



A Sea of Stories:
Music and Myths from Southeast Asia
An Esplanade Commission
By Open Score Project (Singapore)

22 – 31 Jul 2026
Esplanade Recital Studio

Pre- and Post-show Educator's Guide
Recommended Level: Primary

ABOUT THE SHOW

Synopsis

What lies within the conch shell? Lift it to your ear! The magical music of the sea awaits for all to hear!

Step into the enchanting world of *A Sea of Stories: Music and Myths from Southeast Asia* with musicians from the Open Score Project, and narration by Benjamin Chow. Drawing from the vibrant cultures of Southeast Asia, this magical experience will showcase musical traditions and stories from Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. As we sail across the waters that connect us through three different folktales, *A Sea of Stories* invites you to rest your ear against the spiral of the conch—experience the tapestry of sounds, learn about our traditional stories and instruments, and celebrate the interconnectedness of the region through the universal language of music and storytelling.

Learning Objectives

Through the performance, students will:

- Discover folklores from Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand told through a musical narrative
- Experience music from Southeast Asia and learn the names of ethnic instruments
- Develop an awareness and appreciation for the diversity of musical cultures

ABOUT THE VENUE – ESPLANADE RECITAL STUDIO

A Sea of Stories will take place at the Esplanade Recital Studio, a warm and cozy performance space. The Recital Studio has been a popular venue for chamber music, solo recitals, jazz concerts and many other types of performances.



For detailed directions to the venue, please refer to:

<https://www.esplanade.com/visit/visitor-guide/getting-here-and-around>

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Open Score Project

Open Score Project (OSP) is a Singaporean group of musicians from different backgrounds and musical styles. Together, they create music that combines all their different styles into one unique sound. OSP wants to celebrate Singapore's diverse cultures through their music. They have performed in the Chingay Parade as well as festivals overseas, in countries such as Uzbekistan, Vietnam and China.



Off Root Theatrics

Founded in 2022 by co-artistic directors Jamil Schulze and Tan Guo Lian Sutton, Off Root Theatrics is a creative platform, an artist-training & research laboratory, and a community. Their work and interests is driven by a curiosity about the “in-betweenness of things”—between disciplines, borders and cultural heritages, between ritual and performance, myth and what is deemed rational.



Jamil Schulze

Jamil Schulze (he/him) is a transdisciplinary artist, theatre-maker, and actor-movement trainer. He works across text and performance, theatrical stagings, television and film, movement work, installation and site activations, and actor training.



Tan Guo Lian Sutton

Tan Guo Lian Sutton (he/him) is a theatre-maker, artist and educator. A trained martial artist from an early age, Lian brings a unique physical discipline to his craft, creating visceral and meaningful connections in both performance and his work as a teacher.

THREE MYTHS FEATURED IN THE SHOW

In the programme, students will discover three myths from Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand, presented through narration and live music. Below are summaries of each myth and their respective countries of origin.

Indonesia – Malin Kundang

Malin Kundang is a poor boy who leaves his village to seek fortune. He promises his mother that he will return once he has achieved success. Malin eventually becomes wealthy and marries a beautiful woman. Upon returning to his village, he is ashamed of his humble origins and refuses to acknowledge his poor mother. Heartbroken and humiliated, his mother prays for justice. As a result, Malin Kundang is cursed and turned into stone by a storm as punishment for his ungratefulness and disrespect. The stone, which resembles a kneeling man, serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of respecting and loving one's parents, regardless of one's success in life.

Thailand – Phra Aphai Mani

Phra Aphai Mani is a classical Thai epic poem written by Sunthorn Phu in the early 19th century. The entire poem consists of 48,700 lines, making it one of the longest epic poems in the world. It is one of Thailand's most famous literary works, blending elements of fantasy, romance, and adventure.

One of the characters in the poem is a brave boy named Sudsakorn, the son of a mermaid and a prince. Raised by his grandfather, he sets out on an adventure to find his father. Along the way, he encounters magical creatures, fierce giants and dangerous challenges. With the help of his loyal dragon-horse, a magical weapon and his cleverness, Sudsakorn overcomes all the obstacles in his way. The story teaches courage, determination, and the importance of family.

Vietnam – Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh

This folktale is about two powerful spirits who compete for the love of Princess Mi Nuong. Son Tinh, the Mountain Spirit, and Thuy Tinh, the Water Spirit, are both strong and magical. The king decides that whoever brings wedding gifts first will marry Mi Nuong. Son Tinh wins by arriving first. Angry and jealous, Thuy Tinh causes floods each year to attack Son Tinh's mountain. However, Son Tinh always manages to protect his land. The story explains the yearly floods in Vietnam and teaches about resilience and the power of nature.

POST-SHOW CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

In this section, we have included suggested activities for teachers to help students deepen their connections with the show they attended. Teachers are encouraged to freely use, adapt and modify these activities to best suit their classroom needs.

Activity 1 – Discussion

Get students to recall and share what they remember from the show.

Prompts for discussion:

- What were the three myths we learnt about? Which was your favourite and why?
- Can you recall and sing the musical motif repeated throughout the show?
- Which Southeast Asian instrument do you recall from the show? How are they similar or different from the instruments you know?
- What did you enjoy / not enjoy from the show?

Activity 2 –Improvisation Techniques on the Ranat Thum

(Refer to **page 4** of the Student Performance Guide)

In this activity, students will learn about the *ranat thum*, a Thai xylophone used in the show. Students will explore various improvisation methods employed by musicians on the *ranat thum* and create their own improvisations using classroom xylophones. Teachers may use the following slides to conduct the lesson.

Presentation Slides:

Refer to ppt "[A Sea of Stories Edukit_Educator's Resource Guide](#)".

1. Let's Learn – Ranat Thum

- Get students to recall the *ranat thum*, a Thai xylophone used in the show.
- Discuss the two improvisation techniques used on the *ranat thum*: the *kep* method and the *kro* method.
- Explain the characteristics and differences between these two methods (refer to the slides for differences).

2. Let's Watch – Improvisation Techniques

- Play the video demonstrating the different improvisation techniques on the *ranat thum*.
- Encourage students to observe and listen carefully to how the methods have been applied.

3. Let's Understand – Using the Kep Method

- Explain the *kep* method in relation to the video, highlighting how notes are added to the main melody.

4. Let's Demonstrate – Using the Kep Method

- Play the main melody once.
- Get students to suggest notes that can be added to the main melody (based on the *kep* method).

- Improvise by adding more notes to the main melody in a mostly stepwise motion.
(eg. **C E D F E C A C E D B C G C A E D C B A G D C**).

5. Let's Try – Group Work: Improvise a Melody Using the Kep Method

- Divide students into small groups and assign each group a xylophone.
- Instruct each group to work together to improvise a new melody using the *kep* method, adding one or two improvised notes between each note of the melody.
- Remind students to try to make use of notes closer to the main notes (steps or skips) rather than notes that are very far away.

6. Presentation

- Have each group present their improvisation in front of the class.
- Get the rest of the class to observe and provide feedback on whether the *kep* method was applied.

RESOURCES FEATURED IN THE STUDENT PERFORMANCE GUIDE

- *Dendang* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxEqrLyhkQ0>
- *Gendang sunda* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxEqrLyhkQ0>
- *Piphat* ensemble – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RpKhYCRGbc>
- *Ranat thum* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz8oUxkhx9E>
- Create a rap – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oslu6cVeQlg>
- *Flight of the Bumblebee* on a theremin – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE_xEboF2u8
- Ah Bing recording of *Er Quan Ying Yue (Reflection of the Moon at Er Quan)* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtDj61KsF44>
- Shamisen girls playing *Tsugaru Jongara Bushi* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcqO0zkyQRo>

OTHER RESOURCES:

- [Thailand] <https://www.esplanade.com/offstage/arts/the-missing-rice-goddess>
- [Kalimantan, Indonesia] <https://www.esplanade.com/offstage/arts/the-legend-of-hedgehog-river>
- [Vietnam] <https://www.esplanade.com/offstage/arts/legend-of-sword-lake>

To read more tales from different parts of Asia, check out *Esplanade Offstage* at www.esplanade.com/offstagefamily.

Interested to learn more about the arts? Check out www.esplanade.com/schools for more resources and content!

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FOR SCHOOLS