

AN ESPLANADE CO-PRODUCTION



MONSTRESS

Pre-Show Guide

4 - 6 SEP 2026
ESPLANADE THEATRE STUDIO

WRITTEN BY
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DIRECTED BY
YVAN KARLSSON
PRODUCED BY
ART:DIS
(ARTS AND DISABILITY) SINGAPORE

VENUE



Thank you for attending the theatre performance of MONSTRESS. This visual story helps prepare you for the experience.

The performance will be held at:
Esplanade Theatre Studio,
located at Level 4 of the
Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay,
1 Esplanade Drive, Singapore
038981

GOING TO ESPLANADE

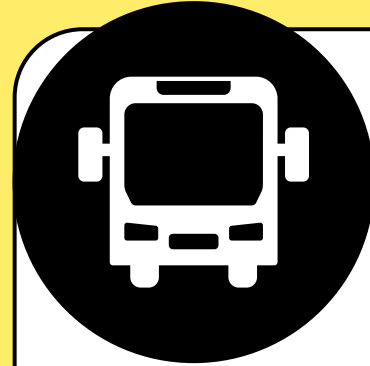


MRT

Nearest MRT station:

City Hall MRT
North-South Line (Red)
East-West Line (Green)

Esplanade MRT
Circle Line (Yellow)



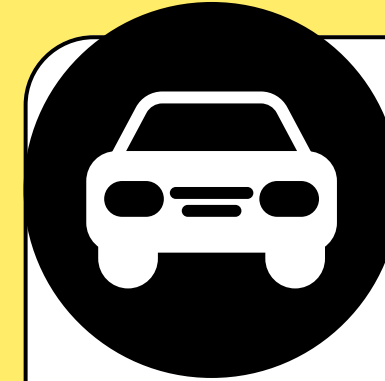
BUS

Nearest Bus Stops (Code):

Bus Stop No. 02061
(The Esplanade)

Bus Stop No. 02111
(Esplanade Bridge)

Bus Stop No. 02029
(Aft Esplanade Stn Exit D)



CAR OR PRIVATE HIRE

Recommended Drop-off:

C24 Esplanade Mall, 8 Raffles
Avenue, 039802

Recommended Carpark:

Esplanade Basement Carpark
Parking Charges apply.

To get a more detailed directional guide to the venue, please scan
this QR code and search for, Wayfinding Guide - Theatre Studio



This show is 1hr and 30mins with no break

Admission age for this show is 13 years old and above.

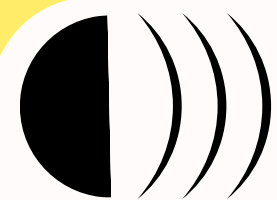


This show contains mature themes and some coarse language, with some references to sexual assault, grooming, and death. Viewer discretion is advised.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Mei Ling, a blind girl, moves next door to Melissa, a single mother, and her autistic son, Sam. As their lives intersect, Mei and Sam form an unexpected friendship, while pressures at home and in their community begin to build. MONSTRESS explores what happens when warning signs are overlooked, behaviour is misunderstood, and people remain silent. It asks us to look closely at what we choose not to see and what happens when it is too late.

ACCESSIBILITY



Embedded Narration

Important visual details are described between the dialogues. Sound and movement help show the setting, atmosphere, and feelings in each scene.



Creative Captioning

Displays dialogue, describe sounds, music, and tone, helping the audience experience the emotions and atmosphere.



Wheelchair Access

This is a wheelchair friendly venue. Accessible toilets, public lifts and wheelchair audience seating areas are available.



Assistive Listening

The venue has an assistive listening system for Telecoil-enabled hearing aids. Arrive 30 minutes early for setup assistance.

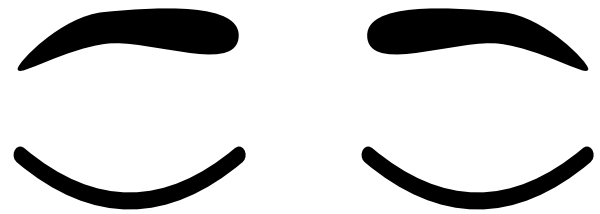


Guide-Dog Friendly

Guide/assistance dogs are welcome at the venue.

Relaxed Environment

There is no single correct way to experience this story. If you need a break you can:



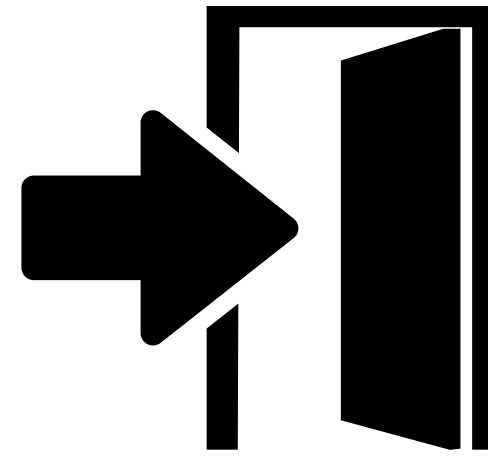
Close your eyes
during
difficult scenes.



Use headphones,
ear defenders
or a fidget



Move or
make noise
if you need to



Leave the
theatre and
return when
you are ready



Use the toilet
during the
performance

Calm Room

If you need a quiet moment, you can come to this Calm Room.

It is situated at the theatre foyer. You can still watch the performance from here on a screen and come back inside when you are ready.



These symbols let you know about things you may see, hear or experience during some of the scenes in the performance.



There may be loud or sudden sounds and shouting.



There are physical struggles like pushing and pulling. There will also be lifting and carrying as well as gestures of care, such as embracing.



There may be strong and intense moments and emotions.

CHARACTERS AND ACTORS

MEI LING played by **Claire Teo**



Claire Teo

This is Claire. She plays the character Mei, at ages 14 in the main memories and 18 in the present-day investigation. Mei is a visually impaired girl who moves into her uncle's house with her mother. Mei is fierce, independent and determined to be heard. She forms a close bond with Sam.



Mei - 14 years old



Mei - 18 years old

SAM LEE played by Syarifuddin Sahari



Syarifuddin Sahari

This is Syarifuddin. He plays the character Sam. Sam loves yellow turtles, drawing and his favourite food is mac and cheese. Sam communicates through single words, sounds, movement and touch. He develops a deep bond with Mei and dependent on his mum, Melissa.



Sam



MELISSA LEE played by Oon Shu An



Oon Shu An

This is Oon Shu An, who plays Melissa, Sam's mother. Melissa is a single mother to Sam who struggles with societal judgement and lack of support for raising a son with high support needs. She is fiercely protective of Sam.



Melissa Lee

INVESTIGATING OFFICER/OTHER CHARACTERS played by Sindhura Kalidas



Sinhadura Kalidas

This is Sindhura Kalidas. Besides the Investigating officer, she also plays the Judge, Bus Driver, Principal, Police Officer, Social Worker and other roles like neighbours and teacher. These characters represent the different systems and people that surrounds Mei, Melissa and Sam.



Judge



Bus Driver



Social Worker

THE SET

This show takes place in an intimate black box theatre that seats 220 people. The set shows two simple HDB homes in shades of grey. A central staircase and movable furniture create different places. Floor tracks mark spaces and help Mei move around.



THE STORY STARTS

Mei is 18 years old. She sits at Sam's grave arranging yellow flowers. At the same time, Melissa is in court. She is asked if she wants to speak before the judgement. Melissa does not speak. She is sentenced to 14 years in prison for causing Sam's death. The story then moves backwards to when Mei and Sam were 14.

ACT 1: OUTSIDE IN

First Meetings



Mei and Sam meet at the playground. Sam draws with chalk, plays with his yellow turtle ocarina and repeatedly says, “Turtle”. Mei gradually learns what he is trying to show her.



At home, Melissa makes Sam his favourite food, mac and cheese. She talks on the phone about money, medicine, sleep and speech therapy. We see how much pressure she carries.



Mei is in her uncle's home. She leaves voice messages to her friend Jess. At first, she describes her uncle as kind but her messages begin to change as she goes on.

School, Bus and Public space



Melissa struggles to get Sam ready for a school open house. Mei challenges the way she speaks to him. Their disagreement continues.



The bus is crowded. Sam runs through the aisle. Passengers stare and make comments about Mei and Sam. Melissa becomes overwhelmed and eventually takes Sam off the bus. Mei follows.



At the school open house, Melissa argues for Sam to receive an education. The Principal informs Melissa that the school has limited resources and a long waiting list.

Sam's Perspective and Mei's first interview



You are invited into Sam's world on his own terms. He communicates without the usual restrictions and judgements. This scene explores how he feels about public spaces and what it means to be misunderstood. Sam repeatedly says the word "happy". He plays his turtle shaped ocarina.



We return to present-day Mei. An investigating officer asks her to give detailed statement. Mei is angry that she has to start again, but the officer explains that the new disclosure has increased the seriousness of the case. Mei is asked to remember what happened when she was 14.

ACT 2: INSIDE OUT

Friendship Grows



Mei and Sam meet again at the playground. Sam guides Mei's hand to the dome so she can understand that he is showing her a turtle. They begin to understand each other.



They become friends. Mei spends more time with Sam, drawing and sharing mac and cheese. Mei asks Melissa to look at her report book. Sam quietly leaves the house and paints on the floor outside.



Melissa panics when she finds out and quickly tries to clean it up. Neighbours start gathering and making remarks about Sam. The Police is called. Melissa is overwhelmed.



Pressure, Isolation, Unlocked doors



Melissa meets a social worker and talks about how difficult caregiving has become. Mei also feels increasingly isolated.



Mei's uncle removes the locks from her bedroom and bathroom. She reports him to the police. Melissa is interviewed and admits that she noticed that Mei was uncomfortable, but did not know what was happening. Mei's account becomes more serious.



Intervention and a good day



Sam tries to reconnect with Mei when she becomes distant. He struggles to find words, but uses movement and touch to communicate.



Melissa and Sam have a warm, playful day at home. They watch television, laugh and talk about going to the beach. Sam is excited about making yellow turtles in the sand.



We return to Sam's world. This time the scene is light and playful. He communicates without reservations.

The interview continues...



Mei describes what happened after her uncle removed the locks. She explains how she recognised him by his breathing, footsteps and the smell of alcohol. The interview asks her to remember details she would rather forget.



ACT 3: EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE

Snakes



Mei's memory becomes fragmented. She describes snakes as an image of the terror moving through her body and mind. She tries to breathe and count, but eventually freezes.



Melissa's Meltdown



Melissa is at home speaking to her ex-husband, a friend, the school and people around her. The different parts of her life begin to overlap. Sam approaches her. Melissa pushes him away.



Sam in the ocean



Melissa and Sam go to the beach. Sam loves making yellow turtles in the sand. The scene moves through Melissa's memories of waiting for Sam's father and promising to never let him go. Sam goes into the water. Melissa tries holding on to him. The waves pull them apart. Sam drowns.



The case moves forward..



Mei returns to the interview room. The officer tells her that her case is active and charges against her uncle will proceed. Mei worries that people might not believe her. She asked the officer directly if she believes her.



THE STORY IS ENDING

Mei is at Sam's grave. Melissa is in prison. Mei brings yellow flowers and talks to Sam. Melissa is led back to her prison cell. She reflects on pregnancy testing, autism and the choices she made before Sam was born. Neither woman gives the audience the answer other people want from them.

Do you remember Sam?



Mei remembers Sam at the playground. She remembers how other mothers shielded their children from Sam. She says Sam had the same right to be there like anyone else. Sam had the right to an education, support, to be happy and to have a life. Mei says she will keep telling his story to whoever is willing to listen.

End of Show



All four actors will be standing in front of the stage for the last scene. And the lights will go off. Show ends.