



For immediate release

**New arts company to focus on bridging cultures
Initiatives by The Select Centre will promote translation and intercultural
efforts in Singapore and region**

Singapore, 26 August 2015 – A new not-for-profit company promoting translation and intercultural efforts has been set up by two experienced figures in the Singapore arts and language scenes. The Select Centre aims to build on Singapore's multicultural and multilingual advantages to strengthen the island's position as a hub of ideas and a bridge between different cultures in the region.

The Select Centre is co-founded by William Phuan, formerly Director of The Arts House at the Old Parliament, and Tan Dan Feng, Director of Asian book specialist Select Books. Says Tan, "This non-commercial entity aims to continue the social mission of Select Books of promoting understanding of Southeast Asia and putting the region on the global literary and intellectual map."

A recipient of the National Arts Council Seed Grant for three years from 2015 to 2018, Select will organise a year-round calendar of activities, including readings, festivals, workshops, mentorships, and residencies. It will also operate a not-for-profit book room showcasing important works from Singapore and the region, which will be the venue for its regular programmes. Select is now looking for a space to set up its operations and the book room.

Phuan, who is Select's Managing Director, says: "We are heeding the call of early pioneers such as Professor Edwin Thumboo and Kuo Pao Kun, who began advocating for intercultural efforts decades ago. We believe intercultural work is not only important in building up a more holistic and inclusive canon of Singaporean works, but also in forming our own culture and identity. We will work with diverse stakeholders, including publishers, writers, artists, policymakers and educators, to achieve this."



Select will roll out a rich slate of initiatives in the coming months. First up is Translators Lab, an innovative workshop focusing on the translation of local Chinese, Malay and Tamil works into English. The 8-week programme will run from 12 Sep to 2 Nov, comprising seven weeks of online mentorship and a final 3-day boot camp. Each language track is led by an internationally renowned translator. This year, participants will be translating the works of Wong Koi Tet (Chinese), Dr Sae'da Bte Buang (Malay) and KTM Iqbal (Tamil).

In November, Select will present TranslateSingapore, the first translation festival in Singapore. Running from 31 Oct to 12 Nov, the festival comprises public outreach programmes, school workshops and the Singapore Translation Symposium. The Symposium will be held at the Singapore Management University on 3 Nov.

As part of the Singapore Writers Festival (30 Oct – 8 Nov), Select will curate an intercultural track of nine programmes, including panel discussions, performances and workshops. Select will also be operating the main festival bookstore.

For more information about Select's programmes, please refer to Annex B.

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Annex A: About The Select Centre



The Select Centre is a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee based in Singapore.

We are named after one of Asia's most respected independent bookstores – Select Books – and aim to continue its social mission of promoting understanding of Southeast Asia and putting the region on the global literary and intellectual map.

Firmly rooted in Southeast Asia, we aim to advance the interflow of ideas and knowledge between different languages, cultures and disciplines through translation, adaptation and other forms of intercultural practice.

We have three strategic thrusts:

1. **Capacity Development:** To develop writers and translators through intercultural and interdisciplinary programmes;
2. **Advocacy & Outreach:** To promote intercultural practice among various stakeholders, including policy-makers, schools and the community; and
3. **Internationalisation:** To develop Singapore as a regional hub and gateway of ideas and knowledge to the world.

We will also operate a not-for-profit bookstore showcasing works from Singapore and the region, which will be the venue for our regular programmes.

We believe that Singapore's multicultural nature and multilingual heritage are unique strengths that have yet to be fully tapped. We believe that Singapore can leverage on these advantages to bolster its status as a hub of ideas and a bridge between East and West. We aim to be an innovative organisation at the forefront of bringing different languages, cultures and disciplines together to advance human progress.

The Select Centre is a recipient of the National Arts Council's Seed Grant the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018.

For more information about Select, please visit www.selectcentre.org

I. About our co-founders

Tan Dan Feng

Dan Feng is director of renowned Southeast Asian books specialist Select Books and is active in the regional language, translation and publishing sectors. He chairs the annual Singapore International Translation Symposium and has been involved in the translation programmes at NTU, NUS and SIM University as course coordinator, lecturer and academic advisory board member. He sits on several government committees, including the National Translation Committee, the NAC Arts Advisory Panel and the MCI Television and Radio Advisory Committee Panel of Experts. He has presented widely on translation issues across Asia. Books that he has edited or co-edited include *Singapore Shifting Boundaries* (2011), *Indonesia Rising: Islam, Democracy and the Rise of Indonesia as a Major Power* (2009) and *The Chinese in Indonesia* (2008).

William Phuan

William Phuan is the Managing Director of The Select Centre. Prior to The Select Centre, William was the Director of The Arts House at the Old Parliament from 2009 to January 2015. He oversaw The Arts House, which was turned from the former Parliament House in 2004 into an arts centre that focuses on writing, writers and ideas. William spent seven years in New York as the Programme Director of the New York Asian American International Film Festival. He has close to 20 years of experience working in various sectors, including journalism, government policy, film festivals, and the not-for-profit arts sector in both the US and Singapore.

Annex B: Information about selected programmes

1. Literary Gateway Myanmar

26 – 31 May 2015

In May, we went to Yangon, Myanmar as part of our Literary Gateway initiative. This initiative aims to establish Singapore as the "gateway" connecting Southeast Asia with the rest of the world, thereby creating opportunities for local writers, translators, editors and publishers. This includes identifying and supporting deserving translation and publishing efforts and supporting cultural diplomacy. We spent five days in Yangon working with our partners – PEN Myanmar, Writers' Centre Norwich, the British Centre for Literary Translation, and Penguin Random House – to organise two literary translation workshops that focused on Burmese to English, and English to Burmese translation.

We brought our very own Alfian Sa'at, who together with UK writer Suzanne Joinson, were the two English writers-in-residence for the workshop. Burmese translator Moe Thet Han led a group of 10 translators to translate their works into Burmese. For the Burmese to English track, workshop leader Alfred Birnbaum led another group of 10 translators to translate the works of well-known Myanmar writers Nay Myo and Min Khite Soe San into English.

This project created opportunities for writers, translators, editors and publishers from Myanmar, China, Singapore and the UK to network and share their experiences. We will continue this initiative in Myanmar next year again and are planning similar workshops in other Southeast Asian cities.

2. Translators Lab

12 Sep – 2 Nov 2015

Organised in partnership with Writers' Centre Norwich (WCN), the Translators Lab is an innovative translation workshop that comprises both online and face-to-face sessions. The eight-week programme, which runs from 12 Sep to 2 Nov 2015, will have an e-learning component (seven weeks) and a three-day boot camp of workshops and discussions. We will have three language tracks, translating Chinese,



Malay, and Tamil literary works into English. Each language track will have a Singapore writer, and will be led by a well-known translator.

The translators are Shelly Bryant (Chinese to English); Harry Aveling (Malay to English); and Lakshmi Holmstrom and Subashree Krishnaswamy (Tamil to English). They will be translating the works of local writers Wong Koi Tet (Chinese), Dr Sae'da Bte Buang (Malay), and KTM Iqbal (Tamil), as well as Indian writer Dilip Kumar.

3. TranslateSingapore 2015 31 Oct – 12 Nov 2015

TranslateSingapore is our signature annual programme. The first translation festival of its kind in Singapore, it has four main aims: to develop the capability of the local translation industry; raise public awareness about the role of translation in society; facilitate the exchange of best practices among practitioners and organisations; and establish Singapore as the translation hub of the region. The festival has four tracks – industry, public, schools and literary. It is anchored by the Singapore Translation Symposium (3 Nov), a platform for professionals to discuss various issues related to the field, including best practices, emerging technologies, as well as global and regional developments. The Symposium will be held at the Singapore Management University.

The public outreach programmes will include public talks and workshops, as we look at the craft of subtitling in film and television. We will also organise workshops in schools, introducing students to the field of translation.

Our literary track will be in collaboration with the Singapore Writers Festival (please see below).

4. Select at Singapore Writers Festival 2015 30 Oct – 8 Nov 2015

In collaboration with the Singapore Writers Festival, Select will organise an intercultural track of nine programmes, including panel discussions, workshops and performances. Two highlights are the presentation of the English translation of *Potret Puisi Melayu Singapura (A History of Singapore Malay Poetry)*, translated as



part of our Intercultural Residency; and *A Quest for Dance*, the memoirs of the late Singapore dance pioneer PK Bhaskar, accompanied by traditional dance performances adapted from local poetry choreographed by Cultural Medallion winner Mrs Santha Bhaskar.

Select will also be operating the main festival bookstore at SWF.

Annex C: Selected bios of translators and writers

(for Translators Lab and TranslateSingapore)

Harry Aveling holds an adjunct appointment as a Professor in the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics at the Monash University in Australia. He specialises in Indonesian and Malay Literature, and Translation Studies. Prof Aveling has published widely in translation theory. He has translated extensively from Indonesian and Malay. In 1991, he was awarded the Anugerah Pengembangan Sastra by the Federation of Malay Writing Societies (GAPENA) for his contributions to the international recognition of Malay Literature. Among his major translations are *Secrets Need Words: Indonesian Poetry 1966-1998* (Ohio University Press 2001), short listed for the NSW Premier's Translation Award 2003, and *Saint Rosa: Selected Verse of Dorothea Rosa Herliany* (IndonesiaTera 2005), winner of the Khatulistiwa Prize for Poetry, Jakarta 2006. His current research relates to the work of the Singapore Malay author Isa Kamari.

Shelly Bryant divides her year between Shanghai and Singapore, working as a teacher, writer, researcher, and translator. She is the author of six volumes of poetry and a pair of travel guides for the cities of Suzhou and Shanghai. She has translated work from the Chinese for Penguin Books, Epigram Publishing, the National Library Board in Singapore, Giramondo Books, and Rinchen Books. Shelly's poetry has appeared in journals, magazines, and websites around the world, as well as in several art exhibitions. Her translation of Sheng Keyi's *Northern Girls* was long-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2012. You can visit her website at shellybryant.com.

Kate Griffin is Associate Programme Director at Writers' Centre Norwich. From 2010 to 2015, she ran the international programme at the British Centre for Literary Translation, at the University of East Anglia, developing projects in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Europe. An international literature consultant, she also works with the London Review of Books. From 2005 until 2010 Kate was a judge for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. She spent most of the 1990s working overseas in Belgium and Russia. www.kategriffin.org

Lakshmi Holmström is a writer and translator. She has translated short stories, novels and poetry by the major contemporary writers in Tamil. Her most recent books are *Fish in a Dwindling Lake*, a translation of short stories by Ambai (2012); *A Second Sunrise*, poems by Cheran, translated and edited by Lakshmi Holmström & Sascha Ebeling (2012); *Wild Girls, Wicked Words* a translation of poems by four Tamil women (2012). *In a time of Burning*, a translation another collection of poems by Cheran was published by Arc Publications in 2013 (this won an English PEN award). Her translation of Sundara Ramaswamy's novel *Children, women, men* was published in 2013. In 2015 she co-edited (with Subashree Krishnaswamy) the Tamil issue of the online journal *Words without Borders*. In 2000 she received the Crossword Book Award for her translation of *Karukku* by Bama; in 2007 she shared the Crossword Book Award for her translation of Ambai's short stories, *In a Forest, a Deer*; and in 2014 she received the award for the third time, for her translation of *Children, Women, Men* by Sundara Ramaswamy. She received the Iyal Award from the Tamil Literary Garden, Canada, in 2008. She is one of the founding trustees of SADAA (South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive).

KTM Iqbal has authored seven collections of poetry and written over 200 children's songs for the Singapore radio programme *Let Us Sing* in the 1970s and 1980s. He has contributed poems, essays and short stories to the region's leading newspapers and magazines. His poem *Water* was selected by the National Arts Council for display in MRT trains in 1995 and for exhibition at Expo 2000 in Hanover, Germany. English translations of his poems by R. Balachandran can be found in *The Evening Number and Other Poems* (2008). He was an associate editor of the anthologies, *Rhythms* (2000) and *Fifty on 50* (2009). His awards include the NUS Centre for the Arts Mont Blanc Literary Award in 1996, Southeast Asia Write Award in 2001 and the Cultural Medallion Award (Literary Arts) in 2014.

Subashree Krishnaswamy is an editor, translator and writer. She edited the *Indian Review of Books*, a monthly magazine devoted to reviews of books, for a number of years. As editor of *Manas*, EastWest Books, she edited several award-winning titles, both translations from various Indian languages into English and original writings in English. Her book, *The Babel Guide to South Indian Fiction in Translation*, was published by Babel Books, UK. She edited and translated into English an anthology

of Tamil poetry, *Rapids of a Great River* (Penguin), along with Lakshmi Holmstrom and K Srilata. She collaborated with K Srilata on the book *Short Fiction from South India* (OUP). *The Tamil Story: Through the Times, Through the Tides*, an anthology that traces the evolution of the Tamil short story, translated by her into English and edited by Dilip Kumar, is in the press. She is an adjunct professor at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai.

Dilip Kumar whose mother tongue is Gujarathi, is a well-known short story writer and editor in Tamil with several awards to his credit. He has published 3 short story collections, a critical work on Late Mouni, a pioneer of Tamil short stories. He has also translated poems, short stories, etc, from Hindi, Gujarathi and English into Tamil. He has edited a volume of *Contemporary Tamil Short Fiction* (in English) published in 1999. More recently he has completed editing a huge volume of 100 years of Tamil short stories translated into English to be published by Westland Ltd. His stories have been translated into Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, English, French, Czech and German. He has given talks on contemporary Tamil literature at Universities of California, Chicago and Yale, as well as INALCO in France. He has also served as a jury member of the panel for the prestigious Crossword National Award for best translation and for Sahitya Akademi translation awards. .

Dr Sa'eda Bte Buang is the Assistant Head of of the Asian Languages and Cultures group at the National Institute of Education. Dr Sa'eda received her Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts from the National University of Singapore, and Doctor of Philosophy from the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She obtained her Diploma in Education from the the Nanyang Technological University/National Institute of Education. She received the Literary Award (poetry) in 2003, and Literary Award (short stories), as well as Literary Award (commendation, poetry) from the Singapore Malay Language Council in 2005. Her award-winning poem entitled *Pustakaku dalam Remang Senja* (*My Reading Room in the Twilight*) was translated into Mandarin by Chan Maw Woh and featured in Lianhe Zaobao in 2003. Another of her award-winning poem entitled *Malang, senda & citra* (*Misfortunes, comedy and image*) has been selected for the READ! Singapore 2010 campaign which aims to, among other things, create a vibrant reading culture in Singapore.



Wong Koi Tet is currently a part-time lecturer at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Chinese department teaching modern Chinese literature and creative writing courses. Graduated with a BA from NUS and MA from NTU, he was previously a journalist with the local Chinese newspaper for eight years and has been writing in different literary genres since his junior college years. He was one of the editors of literary magazine *Afterwards* in the 1990s. During this time, he has started a film and video production company with friends and has scripted a series of tele-movies for Channel 8. Appointed as the NTU-National Arts Council Writer-in-residence in the first half of 2015, he has published four books: *Till Death, We Dance* (prose collection, 1995), *Revised Edition* (poetry, 1996), *Incidents* (prose and short story collection, 2004), and *So Dark The Brightness* (socio-cultural essays, 2015).