

MONSTRESS Pre-show notes

Introduction

Welcome to the performance of MONSTRESS. MONSTRESS is a co-production between Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and ART:DIS (Arts and Disability) Singapore, presented as part of Esplanade's The Studios 2026 contemporary theatre season. This is an original script written and performed by visually impaired theatre-maker, Claire Teo.

The performance dates are 4th Sep 8pm, 5th Sep 8pm and 6th Sep 3pm. The duration of the show will be 1 hour and 30 minutes with no break. There will be a post-show dialogue after the performance on 5th Sep and 6th Sep. A 30-minute touch tour will take place before each performance at Esplanade Theatre Studio. The touch tour is recommended for ticket holders who are blind or have low vision, and may also be useful for neurodivergent audience members who would benefit from familiarisation with the performance space, set and key tactile elements of the production.

Age Advisory

Admission age for this show is 13 years old and above. MONSTRESS contains mature themes and some coarse language. This performance includes references to sexual assault, grooming and death. Viewer discretion is advised.

Synopsis

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

Relaxed Environment (RE). The performance welcomes audiences to move, make a noise, leave their seat, return when they are ready, or access the toilets whenever needed. A Calm Space is available at the foyer of the Theatre Studio.

Embedded Narration. Important visual information is described through lines woven into the dialogue. Sound and movement also help communicate the setting, atmosphere and feelings in each scene.

Creative Captioning displays dialogue and describe sounds, music and tone. The captions help the audience experience the emotions and atmosphere of the performance.

Wheelchair Accessibility. The venue is wheelchair accessible. Accessible toilets, public lifts and accessible audience seating areas are available.

Assistive Listening. The venue has an assistive listening system compatible with Telecoil-enabled hearing aids. Just arrive 30 minutes before the performance and an usher can help with the setup.

Guide/Assistance dog-friendly. Guide/assistance dogs are welcome at the venue.

What to expect during the performance

During the performance you may hear music, soundscapes, shouting, screaming, banging and sudden or strong sounds. You may experience changes in lighting. Pools of light that appear and disappear, shadows and specific areas of the stage that are lit. There are physical movements that include, pushing, pulling, carrying, embracing and shielding. Some scenes may also contain strong and intense emotions. You are welcome to exit the space should any of these scenes affect you. A Calm Space is available at the foyer of the Theatre Studio. You may return to the performance space when you are ready.

Character and costume

Mei Ling

Mei Ling is played by Claire Teo. Mei is blind and uses a white cane to navigate confidently. She is 14 in the main memories and 18 in the present-day investigation.

At 14: Mei wears a pale green halter top, blue jeans and sneakers, with her long hair in a ponytail. For school, she wears a bright green pinafore over a green short-sleeved shirt. She's often rolling her eyes and wearing a scowl on her face. Sometimes, she hugs herself protectively.

At 18: Mei wears a light green short-sleeved buttoned shirt and blue denim jeans, with her long hair neatly untied. She has grown up too quickly. Tired but determined, she dares anyone to meet her gaze.

Sam

The character Sam is played by Syarifuddin Sahari. Sam is a neurodivergent boy with high support needs who experiences the world through sensory exploration. You can also hear him blowing a tune on his yellow turtle-shaped ocarina. An ocarina is a small wind musical instrument with a mouthpiece and finger holes. When he is happy, he radiates warmth and dances around happily, and when upset, he struggles to regulate himself. Physically, he expresses himself through movements like flapping his hands, tapping on tables or surfaces, or bouncing on his feet. He uses chalk to draw on different surfaces around him. He wears a yellow t-shirt and brown shorts and his ocarina hung around his neck.

Melissa

Melissa is played by Oon Shu An. She is Sam's mother. She wears dark brown long-sleeved outerwear, folded at the arms, over a white T-shirt, with long dark green pants and brown sandals. Her black hair is slightly messy and tied with a hair clip. Melissa is fiercely protective of Sam and often appears tired and worried as she navigates life as a single parent.

The Investigating Officer, Judge, Bus Driver, Principal, Social Worker, Police officer, Teacher and Neighbours.

These multiple characters are played by Sindhura Kalidas and represent the different systems surrounding Mei, Melissa and Sam. Costume changes help identify each role:

- **Investigating Officer:** dark blue short-sleeved polo and pants
- **Police Officer:** same, with a police cap, belt and black lanyard
- **Judge:** black blazer

- **Principal:** light purple blazer
- **Bus Driver:** bright orange safety vest
- **Social Worker:** light orange short-sleeved polo tucked into pants

Each character also has a distinct personality and voice.

Set and Setting

This play takes place in an intimate black box theatre that seats 220 people.

Set and Lighting

The set presents a stylised, abstract version of two HDB flats. The overall set is mostly in shades of grey, creating a simple and monochrome environment. At the centre of the stage is a raised staircase structure with an arched opening underneath. The staircase can be used by the performers and becomes an important part of the different scenes.

On the left and right sides of the stage are open, framework-like structures that suggest the two homes. Tables, chairs and other small pieces of furniture are moved around the stage to represent different places and situations, such as a home, playground, bus or interview room.

Tracks run along parts of the floor. They are fixed features of the set that subtly mark thresholds, corridors and different zones. They are designed to be visible as part of the set while remaining unobtrusive. The tracks also support Mei's navigation through the space, helping her orient herself and move with her white cane. They are part of the inclusive design of the set and serve both a theatrical and accessibility purpose.

Black gauze is used as part of the set. These black gauze panels also serve as captioning surfaces, where captions are projected or displayed during the performance. The gauze may therefore appear as dark, semi-transparent areas within the stage environment.

The set changes through the movement and rearrangement of furniture and the use of lighting, rather than through large changes to the main structure. Lighting plays an important role in changing how the gauze and other translucent materials look. At times, the materials may appear more solid or visible; at other times, they may become less visible or seem to disappear into the darkness. Lighting also helps define different spaces and can temporarily create the feeling of a new room, location or architectural structure without changing the main set.

Sound

Sound is live and responsive, working with the performers' movements to communicate qualities such as speed, energy and dynamics. It also provides information about location, time of day and actions, and is used to inform transitions between scenes, spaces and moments in the performance. The soundscape helps establish the atmosphere and identity of each location. It may include environmental sounds, music, voices, breath and responsive sounds generated by the performers' actions. These elements support the audience's understanding of changes in place, time, mood and activity. Embedded narration is woven into the performance through dialogue, sound, music and breath. There is no external audio describer.

Creative Captioning

Most of the set is made up of projection surface, allowing the captions to move alongside the performance and become part of the visual world.

The scenes take place and imagined in these places:

- Melissa and Sam's Home
- Mei Ling's Home
- Playground
- Interrogation Room
- Bus
- Principal's Office
- Prison
- The Beach
- Dream Space

Access Information and directory

MONSTRESS will be staged at Esplanade Theatre Studio, Level 4 of the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay. The address is 1 Esplanade Drive, Singapore 038981.

Getting to Esplanade

By MRT. The nearest MRT stations are City Hall MRT, North-South Line (Red Line) and East-West Line (Green Line) or Esplanade MRT Circle Line (Yellow Line).

By Bus. Nearest bus stops are The Esplanade bus stop code number 02061, Esplanade Bridge bus stop code number 02111 and the After Esplanade Station Exit D bus stop code number 02029.

By Car or Private hire. Recommended drop-off and pick-up point is at C24 Esplanade Mall, 8 Raffles Avenue Singapore 039802. Recommended carpark is the Esplanade Basement carpark. Parking charges apply.

A more detailed wayfinding guide to the Theatre Studio is available via this link: [Wayfinding Guide](#)

Production and Creative Team

Playwright: Claire Teo

Director: Yvan Karlsson

Research and Development: Oon Shu An

Dramaturg: Charlene Rajendran

Cast: Claire Teo, Oon Shu An, Syarifuddin Sahari, Sindhura Kalidas

Set Designer: Grace Lin

Lighting Designer: Stella Cheung

Sound Designer: Serene Tan (Stan)

Creative Caption Designer: Joanna Ong

Producer: ART:DIS (Arts and Disability) Singapore

Production Manager: Karisa Poedjirahardjo

Technical Manager: A Kumarran

Stage Manager: Wisely Chow

Assistant Stage Manager: Mara Karma

Props and Costume Coordinator: Teo Li Lin

MONSTRESS is presented by Esplanade as part of *The Studios 2026: Precarious Bodies*, a season of programmes that explore the conditions, structures and relationships that render us precarious, along with the dilemmas and choices that follow.

About The Studios

Eclectic, genre-bending and running the gamut from neo-realism to experimental, The Studios features works that challenge the boundaries in theatre and performance. It is interested in contemporary artists, ideas and expressions, and offers a space for dialogue and reflection on the questions that matter to us today.

If you have any other queries regarding access information, please contact Esplanade's Customer Experience team at +65 6828 8377 (12pm to 6pm daily).

-End of Pre-show Notes-