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## MEDIA RELEASE

# A Brave New World: T:>Works features up-and-coming playwrights exploring transmedia storytelling in Dec 2020

**SINGAPORE, 11 November 2020** – From 16 to 19 December 2020, **T:>Works** (formerly known as TheatreWorks) will re-open its doors for its final programme of 2020, titled ***How To Break A Window***. For four nights, T:>Works will welcome a limited audience capacity to attend a hybrid theatrical experience with the intention of deepening engagement with an emerging community of audiences open to digital performance. *How To Break A Window* follows T:>Works' investigation into the creation of digital performance and transmedia storytelling in this era of disruption. The programme will feature digital productions, live staged readings, a hybrid performance which is both live and digitalized, as well as conversations with a group of up-and-coming playwrights exploring transmedia storytelling.

### **Playful, Creative, Diverse: A New Wave of Transmedia Storytellers**

The lineup of *How To Break A Window* showcases the winners of T:>Works' first digital edition of the popular annual playwriting event, the ***24-Hour Playwriting Competition***. Firmly rooted in live theatre and eagerly embracing the possibilities of transmedia storytelling, the featured playwrights represent a new milestone in the *24-Hour Playwriting Competition*. Counting names such as Ahmad Musta'ain bin Khamis, Jean Tay, Ng Yi-Sheng, Nur Sabrina Bte Dzulkifli and Yin-Mei Lenden-Hitchcock as past participants, the historic competition has reinvented itself in 2020 as a platform for aspiring playwrights to conceptualize works presented for the digital screen. The programme name *How To Break A Window* is a nod to the ingenuity of the featured playwrights, who approached the *24-Hour Playwriting*

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*Competition 2020*'s stimulus 'Window' with such pathos and creativity, akin to breaking a window in order to discover a brave new world.

In 2020, a diverse array of playwriting voices emerges. The winners for the competition's Open Category are Wong Chen Seong (First Place), Carolyn Camoens (Second Place) and Rajkumar Thiagaras (Third Place). For the competition's Youth Category, the winners are Sarah Zafirah (First Place), Bernadette Koh (Second Place) and Shauna Gul (Third Place). The featured works in *How To Break A Window* will experiment with film and animation techniques, in collaboration with transmedia directors. Refer to Annex A for the biographies of the winners of *24-Hour Playwriting Competition 2020*, and Annex B for the programme line up of *How To Break A Window*.

### **Neither Digital Nor Live: Exploring Hybridity in Performance**

Noorlinah Mohamed, Artistic Director of ***Festival of Women: N.O.W. (not ordinary work)*** who also conceptualizes and helms *How To Break A Window*, says, "In this uncertain time when fully-packed theatre halls may not return to us in the immediate future, *How To Break A Window* is our attempt to reimagine theatre in an ever-changing world. With the return of a limited live engagement, T:>Works wishes to celebrate liveness with its audiences, in combination with digitalized performances. The physical gathering allows us to engage in different dialogues face to face beyond the comfort zone of the digitalized realm. With *How To Break A Window*, T:>Works will instead forge forward in challenging previously held notions of performance writing, methods of performance, strategies of craft, and, stretching the capacity of the audience to experience art in new ways."

Noorlinah continues, "Launching a series of digital performances in this time also means that we are aware that there are new engagement potentials here. T:>Works is committed to building a community that is receptive, welcoming and embracing of our continued experimentation with digital performance and transmedia storytelling. That is why *How To Break A Window* will also host a virtual talkback session with the creators. This hybridity in form, delivery and discussion of digital performance is the marriage of positives – between the intimate nature of live theatre and the possibilities of the digitalized realm."

### **Potentials of Digital Performance Beyond The Age of COVID-19**

In conceptualizing *How To Break A Window*, T:>Works tapped into the insights gathered from its two digital engagements earlier in the year. In May, a four-part webinar on curatorial

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practices led by T:>Works Artistic Director Dr. Ong Keng Sen, **Curating No-thing**, saw up to 2,200 attendees from across the globe. Two months later, the aforementioned **Festival of Women: N.O.W. 2020 (not ordinary work)** launched as a virtual inter-disciplinary festival celebrating women creators and change-makers, reaching over 170,400 people across all digital marketing platforms, and, garnering over 59,000 views through the festival's microsite and streaming platforms such as Facebook Live, SoundCloud, Vimeo and YouTube.

The following insights have been aggregated from the qualitative and quantitative data collected during the two digital engagements:

- **The future of the stage** may possibly be on demand, any time, anywhere. During the *Festival of Women N.O.W. 2020* in July, 55% of viewers<sup>1</sup> tuned in to programme live streams on their mobile phone. With over one-third of the audience having experienced digital performances before, many took it upon themselves to alter their streaming experience by forgoing the video stream and listening to the programme, “while taking a bus”, “doing homework” or simply “with [their] eyes closed”.<sup>2 3 4 5 6</sup>
- **The future of artists and audiences** will transcend geographical borders. The four-part *Curating No-thing* webinar saw an average of 57% international attendees, who tuned in from Brazil, China, Germany, Iran, Japan, Morocco, and, regionally, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. Similarly, with *Festival of Women: N.O.W. 2020*, international viewership accounted for 47% of total viewership, notably from Australia, India, Malaysia and the United States. Within the culturally, ideologically, and linguistically diverse audience of *Curating No-thing*, the post-webinar feedback was remarkably similar, with the majority expressing the need for more educational content about arts leadership and curatorial practices based outside of the global art capitals.

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<sup>1</sup> During the *Festival of Women N.O.W. 2020*, 55.6% of the audience viewed the programme with their mobile, followed by their computer (36.9%), television (3.6%) and finally tablet (3.5%).

<sup>2</sup> During *Festival of Women N.O.W. 2020*, over one-third of the audience shared that they have experienced digital performances before.

<sup>3</sup> “I was waiting for a bus, taking a bus and buying groceries while listening with my earphones and the co-creation of a heartscape-headscape-soundscape was so immersive.” - Audience member Pam E.L. on *The Book of Mothers*, an audio play screened during *Festival of Women N.O.W. 2020*.

<sup>4</sup> “[Jo Tan’s] portrayal of each character is so different but transitions are so smooth and nicely done and it was very easy for me to identify which character is talking without me having to actually watch the video (I was treating King as a podcast while doing my homework). Also, all the characters are really impactful and have their own way of touching me.” - Unnamed audience member on *King*, a digital play screened during *Festival of Women N.O.W. 2020*.

<sup>5</sup> “I listened to it with my eyes closed; so [it] reminds me of listening to drama on radio with my parents. I especially liked the conversations between grandma and granddaughter.” - Audience member L.L. Chung on *The Book of Mothers*.

<sup>6</sup> “[I] really appreciated it’s been uploaded on YouTube for now as I couldn’t catch the live stream - I would have loved to watch this live.” - Unnamed audience member on *King*.

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- **The future of digital theatre** is in flux, and thus evades easy categorization. Like many theatrical productions affected by the closure of physical theatres, *King* by Jo Tan (a play in *Festival of Women: N.O.W. 2020*) had to be converted from a full-scale three-dimensional experience into a two-dimensional theatrical live stream. This theatrical live stream was achieved in a single take with three camera angles, a set-up not unlike typical film productions. While the other programmes in *Festival of Women: N.O.W. 2020* were described and experienced as digitized copies of their original forms (be it musical performances, panels or exhibitions), *King* stood out as a form of its own. Many audience members picked up on the technical artistry of both the format and the performer Jo Tan, who performed the one-woman-play in a single, live take. One audience member remarked, “[It] is amazing that [*King*] did this live when [they] could have pre-recorded it.”<sup>7</sup>
- Overall, the future of digital theatre bodes well, as summed up in this audience member’s enthusiastic endorsement of the new form: “[Watching *King* on screen] was such a different process given the new mediums for live theatre, but it’s a really great new experience from an end watcher’s point of view”.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Ong Keng Sen, Artistic Director of T:>Works concludes, “While there is much said about the losses in moving live theatre to the digital, *How To Break A Window* is our attempt to capture the limits of live theatre on-screen. How will the transience and intensity of the ‘live’ moment be translated for both the artist and the audience? To that end, we have tailored *How To Break A Window* to fit the audience of this age, who is hungry for different and relevant modes of art experiences. With *How To Break A Window*, T:>Works is giving theatre – and performance – a new hybrid lease of life, one that may survive well beyond a time when we can all, both audiences and performers, once again take down our protective masks, gather, and engage in a human way again.”

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<sup>7</sup> “[T]he play was awesome. I really enjoyed it and was blown away by the very intelligent and funny script. The medium really showcased Jo’s incredible talent. And it is amazing that you did this in live when you could have pre-recorded it.” - Audience member C. Lim on *King*.

<sup>8</sup> “We (I daresay for others as well) were too entranced by the performance to emoji during the show . . . it’s such a different process given the new mediums for live theatre, but it’s a really great new experience from an end watcher POV.” - Audience member G. Ong on *King*.

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## **Save the date: *How To Break A Window***

There are two options for the audience to choose from:

- 1) A hybrid theatrical experience
- 2) A home theatrical experience

Tickets will be available via Peatix.

### ***How To Break A Window: A hybrid theatrical experience***

*A 60-minute hybrid theatrical experience featuring a hybrid performance, digital productions, live staged readings, and conversations on transmedia storytelling with the winners from the 24-Hour Playwriting Competition 2020. Limited slots available.*

When: 16 – 19 December 2020, 7.30pm – 8.30pm

Where: 72-13, Home of T:>Works, Mohamed Sultan Road, Singapore 239007

Tickets: \$20

### ***How To Break A Window: A home theatrical experience***

*A truncated home theatrical experience featuring digital productions, live staged readings, and conversations on transmedia storytelling with the winners from the 24-Hour Playwriting Competition 2020.*

When: 16 – 19 December 2020, 7.30pm – 8.10pm

Where: Streamed via a Zoom link

Tickets: \$10

From 20 to 23 December 2020, the three digital productions in *How To Break A Window* will be available online to watch-on-demand on Peatix.

For more information on *How To Break A Window*, visit the [T:>Works Blog](#).

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## **In Conversation: Artists of *How To Break A Window***

*A virtual talkback session with the writers, directors and crew behind the three digital productions of How To Break A Window*

When: 21 December 2020, 8.30pm

Where: Zoom

Tickets: Free admission by registration

### **T:>Works Digital Channels**

**Blog:** <https://tworkssg.wordpress.com/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/TWorkssg/>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/TWorkssg>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/tworkssg/>

**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheatreWorksSG/>

**END**

### **About T:>Works**

Established in 1985, [T:>Works](https://tworkssg.wordpress.com/) is an independent and international arts company based in Singapore at its space, 72-13. It is currently led by Artistic Director, Dr. Ong Keng Sen. T:>Works' mission and vision is the pioneering of thought leadership in the arts focused on transdisciplinary, transcultural, and inclusive processes. To this end, there is a strong educational perspective with research and discourse contextualizing the histories, contemporary experiences, and art practices of South East Asia. T:>Works also serves to investigate the current urgencies of being located in Singapore through different creative expressions in the public sphere. It is a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Company Grant for the period from 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2022. T:>Works is an Institute of Public Character with charity status.

### **About Dr. Ong Keng Sen**

Dr. Ong Keng Sen is the Artistic Director of T:>Works and the artspace 72-13 in Singapore. Apart from creating renowned productions, Ong founded the Arts Network Asia, a micro-grant peer organization, and the international Curators Academy focused on the synergy between contexts and curation. His seminal work was the nomadic artist residency, *The Flying Circus Project*, traveling international artists through Asia, sharing their contexts amongst themselves and young people in the local sites. Ong was the Founding Festival Director of the all-new Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA). He directed four editions of SIFA from 2014 to 2017. He was a Fulbright Scholar and was awarded the prestigious Fukuoka Asian Arts and

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Culture Prize in 2010 for his creations in Asian contemporary performance. He holds a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

**About Noorlinah Mohamed**

An award-winning actress of stage, television, and film, Noorlinah Mohamed has worked in Asia, Europe, and the United States. She is also a teaching artist, and a consultant in arts pedagogy with a Ph.D. in Arts Education from the University of Warwick. Noorlinah is a recipient of the JCCI Cultural Award (2008) and the Women's Weekly Women of our Time Award (2005) for her contributions to the arts. In 2019, she was one of the featured women artists in TheatreWorks' 2019 season of Women & Voice.

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## **Annex A: Biographies of winners of 24-Hour Playwriting Competition 2020**

### **Open Category**

#### **Wong Chen Seong, First Place**

##### **With the script *Third Eye***

**Wong Chen Seong** started writing in secondary school and is a proud alumnus of the TheatreWorks' Writers' Lab Greenhouse. In the years since his last produced work during the inaugural Singapore Theatre Festival in 2006, he has focused his energies on his other life as an infectious diseases and HIV physician. Chen Seong remains fascinated by themes of memory and otherness, and creating mythologies where they might not yet exist.

#### **Carolyn Camoens, Second Place**

##### **With the script *Tadka***

**Carolyn Camoens** is a storyteller by craft and communicator by profession. She has written for page, stage and screen. As a communications professional, she has consulted for the world's leading brands across sectors. Carolyn is an advocate for the power of stories to transform the way we engage, inspire and transform. She is happy reading a great story but happier still when she is shaping one – for clients, readers or audiences.

#### **Rajkumar Thiagaras, Third Place**

##### **With the script *Onthakan – The Blue Hour***

**Rajkumar (Raj) Thiagaras** is a bilingual actor and playwright. Notable playwriting credits include "Chandramukhi", "On the Street of Calcutta" (Avant Theatre) and "Ashes, Ashes" (Toy Factory). He has also written and performed autobiographical monologues such as "The Patient" (Avant Theatre) and "Aishwarya" (Kris P Production). His short story, "The White Lotus: Sinking to the Bottom" was published in the anthology "In This Desert, There Were Seeds" by Ethos Books and Margaret River Press. Raj is currently a member of the Brown Voices playwriting collective and is part of The Playwrights' Cove mentorship programme under the tutelage of Haresh Sharma (The Necessary Stage).



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## Youth Category

### **Sarah Zafirah, First Place**

#### **With the script *The Correspondence***

**Sarah Zafirah** is a Year 5 student in the International Baccalaureate Program at St. Joseph's Institution. She inhales both donuts and the written word. Having become rather acquainted with the 'O' Level Drama syllabus in her alma mater, CHIJ Katong Convent, Sarah hopes to become more involved in the Singaporean theatre scene. Her hobbies include regular cat-cuddling, reading up on social issues that she is passionate about, and of course, writing. She hopes that her creations can serve as an insight into the mind of a teenager living in uncertain times, seeking answers to unknown questions.

### **Bernadette Koh, Second Place**

#### **With the script *La Façade***

**Bernadette Koh** is a Year 3 student from the School of the Arts (SOTA), specializing in theatre. Her performance roles include the voice of Wheelabelle in the Year 5 film production of "Wheeliam" as well as roles in school productions of Desmond Sim's "Drunken Prawns", Suzan Zeder's "Doors" and Kuo Pao Kun's "The Coffin Is Too Big For The Hole". She is currently supplementing her theatrical studies through the LAMDA programme at Pangdemonium and seeks to develop her skills as a playwright and actress.

### **Shauna Gul, Third Place**

#### **With the script *Clique Click***

**Shauna Gul** is a Year 5 student from School Of The Arts (SOTA). She is a theatre student with a passion for playwriting and how the language we use shapes the way we see the world. This is Shauna's first time participating in the *24-Hour Playwriting Competition* and she is delighted that her script caught the judges' attention.

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## **Annex B: Programme lineup of *How To Break A Window***

### ***How to Break A Window***

**16 – 19 December 2020, 7.30pm**

16 December, 18 December 2020

7.30pm

- Live staged reading: Onthakan – The Blue Hour  
*With post-show conversation with the writer, director and cast*  
Written by Rajkumar Thiagaras  
Directed by Kaylene Tan
- Screening of digital production: The Correspondence  
Written by Sarah Zafirah  
Directed by Kaylene Tan
- Screening of digital production: Tadka  
Written by Carolyn Camoens  
Directed by Jasmine Ng
- Hybrid performance: Third Eye  
Written by Wong Chen Seong  
Directed by Casey Lim

17 December, 19 December 2020

7.30pm

- Live staged reading: La Façade  
*With post-show conversation with the writer, director and cast*  
Written by Bernadette Koh  
Directed by Noorlinah Mohamed
- Screening of digital production: Tadka  
Written by Carolyn Camoens  
Directed by Jasmine Ng
- Screening of digital production: The Correspondence  
Written by Sarah Zafirah  
Directed by Kaylene Tan
- Hybrid performance: Third Eye  
Written by Wong Chen Seong  
Directed by Casey Lim

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## About the productions of *How To Break A Window*

### Digital production: Tadka

Written by Carolyn Camoens

Directed by Jasmine Ng

*Tadka* is the story of life when life gets in the way. Geeta tries to create a space for herself, while she settles into her new life in Singapore. While trying to teach the recipe for her chicken curry, she has to contend with multiple other demands on her time, with distractions forcing her to confront new realities, while also revisiting some beloved memories.

**Jasmine Ng** is a filmmaker who tells stories across platforms, from film to television, to theatre and site-specific installations. She has conceptualized cross-disciplinary works, with installation projects in various public spaces in Singapore. Being an advocate for the film and arts community, and the creative industry, she co-founded the Singapore Association of Motion Picture Professionals and is now the current president.

### Digital production: The Correspondence

Written by Sarah Zafirah

Directed by Kaylene Tan

*The Correspondence* surrounds the fraught relationship between the protagonist, Hal, and his father Adam. Juggling familial expectations and a personal transition into adulthood, Hal struggles to understand the parent, who he slowly finds to be strangely similar to himself. Upon receiving news of his father's death, the young man is confronted with unfinished business in the midst of disconcerting grief. Presented through a series of memories and a non-linear timeline, Hal attempts to reconcile his perception of his father with his own difficult reality. *The Correspondence* delivers a powerful message on the difficulty of forgiveness and acceptance, in a time when such conclusions are not easily reached.

**Kaylene Tan** writes across media for theatre, film and television. As director of performance company spell#7, she has been commissioned by arts institutions (Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, National Gallery Singapore) and festivals (Singapore Arts Festival, Singapore Biennale, Georgetown Festival) and collaborated with numerous independent companies and artists. Her headphone theatre production of "In the Silence of Your Heart" (Esplanade Studios) won Best Sound Design at the 2018 Life! Theatre Awards. Recent works include

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“Missing”, co-written with filmmaker, K. Rajagopal (Page to Stage, Arts House); and Brian Gothong Tan’s “Lost Cinema”, which was screened on Esplanade’s Offstage site in June 2020.

### Hybrid performance: Third Eye

Written by Wong Chen Seong

Directed by Casey Lim

After years of living abroad, Seong has been asked to return home to be with his family when his father takes ill. Upon his arrival in Singapore, he has to stay in quarantine before he can go home. In isolation, he soon realizes that he is not alone in his hotel room – whether with his own thoughts, memories or ghosts from the past or present. Does having a third eye mean never being able to have solitude or peace?

Trained in music and photography, **Casey Lim** is an actor, director, digital video and sound artist. Casey was the Associate Artistic Director of TheatreWorks (1999). He co-founded Checkpoint Theatre and was the Co-Artistic Director from 2003 to 2007. He also served as a panel member in the Singapore Arts Festival’s Programme Advisory Committee from 2003 to 2006. He was the creative director for the Army Museum Object Theatre in 2007, and was the multimedia consultant for SAF’s NS45 island-wide exhibitions in 2012. In 2014, he co-founded Centre 42 and is now running Centre 42 as the executive director supporting the independent artists and art groups.

### Live staged reading: La Façade

Written by Bernadette Koh

Directed by Noorlinah Mohamed

A family lives in a city where curtains are not allowed. Windows of homes are left unblocked so that officials may visit at different intervals to check on the residents' safety and well-being. "It's for the citizens' protection," says the mother. But the children, Julian and Winnie, do not think so. Find out what happens to their lives as one of the children decide to put up curtains on their window in an act of defiance.

### Live staged reading: Onthakan – The Blue Hour

Written by Rajkumar Thiagaras

Directed by Kaylene Tan

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During the height of Covid-19, when a quarantined world rests on uncertainty, two former university mates spend an unassuming hour on Zoom as they reconnect over their love for literature. As time closes in on them, will an Indian man from Singapore and a Thai man from another world be able to deal with their past, and their feelings for one another, before the hour is up? *Onthakan – The Blue Hour* explores the pathos of physical and metaphysical distances as two lost souls pine for a connection across an unsurmountable divide between time and space.

### **Other collaborators**

**Hei Studio** produces original content from commercials, narrative short films, documentaries, music videos, video installations and photography. It highlights working with creatives from various art forms – literature, dance, music, theatre, visual arts – presenting multidisciplinary performances, exhibitions, and films as a key direction. To the founders of Hei Studio, Clare Chong and Aaron Andrew Ang, ideas want to evolve, and its process is innately collaborative. Hence, Clare and Aaron seek to support artists and filmmakers through an open co-development process that places ideas at the heart of their creation.