

SAMSUI WOMEN

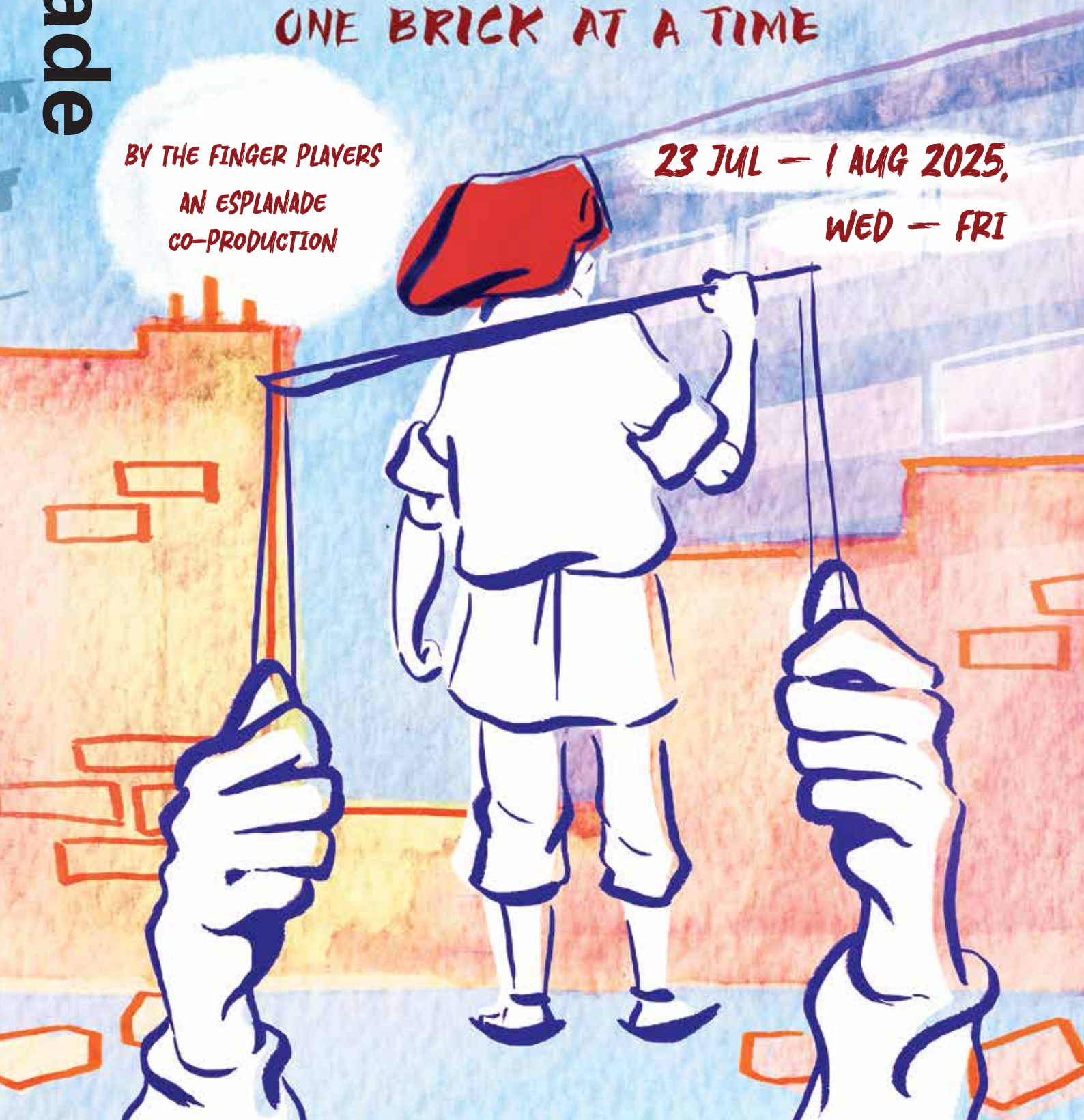
ONE BRICK AT A TIME

BY THE FINGER PLAYERS

AN ESPLANADE
CO-PRODUCTION

23 JUL — 1 AUG 2025,

WED — FRI



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

What are the qualities that make someone a hero? Is it courage? Is it resilience? Or did circumstances in history give rise to these heroes?

Samsui women who were once familiar sights in our country, are gone from the streets and are fast disappearing from our consciousness. Born out of necessity as a result of manpower shortage in the construction industry, these women were the pillars of our labour force, forever imprinting their presence in our minds with their steadfastness and drive. If they were asked if they had ever thought of themselves as heroes, these women would probably have balked at the idea. After all, they had worked alongside men out of necessity, in order to

earn a livelihood for themselves and their families back home. But little did they know their strength of character and stories had inspired generations after them, going down in history as role models and pioneers of our nation building.

Heroes are not born, but made. Like the pioneers of our nation, Samsui women had made many personal sacrifices to better the lives of others, sometimes at their own expense. While their place in society may be history, their stories will never be forgotten.

CHONG TZE CHIEN
DIRECTOR

BACKSTAGE PASS — MEET THE TEAM!

**Playwright,
Director and Set
Conceptualiser**
Chong Tze Chien

Set Designer
Grace Lin

Lighting Designer
Faith Liu Yong Huay

**Sound Designer &
Music Composer**
Darren Ng

**Puppet & Props
Maintenance**
Myra Loke

**Performers &
Puppeteers**
Myra Loke, Vanessa Toh,
Tanya Ang, Jo Tan

Production Manager
Lam Dan Fong (The
Backstage Affair)

Stage Manager
Keira Lee

**Assistant Stage
Manager**
Finna Kwang (The
Backstage Affair)

Sound Operator
Leeyau Shi Min

**Production
Assistant**
Lilith Tan (The
Backstage Affair)

**Educational
Guide Writer**
Jessica Ding

**Educational
Guide Designer**
Shelly Liew

THE
FINGER
PLAYERS 十指帮

The Finger Players

The Finger Players is a theatre company in Singapore that focuses on puppetry. The forms of puppetry that they specialise in includes - Traditional Chinese hand puppets, rod puppets, string puppets, shadow puppets, mask puppets and object puppets.

 www.fingerplayers.com

 [fingerplayers](https://www.instagram.com/fingerplayers)

WHAT WE WILL LEARN FROM THE SHOW!


Gain an awareness
and appreciation for
puppetry as a
storytelling tool


Explore the values of
loyalty, resilience and
sense of duty reflected
in the Samsui women


Examine and gain an
appreciation for the
contributions of Samsui
women to nation-building

ACTIVITY 1

STORY PUZZLE — PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

The events in “Samsui Women: One Brick at a Time” are all mixed up in different building blocks! Draw a line to match each event description to the correct part of the story.



(a) Harsh words from others cause tension between the friends. But when a big fire breaks out at Bukit Ho Swee, the Samsui women show a sense of duty to help people in trouble.

BEGINNING



(b) Even when they have disagreements, the Samsui women quickly make peace and work together as a team to build homes for people who need them. They show loyalty not just to one another, but also to their families and the country they live in.

MIDDLE



(c) Swee Leng and her friends leave their homeland in China and travel across the seas to Nanyang to find a better future. There, they work hard alongside men at construction sites, earning recognition as the resilient Samsui women.

END

ACTIVITY 2

STORY REFLECTION CIRCLE

Think-Pair-Share!

Refer to the previous activity for helping words

What was your favourite part of the story? Why?

What values did the characters show?

Can you share a time when you showed one of these values?

ACTIVITY 3

HEROINES OF HARD WORK

Let's Match!

Samsui women helped to build different kinds of buildings in Singapore back then. Match the type of building that they helped to build with the correct name.



Image taken from NHB website:
<https://www.roots.gov.sg/stories-landing/stories/singapore-shophouses/story>



Image taken from NHB website:
<https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1180754>



Image taken from HDB website:
<https://www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/about-us/history/hdb-towns-your-home/bishan>

HDB FLATS

SHOPHOUSES

COLONIAL BUILDING

WALK IN HER SHOES



Image taken from NHB website:
<https://www.roots.gov.sg/stories-landing/stories/destination-nanyang/story>

Imagine you are a Samsui woman who left China to work in Nanyang. What are three challenges you think you might face?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What values did the Samsui women show when they helped rebuild Bukit Ho Swee? Why do you think they wanted to help? Do you think you would do the same if you were in their shoes?

ACTIVITY 4

DESIGN CHALLENGE — REIMAGINING THE SAMSUI WOMEN'S ATTIRE

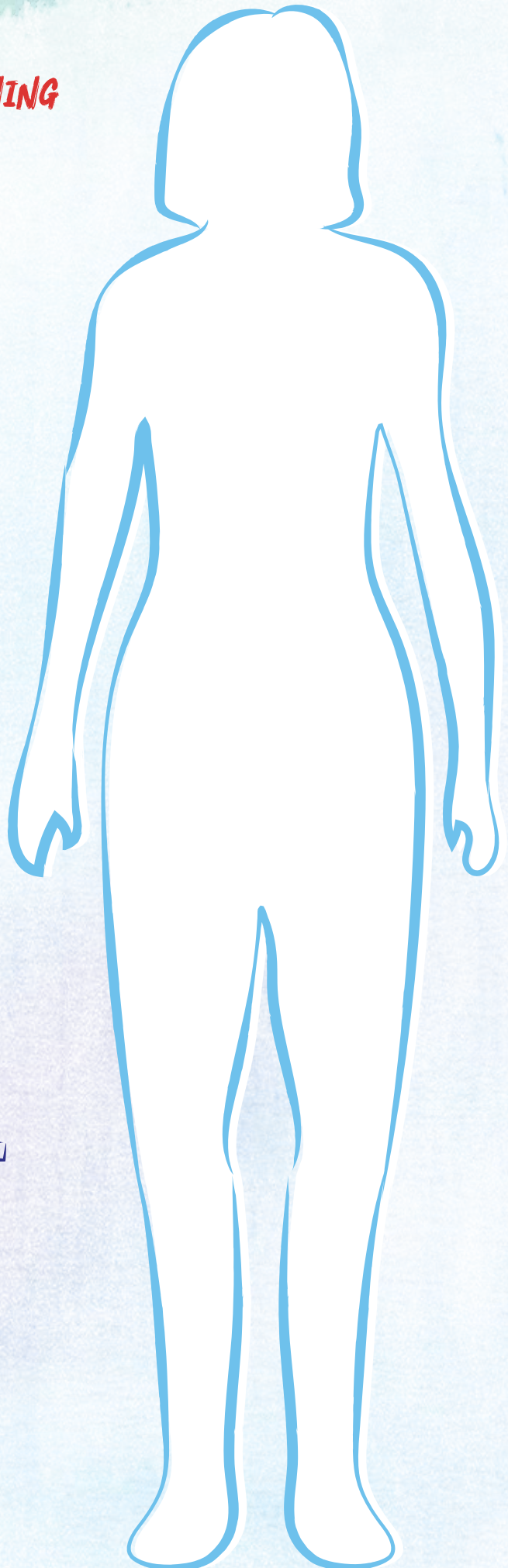
The picture on the left shows how Samsui women dressed in the past. Now imagine you're a fashion designer! How would you change their outfit to make it more comfortable or useful?

Draw your new design on the human figure on the right. Add labels to show your ideas (e.g. "Reflective strips for safety" or "Tool pockets").

Red headscarf – make them easy to spot at construction site and keep them safe. Protects them from the hot sun.



Dark blue or black samfu – a set of loose-fitting blouse and trousers. Dark colours help to hide dust and dirt from tough work.



ACTIVITY 5

PUPPETRY AS A STORYTELLING TOOL

In the show, rod puppets were used to tell the story of Swee Leng and the Samsui women.

ROD PUPPET



- Rod puppets get their name from the way they are manipulated—they are **manipulated using rods**.
- The materials used to form the **body of the puppet** are **wood, sponge and fabric**.
- Some traditional examples of rod puppets include **wayang golek from Indonesia** and **bunraku from Japan**.
- There may be more than one puppeteer controlling each rod puppet as this will allow the puppet to perform more complex movements.

Watch this video on Rod Puppetry by The Finger Players to find out more.



ACTIVITY 6

PUPPETRY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

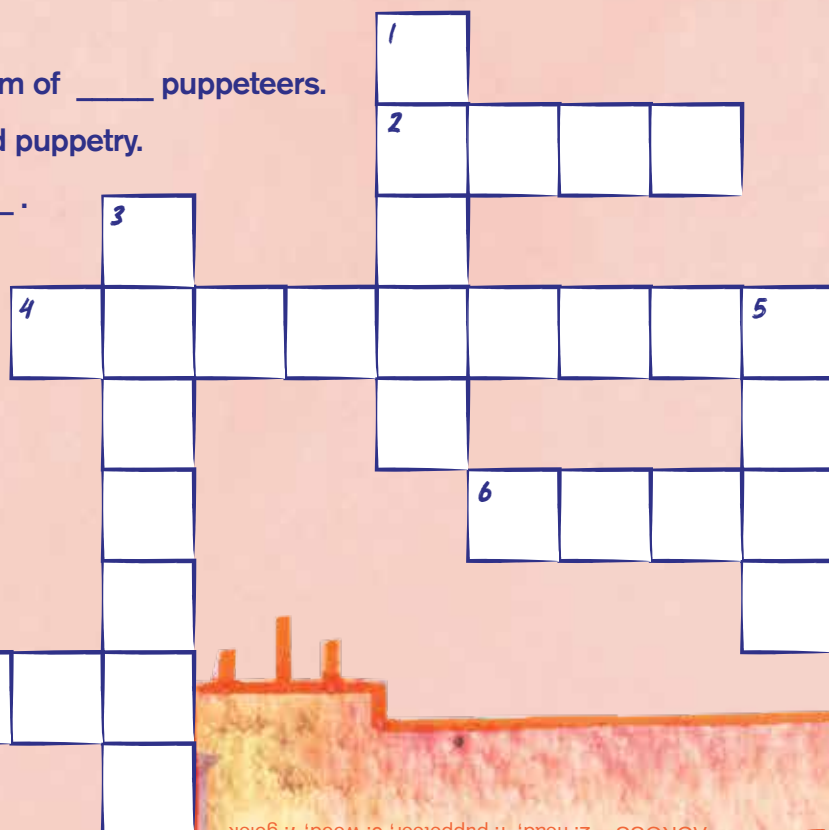
Use your understanding of rod puppetry to complete the crossword below!

DOWN

1. Rod puppets are best operated by a team of _____ puppeteers.
3. _____ from Japan is an example of rod puppetry.
5. Rod puppets are manipulated using _____.

ACROSS

2. A rod puppet can be controlled from behind the _____, the elbows and back of the heels.
4. A _____ is a person who controls puppets.
6. Rod puppets are made of _____, sponge and fabric.
7. An example of rod puppetry from Indonesia is *wayang* _____.



Ans: DOWN – 1. three; 3. bunraku; 5. rods | ACROSS – 2. head; 4. puppeteer; 6. wood; 7. golek

ACTIVITY 7

THE POWER OF PUPPETRY — MY PUPPET, MY STORY!

Puppeteers use their voices, hands, and movements to bring characters to life. It is a mix of art, acting, and storytelling found in many cultures around the world. Now, it is your turn to create a puppet character and tell its story!

A

Imagine a character

Choose a person, animal, or any character you like.

B

Design your puppet

Draw your puppet and label its parts, materials, and clothes.

C

Tell us about your puppet

Give it a name, job, and share what good qualities it has. Write 3–5 sentences about its story.

NAME: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

CHARACTER VALUES: _____

ACTIVITY 8

PUPPET EXPLORER MISSION

Your Mission

Discover the amazing world of puppetry from different cultures! Scan the QR codes to find out more about the three different forms of puppetry. Then, choose your favourite form of puppetry and share your findings in the explorer's log.

1. GLOVE PUPPETS FROM CHINA



Digital Resource by The Finger Players



Traditional Glove Puppetry



Art, Craft and Imagination – Chinese Glove Puppets

2. BUNRAKU PUPPETS FROM JAPAN



7 Things About Bunraku



Capcom & National Bunraku Theatre



Japanese Bunraku Puppets

3. WATER PUPPETS FROM VIETNAM



Water Puppet Theatre



Vietnam Water Puppet Art



Vietnamese Water Puppets

ACTIVITY 9 THE EXPLORER'S LOG

MY FAVOURITE FORM OF PUPPETRY:

1. Brief Introduction

Which country is this form of puppetry from?
When is it usually performed? How is it performed?

2. One Cool Fact

What is one interesting thing about this form of puppetry?

3. My Sketch

Draw an image of the puppet. (You may refer to pictures from the web links and videos.)

4. Why is This Form of Puppetry Special?

In your own words, share what you like about it.

5. Explorer's Thoughts

What happens if people stop caring about puppetry?
How can we keep this art alive and share it with others?

A programme of 60 Connections – At Home and Afar, a year-long season of Singapore stories and international collaborations in celebration of SG60.



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