994, Dorothy is a highly experienced designer for Singapore’s theatre, dance & music companies. Her range of work further includes site-specific works and outdoor productions. Some of her favourite past lighting designs are *Wings of Resonance* (a traditional flute music performance, 2018); *L’Elisir d’Amore* (Singapore Lyric Opera, 2017); and *Farewell: The Body in 16 Chapters* (by Drama Box for Macao Arts Festival 2013). Set design is her secondary field, with her most recent set designs being *Wings of Resonance* (Victoria Theatre) and *Garden Uprooted* (a collaboration between The Philharmonic Orchestra and Arts Fission).

## **DR PHILIP TAN**

*Music Composer, Song Arranger & Sound Designer*

Dr Philip Tan is an internationally renowned Creative Director, Composer, and Educator with over 30 years of experience. Philip’s passion for multimedia story-telling has been exhibited in over 30 countries, where he has created works with new formats, technologies and concepts. Among the prominent events he oversaw, highlights include the ASEAN Best 2018, the Opening of the Singapore National Stadium in 2015, the SEA Games handover in 2013, the Opening and Closing of ASEAN Paragames 2015, and the Opening of Gardens by the Bay in 2013.

He was awarded the 2017 Top 50 Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize, the Life Theatre Music Award (five-times winner), the 2007 Young Artist Award, and 2021 SkillsFuture Fellowships from the President of Singapore.

## **MAX TAN**

*Costume Designer*

Max 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.

## **PETER SAU**

*Director*

As a pioneer graduate from the Intercultural Theatre Institute, Peter holds a Professional Diploma in Intercultural Theatre (Acting) and a Master of Arts in Advanced Theatre Practice from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (UK).

A recipient of the Young Artist Award (2011) and named 'Best Actor' at the Life! Theatre Awards 2015 for *ART* under Nine Years Theatre, Peter is also a notable director with credits including *K* (2010) and *Tell Me When To Laugh And When To Cry* (2012). In 2017, he founded Project Tandem to provide mentorships and performance opportunities to disabled artists. In 2018, as Associate Director and Performer of *And Suddenly I Disappear: The Singapore / UK 'd' Monologues*, he worked with Lead Artist and Playwright, Kaite O'Reilly towards a premiere in Singapore before touring in the UK.

To further disability inclusion in the arts, Peter joined ART:DIS in 2020 as its Head of Artistic Development, Performing Arts.

## **SU PAING TUN**

*Assistant Director*

Su is an actor, theatre practitioner, creative access worker and teaching artist of Burmese and Chinese descent. She graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts with BA(Hons) Acting. She advocates for diversity and access in theatre. Her repertoire ranges from acting (commercial, film & stage), dancing, singing and creative access work in theatre, of which includes *The Necessary Stage*, *Singapore Repertory Theatre* and *ART:DIS*.

In her free time, she enjoys listening to true crime and video essays about anything under the sun.

## ZULFIKAR ALI

*Lead Choreographer*

Ali is trained in Ballet, Jazz and Contemporary Dance. Formerly a dancer for NUS Dance Ensemble and Maya Dance Theatre, he has performed and choreographed for both dance companies.

Apart from his stint as a freelance dance instructor, Ali also teaches children of diverse abilities. He was a Fusion Dance instructor for the Downs Syndrome Association from 2006-2008, and has been the Creative Dance instructor for ART:DIS since 2013. Ali believes in bringing the joy of dance to anyone who wants to move to music.



### **ABOVE**

The ART:DIS Choir team sings *All I Have To Do Is Dream* by The Everly Brothers

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

### BACKSTAGE & CREATIVE ENABLERS

#### **Assistant Stage Managers**

Joanna Ong  
Saffy Ismail  
Audrey Low  
Farrahatulzakiah

#### **Cajon Coach**

Irwan Raman

#### **Vocal Coach**

Teng Xiang Ting

#### **Ticketing & Access Manager**

Nurarina Awang

#### **Visual Story Creator**

Joyce Teo

#### **Production Assistants**

Reyn Tan  
Teo Wei Bing  
Emily Francesca

#### **Choir Coach**

Fran Ho

#### **Violin Coach**

Samuel Kwan

#### **Access Support**

Joo Soon Kang  
Nur Azeera

#### **Music Advisor**

Dr Dawn-joy Leong

### BACKSTAGE

#### **Hair & Makeup**

Frida Ren  
Guo Weicui  
Law Yan Bin  
Tina Zhao  
Yolanda Yao

#### **Wardrobe Assistants**

Su Paing Tun  
Yuki Neoh  
Maximilian Tan  
Ng Shi Jie  
Tan Qian Hui

#### **Multimedia Operator**

Philippe Pang

#### **Caption Operator**

Joanna Ong

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

#### **Screen Performance**

Yeo Yann Yann

#### **Visual Arts Projection**

Abraham Koh

#### **Song Arrangement (All I Have To Do Is Dream)**

Yu Tong

#### **Venue Support**

Arts House Limited

#### **Projection Equipment**

AVC Pte Ltd

#### **Lighting Equipment**

AVEC VISION Pte Ltd

#### **Sound Equipment**

TPP Pte Ltd

#### **Front-Of-House, Publicity, Merchandise & Access**

Team ART:DIS

Dancers from YMCA's Y-Stars  
twisting to Elvis Presley's  
*Jailhouse Rock*



## **A STORY ABOUT COMMUNITY**

by Jade Ow

“Benchmark. Landmark. Dream,” shared Claire Teo. In three words, the lead actor of *Chachambo*, as well as the trainer for Lighthouse School’s team of performers, succinctly describes the essence of this landmark disability-led music theatre work.

Indeed, *Chachambo* is about bringing an entire community together to set new standards for Singapore’s disability landscape. As the main cast moves into combined rehearsals with the rest of the ensemble performers, we spotlight the impact that theatre has on the Deaf and disabled community at every level of engagement.

Staged by ART:DIS at the height of its 30th anniversary celebrations, the main cast of *Chachambo* comprises 10 performers with disabilities. Many are graduates from the non-profit’s BEYOND DIS:PLAY programme, which offers professional theatre training for persons with disabilities, developing them to be artist-advocates who would champion disability representation and access in the performing arts.

### **Leading the Change**

Such change must first begin with the artists themselves. At ART:DIS, lead choreographer Ali takes an experimental approach to dance and movement so that he can explore what each performer is capable of. “Working with their strengths is very important. Each performer has a different skill background, skill set and movement capacity,” Ali explains as he develops dance steps the performers can consistently execute.

“It is my first time choreographing for visually impaired performers and I’ve discovered that using tactile conditioning such as holding them at certain limbs or body parts (with their consent, of course) or asking them to touch or hold items, has helped a lot in the movement experimentation,” he reflected.

To get a sense of how far he can stretch the actors, Ali collaborates with them by allowing the actor to take the lead on movement, before consolidating the moves into a dance routine with form and rhythm. This is particularly true for visually impaired actor Ivni Yaakub.

“Ivni kept discovering more and more movements each week, which was exciting and inspiring all at the same time,” Ali recounted. “His newfound confidence in dance really makes him shine on stage.”

### **Uniting the Community**

The efforts by ART:DIS to engage with the D/deaf and disabled communities extends far beyond the main cast of *Chachambo*. Community groups from all walks of life have also been invited as stage performers, adding diversity and vibrancy to the production. They include APSN Tanglin School, Lighthouse School, Down Syndrome Association, Y-Stars, Yong-en Active Hub, Ageless Bridge, Spring Wind Divas, as well as ART:DIS’s own Cajon and Choir groups.

For many of the trainers who teach students with disabilities, *Chachambo* is

a fantastic opportunity to showcase their students' talents and push them to do more than is usually expected of them in everyday life.

For instance Irwan Raman, the trainer for ART:DIS's Cajon team (pictured right), is keenly attuned to the needs of his students and watching them take on this new challenge is a learning experience for him. "The senior students get better with every training session. We also have some new and talented students who progress quickly in class," Irwan shared.



Meanwhile, as the dance trainer for APSN Tanglin School, Arianty has had the privilege of watching her students (pictured below) grow over the months, developing soft skills such as communicating confidently with new people, alongside proficiency in the arts. "I am honoured to be part of this as there are different representations of disabilities on one stage," Arianty said. She added that dancers from APSN are learning to adapt to changes during rehearsals, to create conversations with new peers and be curious about new experiences. Will these same performers become advocates of disability arts one day? Only time can tell.



Over at Lighthouse School, trainer Claire Teo (who is also playwright & lead actor) has already noticed signs of students taking their first steps towards connecting with each other. She shared: "I witnessed two D/deaf students, normally easily distracted, step up to offer sighted assistance to their



visually impaired co-performers. The production is thus encouraging them to break language boundaries and form inter-disability understanding.”

This may appear to be a small act of empathy, but it is clear evidence of how young Singaporeans are coming together to support each other. From these vignettes, one can glean the many ways in which *Chachambo* is becoming an accessible educational platform for students to hone their craft and soft skills regardless of their disabilities.

### Changing Perceptions

The world has become increasingly connected and informed in the last decade and while Singapore has kept ahead of the curve in many areas, we have still quite a way to go in terms of representation and access for persons with disabilities in the arts. *Chachambo* seeks to be a catalyst for this long overdue conversation, and to envision what a truly inclusive society can look like. Indeed, even at rehearsals, the production has been an eye-opening experience for non-disabled performers, Greg and Gladys.

Greg, who is a trainer for community interest group Ageless Bridge (pictured right), shared: “Sometimes, someone will shed tears as the storyline and acting can be very emotional. I was particularly moved by main cast Wai Yee’s beautiful rendition of *Both Sides Now* - it’s better than the original!”



However, it was his daily interactions with his fellow disabled performers and the camaraderie built between them that eventually broke the barriers of ingrained perceptions of difference.

Greg reflected that he was initially unsure of how to interact with performers with disabilities, and tried to be as cautious as possible. Surprising even himself, it turns out that he felt more at home working with performers with disabilities than he did in most places. “Once I got to know them, I found them to be endearing and sincere people. For over 60 years, I have experienced life and suddenly I found myself in the midst of heartwarming friendly people,” he added.

Gladys, a trainer for elderly performers at Yong-en Active Hub, agrees with the idea: “I hope that there will be more awareness. Arts is a very powerful platform for expression, giving them confidence and belonging. I hope to be a part of this movement in Singapore someday.” She further added that the multi-talented cast of pan-disability performers opened her mind to just how capable and skilled actors with disabilities can be.

These reflections serve as shining examples of how a community can create a collaborative and empowering production that not only changes the societal perception of disability, but also enables individuals to strive towards independent and meaningful engagement with the arts. On a larger scale, *Chachambo* aims to deliver those same epiphanies to every audience member and to challenge the status quo.

### Inspiring a New Generation

As the journey of creating *Chachambo* draws to a close and is manifesting itself fully in Victoria Theatre, it has been nothing short of transformative for both the main cast and the various community groups involved. For Lighthouse School trainer Claire, her students' experience highlights the profound impact that stepping into Victoria Theatre (pictured right) has had on them.

“Describing and showing pictures did not compare to bringing them physically to another space with all other performers. It suddenly became real for them and they began to panic,” she observed.



Coming from the familiar and sheltered environment of Lighthouse School, the students are introduced for the first time to the challenges and demands of a professional production. Claire expressed that she hopes this experience would be the catalyst for the young performers, igniting in them the drive to work towards the rigour expected of mainstream artists, and the aspiration to become independent artists who are willing to take initiative for their own professional future.

As an actor-advocate herself, Claire is aware of how the medical and charity models of society have resulted in a sense of complacency among artists with disabilities, who have been conditioned to expect applause for the bare minimum.

She seeks to change this through advocacy in the arts, stating: “There is a sense of entitlement that comes with being disabled. Yes, society disables us but many times I question if we limit ourselves by playing into victimhood. This is why this production is important – to not only change society’s perception of disabilities, but to also navigate our own individual barriers and discover how much we can give and achieve as a community.”

**CHACHAMBO IS SUPPORTED BY**

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ART:DIS would further like to thank all of our allies, funders, parents, volunteers & media for their generous support and unwavering belief, enabling our artists' dreams to take flight in this landmark production.

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