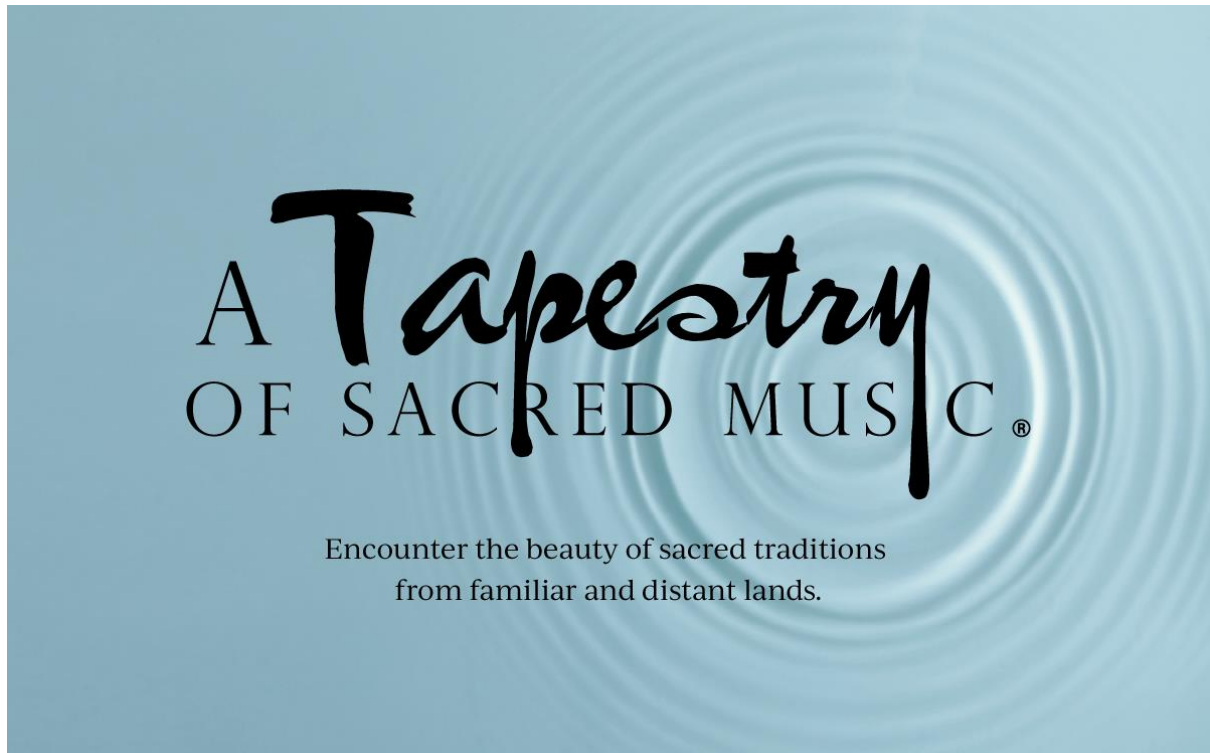


Esplanade Presents

A Tapestry of Sacred Music 2023

28 Apr – 1 May 2023

www.esplanade.com/tapestry



Welcome to the 14th edition of Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay's *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*—a festival where we bring together practitioners of different faith communities in a sharing of their cultural expressions. Taking place from 28 Apr – 1 May 2023, this is a one-of-a-kind event in the region and presents rare access to music that is often cloistered within places of worship. And yet, because these musical practices are inspired by the concept of a higher power and refined over generations of devotional practice, they are also some of humankind's most intriguing and moving expressions.

The music is rooted in diverse beliefs, and continues to evolve under unique geographies, histories, and social constructs; all aiming to provide their perspective on a greater, ethereal truth. Likewise, the sounds differ in accordance with the needs of the believers; they may be ecstatic with joyful praise, or resolute and affirming, or heart-rendering in sorrow.

In spite of their different lineages, all sacred music addresses the same emotional states, uncertainties, hopes, and anxieties we all face in this earthly realm. And the fact that there can be emotional resonance with the music of another faith, is a reminder that we have more in common as people than that which divides us.

The programme line-up this year is a rich array of sounds. From our shores, we have the life and death ritual music of the Hainanese Taoist community, devotional songs of the Naqshbandi Sufi order (one of the few Sufi orders active in Singapore), the auspicious sounds of the *nadaswaram* and *thavil*, associated with the Hindu temples and weddings, Sikh hymns performed with regal instruments, and the enchanting ceremony of *kuda kepang*.

From further abroad, we have chants of Greek Byzantine and Tibetan monastics—Father Nikodimos Kabarnos singing narrative poems on the life of Christ with his ensemble Isokrates and *chöd* tantric songs from monks from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition meant to sever

attachment from the ego. Mythological stories come alive through the dances of ancient ceremonial *hula kahiko*, the colourful ritual theatres of rural West Bengali Chhau, and Edo Kagura of Tokyo's Shinto shrines. From Korea, we bring the music of Korean rural folk celebrations and shamanistic occasions and from the mausoleums of Sufi Saints in Delhi we have the 800-year-old qawwali tradition of The Qutbi Brothers. From the northern shore of Arnhem Land Australia, we present ceremonial songs of the First Nations communities which shared cultural exchanges with the Makassarese people of Sulawesi.

We thank our Supporting Sponsor, High Commission of India, Singapore, as well as Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry Foundation and The Silent Foundation, for their generous support which helps us to keep the festival's programmes free for everyone. We hope you will come with open hearts and minds to explore the colourful traditions that reflect the diversity of human faith, and celebrate our common humanity.

Tan XiangHui

Producer, The Esplanade Co Ltd

About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre. It hosts a year-round line-up of about 3,500 live performances and activities presented by Esplanade, its partners and hirers. As an arts centre for everyone, Esplanade also creates opportunities for seniors, youth, children and underserved communities to experience the arts. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are free for all to enjoy.

Esplanade also brings the arts virtually to audiences in Singapore and beyond, through its diverse range of digital programmes on [Esplanade Offstage](#), an all-access backstage pass to the performing arts and guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture, with videos, podcasts, articles, quizzes and resources.

The centre works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities and content, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. Esplanade supports the creation of artistic content by commissioning and producing new Singapore and Asian work for the international stage. It also develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. The Charity Council awarded TECL the Charity Governance Award – Special Commendation for Clarity of Strategy in 2016 and 2022, and the Charity Transparency Award from 2016 – 2019 and 2022. Esplanade is Singapore's first Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue and a certified Dementia Go-To Point, as well as a Guide-dog Friendly centre.

TECL receives funding support from Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and its Community Programmes are supported by Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

Visit [Esplanade.com](https://www.esplanade.com) for more information.

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Issued by *The Esplanade Co Ltd*.

For more information, please contact:

Gina Koh
Manager, Marketing (Communications & Content)
The Esplanade Co Ltd
Email: kgina@esplanade.com

Tan Wen Rui
Manager, Arts Marketing
The Esplanade Co Ltd
Email: twenrui@esplanade.com

Annexe

Esplanade Presents

A Tapestry of Sacred Music 2023

28 Apr – 1 May 2023

www.esplanade.com/tapestry

A Tapestry of Sacred Music was launched by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay in 2009. The festival offers the rare opportunity for everyone to encounter the beauty of these varied cultural expressions practised by communities all over the world, in a secular setting. Over the years, we have presented more than 36 religious denominations, as well as the sacred art forms of 56 different communities, creating a rich tapestry of some of humanity's most affecting and powerful musical expressions.

Since 2017, we have gone a step further and made this festival a completely free one for all to enjoy, so that there are no barriers to this aural and visual celebration. Esplanade is a charity and not-for-profit organisation, and this year, *A Tapestry of Sacred Music* is made possible with the generous support of High Commission of India, Singapore, Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry Foundation and The Silent Foundation. Help keep this festival free by making a contribution at donation boxes placed around Esplanade, or donate online through Giving.sg.

Free, registration is required.

***Esplanade&Me* Priority Booking from 6 – 9 Apr 2023.**

Public registration starts from 10 Apr 2023.

“A Light to Enlighten the Nations” through Byzantine Chant

Father Nikodimos Kabarnos and Isokrates (Greece)

28 Apr 2023, Fri, 8pm – 9pm

Esplanade Concert Hall

29 Apr 2023, Sat, 10pm – 10.45pm

Esplanade Concourse



Byzantine music in the Greek Orthodox Church is regarded as “the history of prayer through song.” Music occupied a central place in the Byzantine Empire (eastern Rome after the fall of Constantinople), especially in the churches. While not much survives of secular music, sacred liturgical music is exceptionally well-preserved in the form of manuscripts, and through traditions passed down orally, which extend back to the rites in 4th century Constantinople. These traditions continue in the Greek Orthodox churches today.

Rich in history, Byzantine chants retain their traditional elements but have evolved, as new chants, inspired by the divine, have been written and added to the canon. At this year’s edition of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*, theologian, priest, choir director and soloist, and proponent of Byzantine music Nikodimus Kabarnos and his ensemble Isokrates present biblical stories from the Old and New Testaments in the 2000-year-old tradition of Byzantine music.

28 Apr 2023, Fri, 8pm, Esplanade Concert Hall

Listen to the narration of Old Testament stories, the Creation and the Parting of the Red Sea, and meditate on the birth, baptism, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ through haunting orthodox Byzantine chants in the Concert Hall.

29 Apr 2023, Sat, 10pm, Esplanade Concourse

Experience the melismatic Byzantine chants through the narrations of the Creation and the Parting of the Red Sea that will also be performed by Nikodimus Kabarnos and Isokrates at the Concourse.

About the Greek Orthodox church and Byzantine chants

When the Roman Empire split into the western and eastern halves, the eastern half was the strongest power in Europe until the fall of its capital Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. That eastern half was the Byzantine Empire. As the Christians of Western Europe came to be known as 'Roman' Catholic, the Christians in Eastern Europe, from churches that Jesus' apostles founded in the Balkans and the Middle East during the first century A.D., came to be known collectively as Eastern 'Greek' Orthodox.

While both the Gregorian (Roman catholic) and Byzantine chant are exclusively vocal (without accompanying instruments), and monophonic (having a single melody line), there are distinct differences between the two. Because of its location, the Byzantine Empire was influenced by Coptic, Armenian, Persian and later on, Islamic cultures. These influences inadvertently found their way into Byzantine art and music, even the music of the church.

Contents of the chants differ as well: while the text for the Gregorian chant focuses mainly on praise, glorification and petition for mercy, some of the Byzantine chant forms (like the *Kontakion*, a narrative-sermon that explains the meaning of biblical texts) draw on the imagery and stories of historical narratives. Many of these contain conversations between characters, with a focus on the drama.

This is a dialogue between Mary (known as Theotokos in Greek) and the Magi, after the birth of Jesus from a 6th century *Kontakion*, written by St Romanos the Melodist:

*She hears the Magi seeking the new-born Babe.
And at once she cries aloud, "Why did you set out?"
They answer: "Why have you brought forth
A young child such as this?
Who is your father, who is your mother
That you became mother and nurse of a fatherless son?
Seeing his star we know that he is revealed as
A little child, He who from eternity is God."*

The Ritual Theatre of Edo Kagura

Wakayama Shachu (Japan)

28 Apr 2023, Fri, 9pm – 9.30pm & 10.30pm – 11pm
Esplanade Annexe Studio

29 Apr 2023, Sat, 5.30pm – 6.30pm
Esplanade Concourse



With the shrill call of the bamboo flute and the beating of the drums, the performance begins. A hunched creature appears on stage, wrapped in a green cloak with white motifs, sporting a silvery mane that extends down its back from its wooden lacquered head painted in gold and red. This figure moves along to the music, sometimes leonine in nature, sometimes playfully feline—this is the *kotobuki-jishi*, a lion dance that chases off evil spirits and brings longevity and auspiciousness.

The *kotobuki-jishi* is one of many dances in Edo Kagura, a masked performance art with origins in Edo (current day Tokyo) that comprises dance and music. Although Edo Kagura is considered a folk artform, its practitioners are professionals, with the versatility to take on both the dance and music roles. In this presentation, observe the intricate and emotive dance movements in the Edo Kagura repertoire, accompanied by folk music reminiscent of a summer *matsuri*.

Performing at this year's edition of the festival is Wakayama Shachu, one of the four main lineages of Edo Kagura associated with different regions in Tokyo. Wakayama Shachu is officially recognised by the Japanese government as a transmitter of national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property.

About Edo Kagura

The term 'Kagura' refers to a type of Shintō ritual ceremonial dance or ritual drama, often performed at shrine festivals and theatres.

[Watch a shrine performance beginning with the *kotobuki-jishi* >](#)

Comprising tales from mythology, the reenactments—plots that range from the forging of swords to dramatic battles—feature characters such as the sun goddess Amaterasu, the god of sea and storms Susano-o, and the god of agriculture and wealth, Daikokuten. Humorous pieces contrast the serious segments, which spotlight characters such as the comical Hyottoko and Okame. As the dancers are masked, they cannot use their faces to express the characters' emotions, and thus externalise the complex and delicate emotions through the movements of their head and limbs.

[Watch a clip of the Hyottoko and Okame >](#)

These performances are accompanied by *hayashi* (a small ensemble of musicians), which comprises high-pitched bamboo flutes like the *shinobue* and *nohkan* (Noh flute), as well as various small drums like the *shimedaiko* and *odaiko*, played alongside hand-gongs, and cymbals. The sound they make is synonymous with summer festivals and carries a feeling of nostalgia for many Japanese people.

About Wakayama Shachu

Hailing from the Taito Ward, Tokyo, Wakayama Shachu is one of the four main lineages of Edo Kagura that are associated with different regions in the city. Wakayama Shachu is officially recognised by the Japanese government as a transmitter of national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property.

Chöd: Tantric Songs of Healing
Monks of Sang-ngag Choekhor Dargyeling Monastery (India)
28 Apr 2023, Fri, 10pm – 10.30pm
Esplanade Concourse

1 May 2023, Mon, 5.45pm – 6.30pm
Esplanade Concert Hall



The *lama* (title for teacher in Tibetan Buddhism) wields a *damaru*—an hour-glass drum; with a twist of the wrist, two strung beads hit the sides of each drum head alternately, creating an even, plodding rhythm. In his left hand, a brass bell chimes in time, accentuating each beat with a clear ring that penetrates the mind of the listener.

Developed by the deified female yogi Machig Labdrön in the 11th Century, *chöd* (means “to cut”) is a Tibetan spiritual practice that aims to sever one’s attachment to the ego. Despite its profound metaphysical intent, the songs used in *chöd* are some of the most melodious in Tibetan sacred music. In being pleasing to the ears, the music is meant to draw in both living and spiritual beings to attend and benefit from the ritual.

Encounter the restorative experience of *chöd* through the tantric songs used in two spiritual practices, the Dorje Tholu puja and Terma Lay Jang. Performed by the monks of Sangngag Choekhor Dargyeling Monastery, which is known for its healing ceremonies, the songs used in these practices are well-loved for the beauty of their melodies and their ritual significance.

28 Apr 2023, Fri, 10pm, Esplanade Concourse: Dorje Tholu puja

In a group of six, the monks present songs used in the Dorje Tholu puja, a Tibetan Buddhism practice in reverence of the deity Dorje Tholu, who is believed to be able to cut through

negative forces and remove obstacles. The repertoire is chanted as part of the monks' daily monastic practice.

1 May 2023, Mon, 5.45pm, Esplanade Concert Hall: Terma Lay Jang

Experience the beautiful and delicate vocal ornamentation and texture of a solo monastic in performance of excerpts of the Terma Lay Jang. The Terma Lay Jang is a collection of teachings that includes healing rituals. It is associated with grander occasions, such as Black Dakini Day (a day dedicated to the Black Dakini or Dark Goddess, a wrathful manifestation of the deity of wisdom who represents the transformation of negative emotions into wisdom).

Chöd: A Tibetan spiritual practice

Through the esoteric rituals, meditation, song and visualisation, practitioners believe that impulse to cling onto the worldly phenomena of *samsara*—the cycle of death and rebirth—is obliterated. In *chöd*, gods and demons are not literal beings but the mental emanations—anger, ignorance, desire, and fear—that hinder one's liberation.

The lyrics are received through revelation—they are a corpus of hidden teachings and texts that manifest themselves to a lineage of masters called *tertöns* (treasure revealers), at the right time and place for the revelation to take place.

*I, a fearless Yogin in spiritual practice
know samsara and nirvana as equal
Dance upon ego-clinging gods and demons
Grinding dualistic samsaric thought to dust
– Laughter of the Dakinis, Chöd text*

A *chöd* ritual can be a daily monastic practice, though more elaborate forms of the ritual can be performed during feast days such as the monthly commemoration of the *dakinis*—divinity in the female form. Notably, they are sometimes they are performed in cremation grounds, which are ideal locations to summon forth mental states associated with an attachment to the mortal body.

About Sangngag Choekhor Dargyeling Monastery

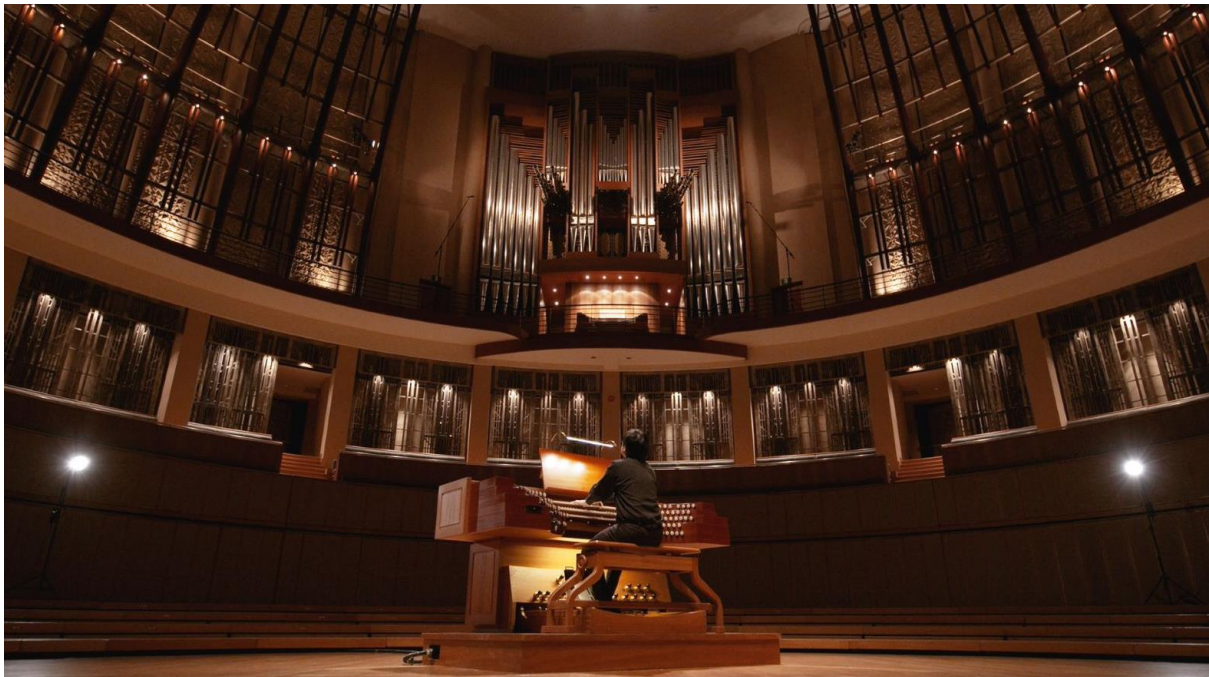
Located in northeastern India in Arunachal Pradesh, the Sangngag Choekhor Dargyeling Monastery holds *chöd* as one of their core spiritual practices. The lineage of *chöd* is passed down by the *tertön* Kunzang Dechen Lingpa Rinpoche (1928–2006), and amongst their canon are healing ceremonies for the sick and afflicted.

History of Improvisation in French Pipe Organ Music

Maurice Clerc (France)

29 Apr 2023, Sat, 2pm – 3pm

Esplanade Concert Hall Stage



An instrument that dates back to 300 BC, the organ was at first disapproved by medieval church leaders for its worldly and “sensually exciting sound”. Nonetheless, it eventually made its way into monasteries and churches. From the 14th through to the 19th centuries, organ-building became more advanced, allowing the instrument to possess its unique symphonic capabilities. Spurred by its symphonic possibilities and influenced by composers like Liszt and Wagner, 19th century organist-composers created a “new language” for the organ. Improvisations flourished at the hands of individuals like Charles-Marie Widor (1844–1937), Louis Vierne (1870–1937) and Maurice Duruflé (1902–1986).

In this talk for organists, pianists and keyboardists (and anyone who’s interested), organist Maurice Clerc whose practice is rooted in the French tradition, shares more about the history of the pipe organ and the French style of improvisation.

About Maurice Clerc

Maurice Clerc’s playing style is deeply rooted in the French tradition while drawing energy from the dynamism of modern organ playing. He has performed in approximately 1300 recitals in twenty countries consisting of 28 tours in North America (United States and Canada).

With over forty years of performing in four continents, Maurice has played at prestigious places such as Notre-Dame de Paris (France), Saint Patrick’s Cathedral (United States), Lübeck Cathedral (Germany), Patriarchal Cathedral Basilica of Saint Mark (Italy), Saint Joseph’s Oratory (Canada), St Paul’s Cathedral (Melbourne, Australia), N.H.K. Hall (Japan) and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (Hong Kong).

In 1987, Maurice was invited to play at the inauguration of the Flentrop organ in the National Theatre and Concert Hall, Taipei. In 1999, he attended the organist convention in Seoul. In 2003, he performed in Hong-Kong, China, Mexico and South Africa. In 2019, Maurice Clerc returned to Australia and New Zealand. In 2020, he played concerts and conducted masterclass in Japan and Hong Kong. His international career includes playing at leading

festivals in Bruges, Ravenna, Madrid, Morelia, Saint Eustache in Paris, Milstatt, Frankfurt, Budapest, Warsaw, Buenos-Aires and Montevideo.

Born in Lyon in 1946, Maurice studied under the tutelage of Suzanne Chaise at The École Normale de Musique de Paris (France). In 1975, he was awarded the Premier Prix in organ in the class of Rolande Falcinelli at the Conservatoire National Supérieur (France). Under the tutelage of Gaston Litaize, Maurice spent several years deepening his interpretation of 18th century repertoire. From 1972, he had the opportunity to frequent Pierre Cochereau's improvisational course conducted at the Conservatory of Nice (France). Maurice won the improvisation prize in the international organ competition of Lyon in 1977.

Maurice Clerc is the Organist Emeritus of the Dijon Cathedral (France) after being the titular organist for 46 years from 1972 to 2018. He was also a professor at the Conservatory of Dijon (France). Maurice has recorded multiple times with repertoire that consisted of Johann Sebastian Bach and German baroque masters. He is a specialist of French organist music with a reputation for romantic and modern repertoire. He frequently performs the major works of César Franck, Louis Vierne, Marcel Dupré, André Fleury and Jean Langlais. His most recent recordings include Pierre Cochereau and French transcriptions.

Maurice Clerc is a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

Exchange: Hula meets Bharatanatyam

Halau Nonoha Hawai'i and Kalpana Sivan & Ensemble (USA/Singapore)

29 Apr 2023, Sat, 2pm – 3.30pm

Esplanade Recital Studio



Two ancient dances from two ends of the world have more in common than one would imagine. As storytelling devices, hula and bharatanatyam both originated as dances devoted to mythology and spirituality, and are accompanied by percussion and chanting.

Hula was one of the earliest forms of sign language; chanting and dancing were used to impart history, traditions and stories down the generations. The dancers' eyes give expression to the story, the movement of their feet and hips bring rhythm and power, and their hands tell the story. Every movement, expression and gesture in hula has a specific meaning, from representing various plants or animals, the weather such as rain, the sun or moon, to actions, such as searching, sailing or listening.

From South India, bharatanatyam, the classical dance form that originated in Tamil Nadu, also conveys narrative in dance. Through rigorous control of hand gestures, head, eye and body movements, emotions and story elements are conveyed through codified expressions by the dancer, leading the audience towards *rasa*, which is an experience of a sentiment.

Join Halau Nonoha Hawai'i and Kalpana Sivan & Ensemble as they come together in an artistic discovery of each other's practices.

As part of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*, join us for a series of exchanges between international and locally based traditional artists whose artforms share thematic resonances. Listen as the artists demonstrate the similarities and differences in their sounds, movements and approaches, and gain insight on the significances and functions of their artistic practice within their respective communities.

Introduction to Byzantine Church Music and Chant

Father Nikodimos Kabarnos (Greece)

29 Apr 2023, Sat, 3.30pm – 4.30pm

Esplanade Rehearsal Studio



Regarded as “the history of prayer through song”, Byzantine music in the Greek Orthodox Church is purely vocal and is usually sung unaccompanied in the form of a monophonic chant. This chant is used as a prayer. Some of the Byzantine chant forms (like the *Kontakion*, a narrative-sermon that explains the meaning of biblical texts) draw on the imagery and stories of historical narratives. Many of these contain conversations between characters, with a focus on the drama.

Come and learn more about Byzantine music and chant from theologian, priest, choir director and soloist Father Nikodimos Kabarnos. This introduction will cover the music and its symbols, and how these symbols are translated into chant.

Songlines of Arnhem Land

Ngulmiya Nundhirribala (Australia)

29 Apr 2023, Sat, 8pm – 8.45pm

Esplanade Concert Hall



Photo credit: Anthony Gray

Hailing from the remote Arnhem Land, Northern Territory in Australia, the Nundhirribala Clan is one of many Australian indigenous tribes, who make up the original inhabitants of the land hundreds of years before colonisation in the 19th century. With Arnhem Land's proximity to water, water is a key element in the clan's dances and songs, which mark major events such as celebrations or deaths. When these occur, the entire community mourns or celebrates with the family. One such ritual is *Ayanjanarri*, the Water Ceremony, which carries the sorrow and pain of many generations, and a totem is sung to cleanse the mourning family after a death.

[Listen to the improvisation of *Ayanjanarri*, the Water Ceremony >](#)

Hidden away for centuries, these sacred dances and songs are now showcased to the world, thanks to songman and dancer Ngulmiya Nundhirribala, a revered leader in his community and keeper of the tradition. Experience these ceremonies for yourself at this year's edition of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*. Nundhirribala, accompanied by piano and string quartet, will perform traditional songs of his family's relationship with the Makassan sailors from what is now Indonesia and previously private ceremony songs.

These songs were recorded for his new album, backed by the 40-piece Budapest Art Orchestra and contemporary classical composers Luke Howard and Anthony Gray. A one-of-a-kind artist, Nundhirribala wrote these songs by improvising over previously private ceremony songs, such as *Ayanjanarri* (Water totem) and *Gurumburra* (Seagull totem), showcasing his incredible ability to improvise and collaborate using his traditional vocal style and language.

About the Nundhirribala Clan

In the barren land at dusk, accompanied by the sound of lively chanting and clapping, the men dance, holding flag posts with numerous triangular red flags and kicking up the sand. They wear red loincloths, their bodies are streaked white with ochre, marking the positions they hold in their tribe, totemic duties and ancestors. As nightfall approaches, the womenfolk dance in a group, their actions telling the stories of their history. The ceremony goes on for days, after

which, the body painting is smeared, just as designs on the ground are obliterated by the stamping of feet during the dances. These are the Red Flag dancers of the Nundhirribala Clan.

[Watch the Red Flag Dancers >](#)

The Nundhirribala Clan is one of many Australian indigenous tribes, who inhabit the remote Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. As early as the 1700s, Makassan fishermen sailed from the island of Sulawesi to Arnhem Land to trade, in search of *trepang* (sea cucumbers) in exchange for coins, clay pipes and alcohol. A record of these friendships turned into a culture and spirituality: the red flags symbolise the sails of the old *perahu* sailing boats and commonalities in language—*jaga* (to take care), *mabuk* (drunk), and *Dhumbala/Dumala* (sail). This culture is passed down generations through aural and oral tradition.

About Ngulmiya Nundhirribala

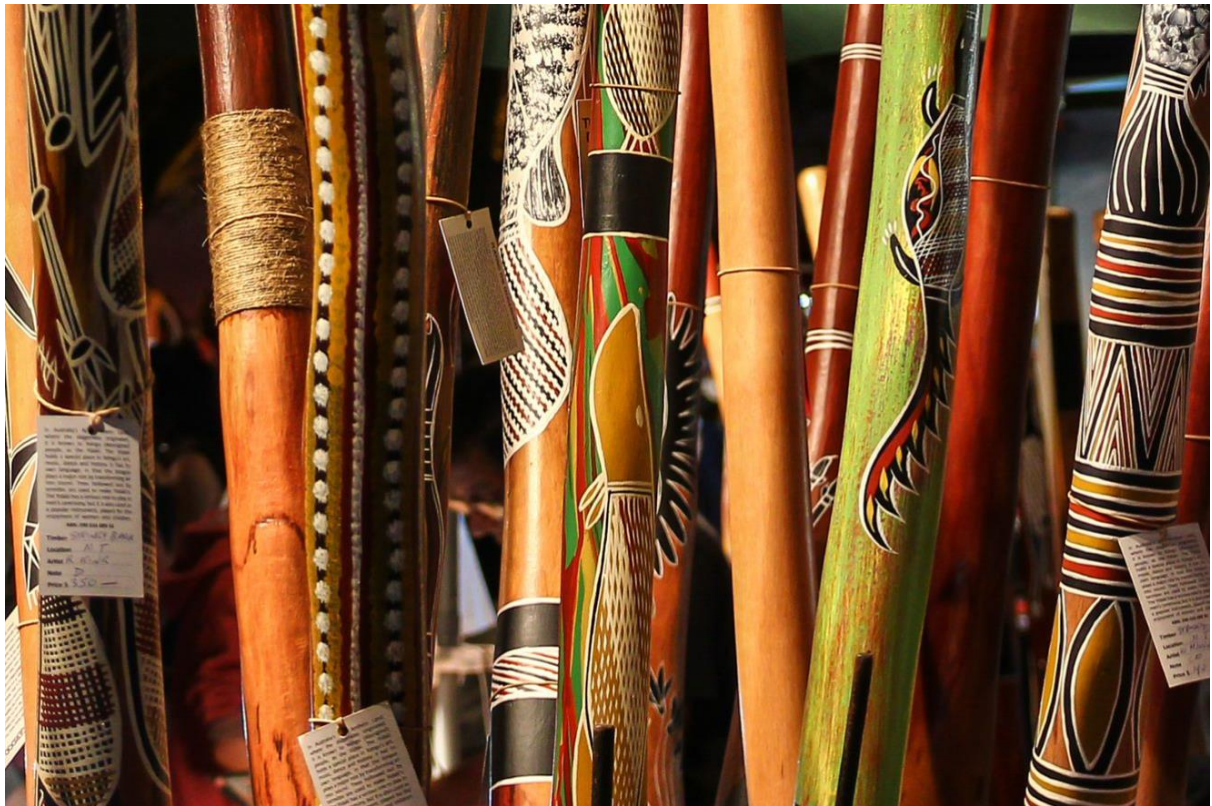
Ngulmiya Nundhirribala is an iconic ceremony leader and songman from Arnhem Land with a powerful voice and presence. He shares improvisations on previously private ceremony songs and *Dhumbala* (Red Flag) songs and stories, that developed over centuries, through his family's long relationship and history with the Makassan traders and sailors from Southeast Asia.

Introduction to the Didgeridoo

Ngulmiya Nundhirribala & Nayurryurr Nundhirribala (Australia)

30 Apr 2023, Sun, 1pm – 2pm

Esplanade Rehearsal Studio



Discover the ancient Aboriginal art of playing the didgeridoo, an iconic instrument that has been used for thousands of years in traditional ceremonies and storytelling with Ngulmiya and Nayurryurr Nundhirribala. Participants will be guided through the fundamentals of playing the didgeridoo, including how to produce different sounds, rhythms and breathing techniques.

Yidaki—the Aboriginal term for the didgeridoo, in the indigenous Yolngu language—was discovered in East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia. Claimed to be the world's oldest wind instrument, the didgeridoo is traditionally made from the tree limbs and trunks of hardwoods (eucalyptus and sometimes, bamboo or pandanus) native to the region, that have been hollowed out by termites. Its shape is therefore irregular, and the instrument produces a low resonant droning sound that can incorporate complex rhythmic patterns.

Exchange: Chhau meets Kuda Kepang

Biren Kalindi Chau Dance Ensemble and Kesenian Tedja Timur (India/Singapore)

30 Apr 2023, Sun, 2pm – 3.30pm

Esplanade Recital Studio



Hailing from different parts of the Asian continent, both *chhau* and *kuda kepong* are ceremonial spectacles and traditional rituals that bring communities together. The performers of both ritual dances take on warrior personas and perform various feats—in manifestation of the deities in *chhau* and in a state of trance in *kuda kepong*. Join Biren Kalindi Chau Dance Ensemble and Kesenian Tedja Timur as they come together in an artistic discovery of each other's practices.

Purulia chhau is one of three forms of the traditional *chhau* dance that will be presented at this year's edition of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*. Hailing from West Bengal, it is characterised by its elaborate and oversized masks as well as vigorous acrobatic stunts. The performers combine combat techniques, and animal gaits and movements to bring to life the ancient mythological battles in the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, about good and evil.

In the Javanese *kuda kepong*, warrior-dancers ride on woven bamboo or rattan horses, as if going to battle. Stemming from animistic beliefs, the ceremony culminates in the performers going into a trance when they perform superhuman feats such as eating glass or walking on coals, accompanied by the haunting sounds of the gamelan—part cleansing ceremony and part ritual reenactment of battle.

As part of *A Tapestry of Sacred Music*, join us for a series of exchanges between international and locally based traditional artists whose artforms share thematic resonances. Listen as the artists demonstrate the similarities and differences in their sounds, movements and approaches, and gain insight on the significances and functions of their artistic practice within their respective communities.

Pipe Organ Recital - One Hundred Years of French Sacred Music

Maurice Clerc (France)

30 Apr 2023, Sun, 3pm – 4pm

Esplanade Concert Hall



Soaring, majestic, powerful, stirring—these are the words so often used to describe the sound of music played on an organ, an instrument that dates back to the 3rd century BC. It was at first an instrument of royal patronage, disapproved by medieval church leaders for its worldly and “sensually exciting sound”. Nonetheless, it eventually made its way into monasteries and churches. From the 14th to the 17th centuries, the tonal palette of the organ began to expand, and national styles of organ building also began to develop.

Through the 18th and well into the 19th centuries, organ-building and performance flourished in France, advancing quicker than adjacent countries. Organ-building competitions encouraged builders to push the boundaries in design and sound – the addition of pipes that imitated orchestral instruments like bassoons, oboes, clarinets and flutes; and constructing the organ to produce a seamless swell of sound from soft to loud, which was previously impossible. The instruments of great organ builders like Aristide Cavallé-Coll filled the knaves of the most famous churches in Paris, including Notre-Dame (whose organ was thankfully spared from the fire in 2019), L'église de la Madeleine and Église Saint-Sulpice.

Influenced by composers like Liszt and Wagner, organist-composers were drawn to the instrument's symphonic possibilities, and composer Charles-Marie Widor (1844–1937) had mentioned that “[the] modern organ is essentially symphonic [and] the new instrument needs a new language”. Widor and his successors, such as Louis Vierne (1870–1937) and Maurice Duruflé (1902–1986), thus set about composing “symphonies” for the organ. Dramatic and witty, they made use of the varying colours and timbres that the organ could produce. They brought together the vast and disparate elements of the French pipe organ into an “orchestra”, while staying true to the nobility and spirituality of the instrument.

At the Esplanade Concert Hall, established French organist Maurice Clerc presents a programme covering the last 100 years of French sacred organ works. These pieces are written by some of the most influential organist-composers of the 19th and 20th centuries, and include improvisations by Widor, Vierne and Duruflé that were written for solo organ. One will experience the range, power and capabilities of the organ as a symphonic instrument through their works, while the masterpieces by Tournemire and Dupré showcase their unique blend of liturgical chants with modernist harmonies and techniques.

Programme:

Charles Tournemire (1870–1939)
*Paraphrase on *Victimae Paschali Laudes**
(reconstructed improvisation by Maurice Duruflé)

Marcel Dupré (1886–1971)
Crucifixion of the Passion-Symphony

Louis Vierne (1870–1937)
Offertoire
(reconstructed improvisation by Maurice Duruflé)

Charles-Marie Widor (1845–1937)
*Mattheus-Final of Bach's *Memento**

Jean Langlais (1909–1991)
Te Deum

Gaston Litaize (1909–1991)
Liturgical Préludes:
Andantino in A major
Allegretto in B major

Jehan Alain (1911–1940)
Postlude pour l'office des complies

Pierre Cochereau (1924–1984)
Scherzo symphonique (Notre-Dame Cathédral, 1974)
(reconstructed improvisation by Maurice Clerc)

Mehfil-e-Qawwali: Songs from a Sufi Shrine

The Qutbi Brothers (India)

30 Apr 2023, Sun, 8.30pm – 9.30pm

Esplanade Concert Hall

1 May 2023, Mon, 8.30pm – 9.15pm

Esplanade Outdoor Theatre



Qawwali is a Sufi expression of devotion, known as “path of the heart”. Qawwali’s present form can be traced back to 13th century India, when musician, politician and Sufi poet from the Chisti order in Delhi, Amir Khusru, wrote songs that combined elements from Persian, Turkish and Indian music to create qawwali’s signature, exciting sound. From hallowed shrines to bustling Bollywood, qawwali music and lyrics—it is Sufi poetry that is sung—have permeated the mainstream.

In this concert, one of India’s most celebrated qawwali singers The Qutbi Brothers presents a rousing performance of this ancient devotional form, in multiple languages including Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi and Arabic. With a lineage of over 800 years in the Sufi tradition passed on from the great mystics and saints, the award-winning The Qutbi Brothers are renowned for their distinct singing style and modern qawwalis. They are regular singers at the dargah (mausoleum or Sufi shrine) of Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, a Sufi saint and scholar who is regarded as one of the most important figures in the history of Sufism.

The qawwali repertoire: Sufi poetry

Poems of ancient Sufi mystics still make up the bulk of the *qawwali* repertoire and are sung in Urdu, Hindi, Farsi and Arabic. Today they are not only associated with religious occasions, but have become a part of mainstream music, widely recorded, performed and loved as musical entertainment in Pakistani film and in Bollywood soundtracks. Its traditional poetic lyrics of devotional, spiritual love re-interpreted as lyrics of secular love and its mystic imagery used for dramatic effect. Nonetheless, the core of its practice still belongs at the shrines of

Sufi saints, as a means to connect to the divine. Its rich store of philosophy, poetry and music continue to touch people who encounter it.

About The Qutbi Brothers

The Qutbi Brothers are one of the India's most celebrated qawwali singers. Headed by Haji Mohammad Idris and Arshad Qutbi who started their musical journey at an early age, they have inherited over 800 years of Sufi tradition from important mystics and Sufi saints such as Baba Farid, Amir Khusrau, Meerabai, Rumi, Bulleh Shah, Kabir, among others. The Qutbi Brothers are regular singers at the dargah (mausoleum or Sufi shrine) in Mehrauli, Delhi, of Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, a Sufi saint and scholar who is regarded as one of the most important figures in the history of Sufism. The award-winning ensemble has also performed extensively in India and internationally, in France, Maldives, South Africa, Tanzania, UAE and UK.

Pipe Organ Tour

Dr Evelyn Lim

1 May 2023, Mon, 11am, 12pm & 1pm

30mins per session

Esplanade Concert Hall



Come for an exclusive backstage tour to see Singapore's largest pipe organ up close. Three storeys high, the pipe organ in the Esplanade Concert Hall has 4,740 pipes and weighs about 25 tonnes (or five elephants). This is your chance to examine the pipes and mechanisms of this magnificent Klais organ in person, and discover how the instrument makes a range of sounds, from a tiny whistle to a monstrous growl.

[Find out more about Esplanade's pipe organ >](#)

Dances of the Santería Tradition

Yemaya Folklore Group

1 May 2023, Mon, 1pm – 2pm
Esplanade Rehearsal Studio



Join Yemaya Folklore Group for a workshop and demonstration of Santería's drumming traditions.

Through this workshop, participants will be introduced to Afro-Cuban percussion and its various drumming techniques and rhythm patterns, with some dance steps which are culturally significant to Santería.

With roots in slave history and oppression, Santería is a syncretic religion of the African Diaspora in Cuba. Based on the beliefs and traditions of the Yorubas, one of the first West African ethnic groups to be introduced to Christianity on a large scale, Santería is a fusion of the worship of semi-divine spirits or deities called orishas, with elements of Spanish Catholicism.

Music, chanting and dancing became central to worship, with percussion playing an especially vital role. Consecrated *batá* drums play interlocking rhythms, with each type of rhythm invoking different deities. Worshippers sing call-and-response songs in archaic Yoruba, led by the lead singer known as an *apón*, in an attempt to reach out to the spiritual world.

About Yemaya Folklore Group

Yemaya Folklore Group is a band that specialises in folk music from Cuba, while striving to introduce Afro-Cuban music to the world. The band started in 2014 in Singapore and comprises Lid Ferrera (vocals, percussion), Rony Martinez (vocals, percussion), Diosdado Hechavarría (percussion) and Pablo Calzado (vocals, percussion). The group features a huge variety of rhythms and styles from Afro-Cuban folklore that are all related to Santería, which is the main religion in Cuba and most parts of South America.

Kebatinan vs Keyakinan: Kuda Kepang

Iswandiarjo bin Wismodiarjo

1 May 2023, Mon, 2pm – 3pm

Esplanade Recital Studio



Brought to the city-state by immigrants from Java, Indonesia in the late 1940s, *kuda lumping*, better known today as *kuda kepeng*, is lived and performed through its descendants, despite criticism by the Islamic authorities for its perceived unruliness, leading to social misconduct and misdemeanor. *Kuda kepeng* stems from archaic animistic beliefs, and is practised regularly in Indonesia as part of celebrations such as weddings and cleansing ceremonies, in which villagers seek spiritual protection to ensure good harvests and prosperity.

Typically, a *kuda kepeng* performance features acts such as eating, walking on glass or embers, and its dancer-warriors are "whipped" by a *pawang* (shaman) and his assistants as part of the ritual. The performers, however, seemingly feel no pain, as they are in a state of trance—their bodies occupied by a spirit invoked by the *pawang* in an earlier part of the ritual. In this session, leader of the group Kesenian Tedja Timur that performs *kuda kepeng*, Iswandiarjo bin Wismodiarjo guides attendees in an investigation of the cultural and historical context of these practices, to examine possible associations with the supernatural, and if these were simply forms of traditional entertainment.

About Iswandiarjo bin Wismodiarjo

Since 2001, Iswandiarjo bin Wismodiarjo has led the Kesenian Tedja Timur, a group established in 1948 that keeps the ancient practice of *kuda kepeng* and other Javanese dances alive by performing and educating the public, as well as training youth in the art form. Iswandiarjo was elected President of Kuda Kepang Singapura in 2008 and has served as Vice President of the Javanese Association of Singapore's Performing Arts sector since 2015. Iswandiarjo is a practitioner and critic of Javanese Folk Performing Arts. In Singapore, he participates actively in the scene and holds various positions: Music Director for Qasyidah group Ikhwatul Iman, musician in Orkestra Melayu Singapura, section leader in the Pangrawit Anyar Gamelan Ensemble, and senior instructor and performer in Sri Warisan Gemelan and wayang kulit section.

Introduction to Hula Dance

Halau Nonoha Hawai'i (USA)

1 May 2023, Mon, 3pm – 4pm

Esplanade Rehearsal Studio



Welina Mai! Practitioners with the Hawaiian school Halau Nohona Hawai'i will share *mele* (chants) and *hula kahiko* (the ancient form) that honour *nā ali'i* (chiefs) and *nā akua* (deities), and demonstrate cultural values of the *kanaka maoli* (native Hawaiian people).

For generations, it is through hula that history, traditions, and stories about Hawaiian culture—its people, way of life, sense of aloha and connection to the earth—have been passed down. When one dances hula, one is connected to the universe. In this workshop that is open to everyone of all ages, discover the basic dance steps of hula, through storytelling and of course, the dance itself.

About Halau Nohona Hawai'i

Under the direction of Kumu Hula, Kaimana Chee, Halau Nohona Hawai'i is a Hawaiian cultural school founded in 2014 based in the USA. Its name refers to all things Hawaiian and living the Hawaiian way. A non-profit cultural organisation, the group's mission is to cultivate, protect and perpetuate the cultural practices, knowledge, and traditions of *na kupuna* (ancestors/elders) through the teachings of hula, language, chant, protocols, music & history.

Free, registration is required.

Esplanade&Me Priority Booking from 6 – 9 Apr 2023.

Public registration starts from 10 Apr 2023.

More information about the programmes will be released soon.

Last updated: 6 Apr 2023