



entertainment › arts

Cultural Medallion, Young Artist Award recipients announced

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BY MAYO MARTIN - 5 HOURS 27 MIN AGO

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Heng, 50, is artistic director of theatre company Wild Rice and founder of the Singapore Theatre Festival, while Mohamed, 63, is a South-east Asian Write Awardee and three-time Singapore Literature Prize winner. Mr Tsung, 63, meanwhile, is the music director and conductor of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra.

Apart from the three Cultural Medallion recipients, seven artists also received the Young Artist Award. They are: Multidisciplinary artists Bani Haykal and Grace Tan, conceptual artist Zaki Razak, Ding Yi Music Company founding member and Pipa soloist Chua Yew Kok, Dramabox associate artistic director Koh Hui Ling, music composer and producer Ruth Ling, and urban artist Zul Othman.

The CM and YAA recipients will be eligible for grants to further their practice (S\$80,000 and S\$20,000, respectively).

Said National Arts Council Deputy Chief Executive Officer Yvonne Tham: "The artistic excellence achieved by these Cultural Medallion recipients has won them critical acclaim both at home and abroad. We also recognize the outstanding work of our Young Artist Award recipients and trust that this award will further fuel their artistic trajectory and break new ground." The public will have the opportunity to meet the recent CM recipients at a panel on Nov 23, 2pm, at the National Library, The Pod. To register, visit www.cmspeakers.eventbrite.com.

Read below for what the CM and YAA recipients had to say.

CULTURAL MEDALLION RECIPIENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

IVAN HENG, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, WILD RICE, 50: I feel very honoured and encouraged to be recognised for my work, and the vital role that theatre plays in our society. I know few other countries in which theatre resonates as it does in Singapore. It has expanded the public's cultural imagination, and inspired a "national conversation" of more than three decades. It's part of our job to push the boundaries, and I do not take for granted the space and the responsibility that we have as artists, in reflecting on the possibilities and problems of our times. It takes a village to make theatre. It is the most collaborative of all art forms, and I am deeply grateful to the Singapore theatre community and our audiences and supporters, to whom I dedicate this award.

MOHAMED LATIFF MOHAMED, WRITER, 63: The CM award presentation ceremony on 22 Oct is the most memorable day in my life — 40 years worth of my work being recognised by the government. The grant from the NAC will be used to translate into English two of my novels, *Dalam Keasingan* (Isolation) and *Ziarah Rindu* (Visits of Reminisce) as well as one or two out of the three winning poems from the Singapore Literature Prize, and one short story from anthologies *Nostalgia Yang Hilang*. I am also in discussion to explore the possibility of publishing a compilation of my best short story, poetry, essay and drama script.

TSUNG YEH, CONDUCTOR, SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA, 63: It is definitely a great honour for myself as well as my team in SCO (from the Board, to management to musicians), and people who have supported me the past 11 years. This is a confirmation to what me and my team in SCO have accomplished. This award stimulates and encourages me to produce more innovative Chinese orchestra works to the community and bring to the world a diversity of music. I will invest in innovative research and to enhance creativity to produce better productions.

THE YOUNG ARTIST AWARDEES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

BANI HAYKAL, MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST, 28. I'm definitely appreciative and grateful to the people who've been of great help in my process and development as a practitioner of the arts. There are a few projects that I have in mind. There's a series of work I'm doing research on at the moment exploring the effects of the military-industrial complex from a sociocultural perspective. There's another light source at the end of the tunnel.

GRACE TAN, MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST, 34. I just got back to Singapore from installing a work at Setouchi Triennale, so it was a really wonderful surprise when NAC called me. The award is a big encouragement for me to continue with my artistic pursuit. Coming from a design background, the award is very meaningful to me because it recognises the (rather) unconventional approach in my practice.

ZAKI RAZAK, CONCEPTUAL ARTIST, 34. This accolade signals a ten-year journey, which I went through, not necessarily as an artist but as a commoner, human and servant of Allah. The journey of wisdom, trials and tribulations teaches and guides me to a better understanding of art and life. I receive this accolade with humility, praising Allah for His Bounties and Mercy and I hope to contribute whatever I have gained with a similar stance. I have options (for the grant). I might top it up with an exhibition I am working on for Substation next February or use it for a

fresh project or perhaps for studies.

CHUA YEW KOK, MUSICIAN, DING YI MUSIC COMPANY, 35. I was caught a little off guard when I received news of the award. Since I was told not to publicise the news, my first reaction was “wow”. I grabbed my keys and wallet got myself a cup of coffee. However I did share this wonderful news to my parents late at night. I identify that this award represents national recognition as well as a certain social responsibility. With this award, I hope reaffirm the value and place of traditional Chinese music in our society.

KOH HUI LING, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, DRAMA BOX, 34. It is definitely a recognition of the field of my practice — Applied Theatre (youth and community theatre) — and I would like to thank NAC for recognising that there are other non-mainstream theatre practices. I’m also very grateful to the practitioners before me who have done a great deal and hard work in building and continue to push boundaries in using Theatre in the community and youth works. There are two ways I foresee I would be using the grant: One part is for the training of the second batch of the ARTivate, the youth group of Drama Box, that I’ve started. I would be using the other portion in an unprecedented project called GoLi, the moving theatre. It will be the first inflatable theatre that would tour the heartlands with our regular community theatre projects (which we have been doing since 2000). GoLi aims to be an iconic space where the community would gather to dialogue about issues important to them, and also to re-imagine the use of public spaces in Singapore.

RUTH LING, PRODUCER/COMPOSER, 33. I felt pleasantly surprised because the field of my work is generally in contemporary music, which I feel for a long time, has not really been recognised as one of the arts in the same way as classical music, or Chinese classical music, or ethnic classical music. And also because a lot of what I do involves technology, in terms of programming my arrangements, in terms of production techniques, I’m also very glad that these kind of tech-based skills are also being recognised. The grant will be used towards a very exciting project that I have lined up for 2014 that involves bringing together local musicians, creating original work regularly and launching them on the Internet, so it’s going towards that project, called Some Kind Of A Session.

ZUL OTHMAN (ZERO), FOUNDER, RSCLS, 34. I think for me it’s just surprise, mainly because I don’t see myself as coming from a background that is always seen in a very positive light — street art and graffiti, with its history in transgression and whatnot. I’m happy to be a representative of a fringe, that community, the movement that I’m part of. I guess it is being more of a point where people can look at the kind of art that I do as something which is quite serious as well, looking at it from a point of view that it is not just connected to the “juvenile”. I’ll use (the grant) to learn more. I think as an artist, especially in Singapore, we are losing a lot of traditional craftwork and that is something that I am very interested in, like wood carving, stone carving and metal smith, things that I work a lot with my hands. I like to work with my hands. A lot of these skills like wood carving; you cannot find any wood carvers here who are masters. So I’m planning to go to maybe Indonesia or the Philippines to find a master woodcarver where I can learn. I have actually talked to a Filipino artist to understudy him for a period of time and I’m also planning to continue my studies, maybe take my Master’s degree.