

**PhD Research Scholarship Opportunity at National University of Singapore
“Archipelagic Mappings and Performance Routes, Routers, and Networks”**

With an ideal start date of **August 2025**, **ONE** Research Scholarship (RS) is available at the National University of Singapore (NUS) for a prospective PhD student interested in completing research on <theatre history, digital humanities, and/or >. Successful applicants will complete their degree in the [Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies](#). The deadline for application is **1 November 2024**.

The RS details can be found [here](#). The end-date of the RS award will be the fourth year of study and it will cover tuition fees and provide a monthly stipend. The scholarship is targeted for applicants who have training and skills in the following areas and will continue to focus on these topics in their PhD programme:

- Transnational theatre histories – South, Southeast, and/or East Asia
- Digital Historiography
- Nineteenth century to Twentieth century Interculturalism and Performance Networks
- Digital Humanities – Theatre and Performance Archiving, Database design, or Applied Geographic Information System

The PhD thesis work should be an independent project which fits broadly into the overall research project on “Archipelagic Mappings and Performance Routes, Routers, and Networks” (Principal Investigator [PI]: [Dr Alvin Lim](#), Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies).

The research project will illuminate early waves of interculturalism and performance-making during the colonial period, processes that were brought on by human migration, travel, cultural exchange, commerce and trade, and technological advancements. It will also identify obvious gaps in research on the theatrical networks and performance routes of the nineteenth century to early twentieth century in Southeast Asia. It aims to study such networks and routes of the colonial British empire, where new forms and practices were hybridising and evolving as they travelled and parsed through key performance venues along key trade routes. Till today, what we encounter as ‘traditional’ forms emerged out of a long process of cultural exchange, modernisation, and colonial trade and exploitation, experienced and spread in transnational (or rather trans-colonial) contexts. The proposed project seeks to shed light on the following questions: Who and what constituted these performance networks? Who were the historical figures, performers, and where were the performance venues? Who were the audiences? How was the publicity of shows disseminated? How did early travels shape and inform performance and festival circuits found presently? Were these performance tours an early manifestation of globalisation? How did trade routes, shipping lines, and technology (e.g. telegraph and steam) shape the networks that emerged and evolved over a long period of time?

The proposed project examines these contexts and diversifies the gaze (as opposed to a colonial gaze), re-narrating the histories of performance forms through contemporary and nuanced terms. It explores local subjectivities, where possible, in the form of travelogues, journals, photographic images, newspaper columns (or opinion pieces and theatre reviews), and written records. It also aims to provide a visual representation of performance travels—the routes that travelling troupes and performers took, and the routers and nodes that they arrived at to perform, reside or disembark. In that respect, the proposed research project will theorise and document the circulation and travels of theatre, dance, and performance against the backdrop of colonial expansion, territorialisation, cultural diplomacy, trade,

and technological development between 1840 to 1940. By situating Singapore as a significant node, the study will trace the networks that existed between urban centres, port cities, and the sea routes (namely, along the Malacca and Singapore Straits and diverging across Australia, Hong Kong and the Southern provinces of China, to name a few) that performance practices and performers travelled on as they embarked and disembarked, evolved, or took root across places in the region. These networks will be visualised and narrated through storymaps and digital scholarship, ensuring that the histories of individual traditions are not told in isolation but interwoven into a connected history of performance-making in the region.

The proposed project will combine erudition (histories of) and digital methods to study historical patterns of transmission, mediation, dissemination, and networking of performers, practices, producers, and performance venues. Broadly speaking, there are three steps in the research methodology. First, the research team will collect historical data from national archives, library records, and maps from a range of sources. The data collection involves both digital research and on-site collection at archives and collections in Singapore, London, India, and Hong Kong.

Second, the historical data will be digitalised and organised into a searchable database. This will ensure that future research and efforts go into consolidating and organising valuable key information, previously scattered and loosely kept, under one repository for quicker and simpler access and study. The online database will assemble a large set of data on performance dates, shipping routes, port of calls, names, performance venues, commissions, and any relevant historical information. This database will include maps that trace the performance venues, performance forms or troupes, troupe members, events and shows performed by the performer or troupe, and bibliographic sources (newspapers, travelogues, journals, etc.).

Last, these journeys will be retold as digital exhibitions or 'storymaps' that narrate and bring to life the travels and influence of a particular historical figure, performance venue, and/or troupe. Incorporating Geographic Information System (GIS) technology and building an interactive map on the database portal, the interface will establish a one-stop repository for historical data on the performing arts found across Southeast Asia. These 'storymaps' will provide scholars and students with new ways to visualise, interpret, and analyse historical and geographic data. Users will be able to interact with the digital map to visualise and appreciate how a particular node (performance venue, troupe, or practitioner) contributed to the development of a performance practice at a given time. This history will also be narrated by an expert through annotations and scholarly writing. This will propel an extensive study of Southeast Asian performance in areas of interculturalism. The successful and rigorous development of the performance database will encourage future research on the cultural history of Southeast Asia and provide a rich resource repository that can be used for comparative studies.

[English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies](#)

The Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies, established since 1929, is one of the oldest departments in NUS.

The department houses three undergraduate majors and three graduate programmes all under the same roof. We teach and study English language and linguistics, English literature and Theatre and Performance Studies. Each of the three sections has its own character, and its own distinctive strengths. All three programmes include in their numbers some of the best teachers in the university.

Come find out more about the Department at our website [here](#)!

Application Procedure

Graduate research students in the Department follow a semi-structured programme that involves a taught component in the first one to two years of registration. The programme allows a PhD student to acquire and develop to a high standard both subject-specific and transferable skills, thus enabling a student to access a broad range of future employment opportunities – in business, industry, consultancy, education, research etc.

Applicants must be university graduates with at least an upper second class honours degree or equivalent and at the time of the RS award. Applications from candidates who also already hold a graduate degree (e.g. Masters) are particularly welcome.

All applicants must also submit the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) report. Applicants with an excellent academic track record from renowned universities may request a waiver of this requirement by uploading a note in the "Documents Upload" section, providing reasons for waiver.

There is no restriction on the nationality of applicants.

Applicants who are able to start the PhD programme in August 2025 are strongly preferred. The **application deadline is 1 November 2024** and applications are to be submitted online [here](#).

All applicants must write separately to the PI ([Dr Alvin Lim](#)) copying the [Department's administrator](#) with your Curriculum Vitae to indicate an interest in the project **by 1 November 2024**.