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## EPISODE 1: "Right Time, Right People" feat. Arun Mahizhnan (Part Two)

[00:00:00]  
[Theme Music]

### INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT-SETTING FOR THE SINGAPORE ART WORLD IN THE LATE EIGHTIES

[00:00:08]

**Serene:** Welcome back to part two of our discussion with Arun Mahizhnan. Moving beyond the festival, Arun also played a crucial role in the development of Singapore's cultural policy in the late eighties. Apart from the increased activities in the arts, through the arts festival, there was a parallel recognition by the state to professionalise and grow the local arts ecosystem.

And we can see this in the effort to develop our first publicly available official cultural policy, the **Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts**, otherwise known as the ACCA report. In February 1988, the advisory council on culture and the arts was established to map out a program to make Singapore a culturally vibrant society, by the turn of the century.

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**Serene:** He was also tasked to craft a vision for Singapore's long-term arts and cultural development. The final report, which was released in 1989 has been described as a significant report, marking the first dedicated recognition of the value of arts and culture for a maturing nation by the Singapore government. To formulate the policy and its recommendations, the council was supported by five subcommittees, including the working group on new cultural development agency, who Arun was the chairman of. I think **this agency that we were talking about back then, of course came to be the National Arts Council** in 1991. May I ask you why was a cultural development agency needed at the time when we already had a ministry

### WHY WAS THERE A NEED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL IN SINGAPORE?

[00:01:44]

**Arun:** Like many things in government, there is always an evolutionary process. And after some time, you realise that the constraints of a government system actually is an impediment rather than an enhancer. The government has money, and the government has power, yes. But in terms of actual implementation, you'll find that the diversity of ideas that are required, is funnelled through a process and in this very dynamic or very controversial or very different ideas, don't really come up to the surface. This is a situation in all civil services. It's nothing unique to Singapore.

[00:02:30]

**Serene:** Oh, I thought we were special.

[00:02:32]

**Arun:** No, no. I mean, we are special in some ways, but all bureaucracies, and this is also true, even in the biggest corporations, and I have worked in and with at least 20 of the world's biggest corporations. And this is common in bureaucracies. So, we felt that the arts development within the earliest civil service system had placed certain constraints and that to unblock this, we needed a different legal as well as administrative structure. And it was on that basis, my committee deliberated over many months as to what should be the new structure for this focused agency, even within the Ministry of Culture, which is a very broad rubric and it covers so many things. So we felt that perhaps a new agency dedicated and focused on cultural arts development should be structured in a certain way.

## THE COMPLEXITIES OF BALANCING THE NEEDS AND TENSIONS FOR A NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL

[00:03:40]

**Arun:** To make a long story short, in this case, unlike economic development, the arts area is one of the most subjective areas of human endeavour. There are as many right opinions as there are people. There are as many wrong things as there are people. A civil service structure is a straightjacket because it should function by the general standards. You can't make too many exceptions for each of the department, right? And we felt the structure we should recommend is not the stat board, which is usually the first option, but a company limited by guarantee. By then a couple of institutions have already been established, including my current employer, the **Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)**, who was originally set up as a company limited by guarantee.

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**Arun:** So, I studied the few existing examples of this structure - company limited by guarantee. So, we put forward this idea. At first, there was resistance within my own committee, but after deliberations, we managed to convince everyone that the company limited by guarantee - and very simply I'm over-simplifying, but just for reasons of brevity - the company limited by guarantee will be an autonomous group set up by the government, but reporting directly to the minister, not the perm secretary, not anybody else - directly to the minister. And the minister will appoint the governing board. So, it is not a case where the government has no control over it. The control will not be that different from a stat board or even a civil service department.

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**Arun:** But the processes would be completely autonomous of the civil services and all that. Just a simple example, hiring and firing will be done by the company, by its own standards, by its own methodologies, by its own norms. It will set its own norm. Whereas if you're a stat board, the norms have already been set and there is very little leeway for a CEO to go outside of these perimeters, you know?

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**Arun:** So, we convinced ourselves that this is a better thing. So we felt that the subjectivity of the arts area is such that it would have a greater opportunity to flourish, without too many impediments. This was the primary reason. Of course, the, one of the biggest objections was a stat board will be given a subvention by the government, through its budgetary process,

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where I went to get the money. This was actually one of the biggest concerns by the civil servants in my committee or people with only civil service experience. But having been outside and having been with Mobil, I knew in my heart and in my head that we can get the necessary funding. The government will give some funding, but it would not have the iron grip on the processes, which were always stifling.

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**Arun:** And unfortunately, I went off on my sabbatical after the... We submitted this report to **Mr. Ong Teng Cheong**. He knew fully well, and I heard it from his own mouth that this is okay. I went off to Australia then I read in the papers that at the parliament session, the government presented an option where NAC would be established as a stat board. Something happened between the cup and the lip kind of thing. So later on, when I came back, I was placated by saying "Arun, this is purely for funding reasons". There's greater certainty for funding. I don't know because I can't quote any official sources for this and I'm absolutely convinced having been in all kinds of structures, the National Arts Council should have been a company limited by guarantee. The looser control would have enabled NAC to perform much better than it has.

## THE EVOLVING LEGACY OF THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR FOR THE SINGAPORE ARTS FESTIVAL

[00:08:14]

**Serene:** So, after the NAC was established, the festival went under the NAC in 1992, with the appointment of Mr. Liew Chin Choy as the director of programming. We heard a quote from him earlier on - very interesting - where he described himself also as a civil servant, having to deal with the festival without that formal training. There was also a **first local collaboration** between two dance companies, the **Singapore Dance Theatre** and **Hong Kong Ballet** in 1992. Those would be the key highlights.

[00:08:40]

**Serene:** In 1993, there was the launch of the biannual **Festival of Asian Performing Arts or FAPA**. I think that was very short-lived, at least that name, but I do remember it, it was to alternate with the Singapore Festival of the Arts. So, you have the so-called international festival, the Singapore Festival of the Arts, and then it will alternate with the Festival of Asian Performing Arts.

[00:09:03]

**Serene:** So, and in a way, this is a bit of a change from the fringe, right? Previously there was the fringe which supported the local arts. So FAPA apparently saw poor attendance at the first two editions and a third edition in 1997 became its last.

[00:09:20]

**Arun:** Yes. In a way it was inevitable that international programming is dominated by the so-called west. It is inevitable, but even people like Professor Tommy Koh were very keen that we should have a greater Asian component. And I was certainly very much in favour of that. But as often happens, good idea when it is implemented poorly, it doesn't succeed. Unfortunately, I think the FAPA was one of those things. It's a very good idea, basically, but on the other side, we have now got a more of an annual cycle, right? Instead of the biannual

cycle. So, the arts lovers are not deprived of the amount of programming or content because each was once every two years. Now we have more opportunities.

[00:10:19]

**Serene:** Yeah. And we have a slate also, of local artistic directors.

[00:10:23]

**Arun:** Definitely. I think related to that, I should mention that we insisted that it must have a professional artistic director or at least a dedicated artistic director. And that is how we brought in **Robert Liew**. Robert Liew has never done an international arts festival ever before, but in our opinion, he was still far better than giving it back to the civil servants. And as Chin Choy himself had readily admitted, it is not that the civil servants really wanted it, they were just thrust upon by the system.

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**Serene:** Yeah. It will be interesting to see how the various local artistic directors will find their way. And I just like to share the list with our listeners. We had **Anthony Steel**, of course, as you mentioned earlier on sharing the years that he was artistic director, 1982 to 1984, then we had **Robert Liew** for another three years. And then we had **Tisa Ng** in 1990, **Mr. Liew Chin Choy** - this is the reversion that you said, right? This is the reversion to the civil service from 1992 to 1999, **Mr. Liew Chin Choy** was the artistic director of the festival. And then **Ms. Goh Ching Lee** for nine years after that 2000 to 2009 and **Mr. Low Kee Hong**, 2009 to 2012.

[00:11:41]

**Serene:** Now this part is the departure. In 2014, **Ong Keng Sen**, who was then also artistic director of **TheatreWorks**, took over and he was artistic director for three editions till 2017. And then you had **Gaurav Kripalani**, artistic director of the **Singapore Repertory Theatre**, from 2018 to 2021. I should say this is because of the generosity COVID-19 thrown in, so the years kind of shifted a little bit. So **Natalie Hennedige** will take over this year in 2022.

[00:12:12]

**Arun:** I should add a footnote to your list, about the outsourcing of the arts festival under artistic director who was not part of NAC. **Mr. Liu Thai Ker**, when he was chairman of NAC, he actually commissioned me and a couple of others to do a study of the **Hong Kong arts festival**, because he knew my earlier expressions about the autonomy of the arts festival and the artistic director. He said since the Hong Kong arts festival, which is far more successful than ours had been there for a long time, why don't we go in and study how they do it?

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**Arun:** And I submitted a report with my group and our recommendation was that it should be moved out. Again, similar reasons, the constraints of the civil service and the constraints of the stat board are not the same as the constraints of an autonomous entity. And that's why an artistic director functioning as an autonomous entity would be better. Not that it is always best or better than anything civil servants can do, I'm not saying that. But in general, the constraints of these systems are stifling. And as you have now seen, each artistic director has a very different vision of the festival. It reflects their own vision more than a particular civil service mentality, which is the case in the earlier years.

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**Arun:** I am quite convinced that artistic endeavours should be given more latitude than say an economic or environmental agency, because of the subjectivity... it's the very nature of the beast. It is so subjective that we have to take a risk and give the autonomy and the authority for the artistic director. And once we find the product or the outcome is not acceptable, we can fire the artistic director. It's as simple as that. That's what we recommended even for the NAC. The person you appoint as a CEO... there is a board of governors, they will decide whether the person is up to scratch or not, and you can easily replace the CEOs and the artistic directors. But if you have a civil servant running these kinds of operations, very often you will find a way of moving him or her out to another, some other pasture and then bring in yet another civil servant, because the system requires that.

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**Serene:** I am also hearing very passionately, the kind of ownership, the kind of thought and precision that you are expressing these issues. comes from a very deep place where you've thought about the arts. And there is a very deep belief and passion, I think, for the growth of the local arts. And that's what is really infectious.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SYMBIOTIC FRIENDSHIPS AND ALLIANCES BETWEEN ARTISTS AND ARTS MANAGERS

[00:15:28]

**Serene:** You of course, in your really long career, you have very fond memories, very firm friendships with **ITI**, with the **Substation** because of the leaders as well, right? **T Sasitharan**, as well as the late **Kuo Pao Kun**. I wonder if you could share some of your memories of being in those organisations with us.

[00:15:49]

**Arun:** Well, my association with Kuo Pao Kun goes back a long way, and most people don't know this, that he worked in the same unit in **RTS (Radio Television Singapore)**.

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**Serene:** He was in radio. Chinese radio.

[00:16:02]

**Arun:** Radio Television Singapore, where I subsequently joined. He was already a partially a legend because of the fact that he was imprisoned and wrongly accused of being a communist sympathiser and so on. And so, I had already developed a certain liking for him because I have no problem confessing that I'm a diehard liberal and I don't subscribe to a dictatorial, authoritarian approaches where it is unnecessary. So Pao Kun had already made a mark in my mind, even before I met and got to know him well, and then later on, when I was in Mobil, he had approached me to be part of their original **TTRP (Theatre Training & Research Programme)**, which was somewhere near Bartley road. There was a little house just away from Botley road. So, **Professor Eddie Kuo** and myself were members of his so-called advisory panel.

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**Arun:** Let me put one point in my relationship with Pao Kun. I don't have an artistic bone in my body. I'm not a creator. And Pao Kun had consistently kept me by his side, not because

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of my artistic merits, (but) because I have some administrative ability and even more importantly, I speak my mind.

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**Arun:** Pao Kun, by the time he established Substation, he was already a kind of an iconic figure and people were worshipful of Pao Kun, but while I admired him greatly, I spoke my mind and there is one other person in that group, which is **Tan Beng Luan**, who had been with him for a very long time. Beng Luan and I will always speak up and tell him off. And that is the main reason why I think Pao Kun kept me by his side. Not for any other merits. I have very few, if any. But he accepted the idea that I spoke from my heart and that I use my head and that I was seeing things contrarian, but in the best interests of his mission.

[00:18:32]

**Serene:** I'm very curious about one of those contrarian things that you might have said to him, because well in drama, we say that conflict makes good drama, and it looks like conflict makes good partnership as well.

[00:18:44]

**Arun:** Oh, no, conflict makes good drama, but very few can accommodate conflict in administration, in running a thing. This is the level of maturity that Pao Kun had. He was able to see when people said different things, that there was... he would want to know why. And I think I pass muster in explaining my rationale. It is, I have to say, mostly with the administration of his institution and he was never a good administrator.

[00:19:20]

**Serene:** This was TTRP? Or Substation?

[00:19:22]

**Arun:** In all, TTRP and Substation, and I think also **IT** in the early [days]. And he would be the first to say that. And that's why he invited people like me and Casey Chew to be part of this process. You know, he knows that when we are saying something on how certain things should be organised or administered, which is not his area of expertise, he was magnanimous enough. And I use the word magnanimous only because of his iconic status. He could have easily brushed us aside and said this is the way it's going to be done. He could have easily done that, but he never ever did that. He never had a harsh word with me over more than 30 years that we have known each other.

[00:20:09]

**Arun:** And I think I would say my involvement with substation is another one of those rare stories. Because I was in Mobil and he already knew that Mobil was the pioneer supportive of the arts. He came to me first. Because **[Tay] Kheng Soon** and him had developed the idea of the Substation, he came for funding support.

[00:20:31]

**Arun:** I, you remember I mentioned Dorsey Dunn. I think it's a blessing for me that he was a chairman. I went to see him about this proposal and he had some idea because it was on paper, the dimensions of Substation and all that. He said, it seems rather small to me, why don't you go and look for an even a bigger place, but not a new building. The spirit of the Substation is repurposing. That is what I, unfortunately, and all others seemed to have

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missed the whole point of Substation. That place was invested with a certain spirit by people like Pao Kun and Kheng Soon, which cannot be replaced. So I came back, so I submitted a proposal to Pao Kun that we will fully fund this, but on one condition that this has to be Mobil arts centre. And Pao Kun said no, we cannot give naming right to the whole centre.

[00:21:40]

**Serene:** Okay.

[00:21:41]

**Arun:** Despite the fact that we were close friends. I mean my management also said, well, we are giving so much money and we don't have any naming rights. It's not worth it. I think in both cases, they were perfectly valid decisions. So when I conveyed this bad news to Pao Kun, instead of throwing me out, he later asked me to join the board of Substation. That is called Pao Kun for you. Yeah. Which is why we got along. And of course, I considered that a great honour for me to have served with him.

[00:22:11] **Serene:** I think that gives a lot of inspiration to people who are finding out about the pioneers of the arts and Substation, of course, as we know it has been returned. The building has been returned to the National Arts Council. Here on Backlogues, so we do have an upcoming episode of an interview with **Wong Han Juan** for the Substation.

[00:22:32] **Arun:** Even in the case of ITI, I should add, I was a resident sceptic when this particular conception of data training was put forward.

[00:22:43] **Serene:** TTRP, Theatre Training & Research Programme

[00:22:45] **Arun:** Yes, TTRP absolutely, the ITI was a later name. And so I was, but when it was finally prepared, he told Sasi, go give it to Arun and see what he says. And I was so impressed, which is why I'm still there for nearly 20 years, you know? So this scepticism was something that he welcomed. Rather than people who are sycophants, people who are in thrall to him.

[00:23:14] **Serene:** Yup, not so much into the hero worship and things like that. Yeah.

[00:23:16]

[Theme Music]

## OBSTACLES FACED BY ARTS MANAGERS IN SINGAPORE

[00:23:28]

**Serene:** There's so many things that you've shared with us. And I think I do have a question which, it's a big question, but I'm really interested to hear your view of what's the biggest obstacle, you, think that arts managers have today.

[00:23:43]

**Arun:** Okay, when we talk about arts managers, unlike in many other countries, arts is so much in the hands of the government in Singapore, as opposed to non-government hands. So this is a reality we have to face. Accept and make the best of it. So in the case of the arts managers in the government, that already has some basic imperatives. It is a multi-ethnic,

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multicultural and multilingual society. And the government has pledged that it will abide by this fundamental of Singapore's existence, that it will always be a multi-ethnic, multicultural, multilingual society.

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**Arun:** Now, once you have made that kind of a pledge, and in fact, some aspects of are already enshrined in our constitution, government arts management must always refer to these fundamentals. Am I doing for all ethnic groups? Am I doing it for all art forms? Am I doing it [00:25:00] for all languages? So this places enormous constraint while it also gives enormous opportunities on the modus operandi in the non-government sector, whether it is private sector or the people sector. I mean, here, the challenges for the arts manager are many times more than the governments, even though their constraints are different from ours. Here, we don't have to pretend to cater to everyone, whether it is the Substation or the ITI as two examples, where I have personal experience. We go by the arts imperative. Raw theatre was an imperative for Substation. Experimental theatre was an imperative for popcorn. This is not an imperative for the government. The second thing is, in the private sector, the resources, not just financial resources, even other resources are limited. You see, for example, if an NAC official wants to know what the British arts council has done. A phone call away. They will get so much of material, so much advice. It's the norm. But if I am sitting in ITI and I want to find out how such programs are run, the amount of effort we have to make, where there's nobody else to snap your fingers and we don't have that. And so even to find knowledge, even to find insight, even to share experience, it is so much tougher for the arts managers in the NGO sector. And I can go on for the rest of the day. Now in the last 10 years, I can see the arts management in the arts groups are professional. When I started out in 70, hardly anybody, they don't even have the concept of marketing. They will just say publicity. That's what they were thinking. So I, in my role, I will also encourage them. You're focusing entirely on the artistic creative output. You are not looking at the other things. How do you keep track of your expenses? What is the management structure? Which many funders never asked these people? They, you can ask them. I used to focus on these things just like in substation, where my role was more to do with the administration of the Substation. So as a private sector, funding arts manager, my role was such that we are not only giving money to support, but to socialising the arts group to good management practices.

## ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF ARTS MANAGERS IN SINGAPORE

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**Serene:** That is so passionate. Arun, I picked up, I made a list for our listeners as well. We meet a lot of young people nowadays who want to Google and find an answer for arts management. And as you said, it's hard, right? So these are some of the things that I wrote down. And for brevity, I'm just going to ask you to say yes or no when I say them out. To me, what Arun has shared with us about being an arts manager, these are some of the essential skills: Make friends.

[00:28:16]

**Arun:** Yes.

[00:28:16]

**Serene:** Beg.



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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Talk to people.

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**Arun:** Yes, yes.

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**Serene:** Grow a thick skin.

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**Arun:** Yes, yes.

[00:28:22]

**Serene:** Know the terrain.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Be an ally or build bridges.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Be curious.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Think Big.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Don't afraid to be wrong.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Be present.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Listen.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Do due diligence.

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**Arun:** Yes.

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**Serene:** Enable others.

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**Arun:** Yes.

[00:28:39]

**Serene:** Shine a light.

[00:28:40] **Arun:** Yes. You have a made it better than I was able to. All of them are definitely boxes that you have to tick. The arts manager, as I see myself, as I also confess earlier, I don't have a [00:29:00] creative capacity. But if you are an arts manager, you must know management thoroughly. Just like you are expecting the director to direct well, the writer to write well, the actor to act well, the manager should manage well. Unfortunately, arts managers don't think of themselves until recently. Of course, some of them are professionally trained. Arts management courses offered both locally and abroad, but previously they didn't think they were thinking, or there's a, like a support staff. The management of Substation is as important as the creative output that you are manning, you are putting it out. So your staff here, what doing the management side, they have to be thoroughly trained. They have to be very, very good. So this combination of onstage and offstage thing, are critically important for arts development. Unfortunately, we privileged the creative effort, the creative endeavour, and underprivileged the non-creative, but critically essential endeavours.

[00:30:15] **Serene:** That's right. That's right. Well put. I'm going to end on this phrase that you used right at the top of our interview, which was that Singapore was a cultural desert. So what do you think of Singapore now?

[00:30:25] **Arun:** Oh, now it's not only a cultural garden, it is like the Gardens at the Bay, it is so much of a rich, diverse environment, I would say. Very rich, very diverse environment. And I think we have to thank the Singapore government, more than any single entity. Where the government had now put in so much of money, so much of effort, and it has raised the signature for arts in the say, at the cabinet level, at the administrative level. So we have to thank the government for that. But also the private sector, without which we could not have

reached this stage. Some of them have become professional arts providers. The private sector already has professional arts providers. Then, there are the funders, but of course, arts cannot exist without the artists. They are the reason why we are here. Again, arts management is there for arts, for the sake of art, not for the sake of management and I hope we will never, ever revert to being a cultural dessert.

[00:31:43] **Serene:** Thank you very, very much, Arun. Thank you so much for sharing all your insights, your experience, and spending the time here with us on Backlogues today.

[00:31:51] **Arun:** Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. It is actually quite rare. Nobody has interrogated me for [00:32:00] so long on this subject.

[00:32:05] **Serene:** You've just come to the end of another episode of Backlogues, an arts management podcast series. If you'd like to learn more about any of the key events, people and institutions mentioned in this particular episode. Head over to our website@backlogues.sg. That's B A C K L O G U E S dot S G, to find further information pertaining to each episodes' content. You may find them under show notes on the respective pages for each episode. For more resources with regards to arts management in Singapore, head to the resources page on the website. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram @backlogues.sg, which will be updated every time a new episode is released.

Share your comments with us by tagging us@backlogues.sg or using the #BackloguesSG. If you've enjoyed what you heard today and would like more, do support our fundraising efforts. We are raising funds to support the operational costs of manpower, equipment and resources in order to keep this podcast going. You may find the donation link on our website as well as our social media channels.

This first podcast series is presented by Centre 42 and Singlit Station together with researchers Dr. Hoe Su Fern and Dr. Cheryl Julia Lee. It is supported by the National Arts Council Singapore. Thank you for listening.

## References

- [00:00:41] Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA): The ACCA report, which was released in 1989, is the first publicly-available cultural policy in Singapore. It has been regarded as a major landmark report that laid the foundations for arts development in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century
- [00:01:32] The National Arts Council: The National Arts Council is a statutory board established on 15 October 1991 to oversee the development of arts in Singapore. It is under the purview of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.
- [00:04:33] The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS): The Institute of Policy Studies is a Singaporean think-tank that studies and generates public policy ideas in Singapore. Established in 1988, IPS became an autonomous research centre of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore in 2008.
- [00:07:15] [Ong Teng Cheong](#): Singapore's fifth president whose term was from 1993 – 1999. Fondly remembered as the People's President, he is also known for championing the arts within state governance and policy-making in Singapore.
- [00:08:34] First Local Collaboration: First local-foreign collaboration between two dance companies, Singapore Dance Theatre and Hong Kong Ballet was titled Unknown Territory
- [00:08:37] Singapore Dance Theatre: Singapore's national dance company which was founded in 1988 and renamed Singapore Ballet in December 2021.
- [00:08:37] Hong Kong Ballet: The Hong Kong Ballet is One of Asia's premier ballet companies, founded in 1979.
- [00:08:44] Festival of Asian Performing Arts (FAPA): The Festival of Asian Performing Arts, which was launched in 1993, was a new festival aimed at promoting traditional and contemporary Asian performing arts. It was complement and alternate with the Singapore Festival of Arts.
- [00:10:38] Robert Liew: Robert Liew, born in Singapore in 1948, is a pioneer in the Singaporean arts industry and served as the artistic director of the Singapore Arts Festival from 1985 to 1988.
- [00:11:10] Anthony Steel: Anthony Steel is an Australian festival director and the former artistic director of the Adelaide Festival. He was appointed as the artistic director of the Singapore Arts Festival from 1982 to 1984.
- [00:11:21] Tisa Ng: Tisa Ho is currently the director of the Hong Kong Arts Festival and was previously the director of the Singapore Arts Festival in 1990.

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- [00:11:24] Liew Chin Choy: Liew Chin Choy is an established arts administrator in Singapore who became heavily involved in the local arts scene in the early 1980s. He served as the artistic director of the Singapore Arts Festival from 1992 to 1999.
  - [00:11:36] Goh Ching Lee: Goh Ching Lee was the Senior Director of Arts Cluster Development at the Singapore National Arts Council and was appointed as the director of the Singapore Arts Festival from 2000 to 2009.
  - [00:11:39] Low Kee Hong: Low Kee Hong is currently Head of Theatre, Performing Arts at the West Kowloon Cultural District Hong Kong. He was the Artistic Director of the Singapore Arts Festival from 2009 to 2012 and the General Manager for the Singapore Biennale from 2005 to 2009.
  - [00:11:45] Ong Keng Sen: Ong Keng Sen is a Singaporean director of the theatre group, TheatreWorks, which was founded in 1985.
  - [00:11:49] TheatreWorks: TheatreWorks (currently known as T:>Works) is an independent, non-profit Singaporean theatre company that develops and nurtures professional arts skills. It supports Singapore artists, and articulates the Singapore arts through its various productions and developmental programmes.
  - [00:11:55] Gaurav Kripalani: Gaurav Kripalani is artistic director of the Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT) and the director of the Singapore International Festival of Arts from 2018 to 2021.
  - [00:11:59] Singapore Repertory Theatre: Singapore Repertory Theatre is a non-profit professional theatre company founded in 1993.
  - [00:12:08] Natalie Henedige: Natalie Henedige is the Artistic Director of Cake Theatrical Productions and will step in as the new festival director of the Singapore International Festival of Arts from 2022 to 2024.
  - [00:12:24] Liu Thai Ker: Liu Thai Ker was the Chairman of National Arts Council (NAC) from 1996 to 2005.
  - [00:12:31] Hong Kong Arts Festival: The HKAF, launched in 1973, is a major international arts festival committed to enriching the cultural life of the city by presenting leading local and international artists in all genres of the performing arts as well as a diverse range of "PLUS" and educational events in February and March each year.
  - [00:15:36] ITI: Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), formerly known as Theatre Training and Research Programme (TTRP), is an independent theatre school for contemporary artists. ITI is a unique enterprise in theatre training, human understanding and raising social and cultural awareness.
  - [00:15:38] Substation: The Substation is Singapore's first independent contemporary arts centre. Founded in 1990 by Kuo Pao Kun, it is known for its pioneering and experimental arts programming.

- [00:15:40] T Sasitharan: Thirunalan Sasitharan is a Singaporean theatre educator and the co-founder and director of Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI)
- [00:15:42] Kuo Pao Kun: Kuo Pao Kun was a playwright, theatre director, and arts activist in Singapore who wrote and directed both Mandarin and English plays. He founded three arts and drama centres in Singapore, conducted and organised a number of drama seminars and workshops, and mentored Singaporean and foreign directors and artists. He is also the co-founder of Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) and the Substation.
- [00:16:01] RTS (Radio Television Singapore): After the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, all of television and radio operations in Singapore were fused to become Radio Television Singapore (RTS), a part of the Ministry of Culture. The government officially dissolved RTS on 31 January 1980.
- [00:17:03] Professor Eddie Kuo: Professor Eddie Kuo is an academic advisor at Singapore University of Social Sciences.
- [00:18:00] Tan Beng Luan: Tan Beng Luan was the founding manager of the Substation
- [00:20:25] Tay Kheng Soon: Tay Kheng Soon was the founding Chairman of the Substation
- [00:22:30] Wong Han Juan: Wong Han Juan worked with the Practice Performing Arts School from 1988 to 1990 and she was also the Acting Manager of The Substation from 1990 to 1993.