

CURATORIAL NOTES

As curators, we found ourselves returning to two questions that are rarely treated as questions in our region: **What is a play? Who is a playwright?** Rather than seeking definitive definitions, we became more interested in the plays themselves—their writing processes, theatrical forms, and the cultural realities from which they emerge. We were drawn to works that invite us to engage across differences, challenge inherited assumptions, and envision new ways of being together. Through these encounters, stories become sites of transformation—not only of the self, but also of the communities and futures we seek to create.

This understanding is reflected in **PANORAMA**. Originally conceived as a platform for emerging artists, Panorama has been reconfigured this year as an invitation rather than a competition. We decided to launch an open call designed **not to choose the "winners", but to assemble the unheard voices**. By welcoming every eligible submission, we wanted to discover not only experimental works, but also unstaged plays, unfinished texts, and restrained creations that often remain invisible within existing theatre infrastructures. To accept all eligible submissions is also to reconsider the power dynamics of curation itself. Instead of asking applicants to compete for visibility, Panorama returns the right of choice to those who choose to enter the conversation. It values accessibility, challenges traditional gatekeeping, and opens possibilities for broader exploration and exchange. Encounter becomes a progressive act of welcoming diverse perspectives, people, and stories. It affirms openness as a curatorial practice of care. The same understanding continues through **FOCUS**, where eight plays reveal how encounter unfolds across different histories, aesthetics, languages, and lived realities.

In **Balos**, encounter emerges through the moral ambiguities of war, asking who deserves care, how justice is defined, and where responsibility begins. **I Am Kegu** offers many of us a first encounter with contemporary theatre from Papua New Guinea, opening another way of seeing, listening, and experiencing theatre while confronting the tensions between Indigenous traditions and the forces of modern society. Through sharp satire, **G*d is a Woman** exposes censorship, moral panic, artistic freedom, and the uneasy relationship between power and culture. **Woman With the Time Machine** playfully reimagines gender, womanhood, and identity through speculative imagination, while **Mirror** asks what theatre might become as artificial intelligence reshapes language, authorship, and theatrical possibilities.

Exi(s)t Strategy continues this exploration through an intimate queer lens, exposing the impossible choice between forced conformity and self-erasure, and questioning how belonging is negotiated through constraint. **Chronicle of Exile** turns towards migration and bureaucracy, asking whether identity is ultimately defined by official documents or by one's own truth. Meanwhile, **Vanilla is not a Tree** reflects on displacement, care, labour, and ecology, revealing how the search for belonging can become both an intimate act of resilience and a negotiation with unfamiliar communities.

Encounter, in this sense, is never singular. It may arrive through conflict or intimacy, memory or speculation, tradition or innovation, but each play proposes another way of understanding ourselves and the worlds we inhabit. Across these works, we found ourselves drawn not only to **what** stories are told, but **how** they are told. We were consistently captivated by unconventional dramaturgies, linguistic experimentation, ritual structures, speculative narratives, and theatrical forms that transform silence into dialogue, distance into intimacy, and difference into possibility.

We also hope APM continues to question itself. **What does "Asia" mean? What does it mean to identify as an Asian playwright today?** How do these identities empower us, and how might they also limit us? Rather than settling these questions, we hope future editions continue to create encounters where they remain open, evolving alongside the artists, audiences, and communities who gather here.

ZHANG Yuan
James Harvey Estrada
Jarunun 'Jaa' Phantachat

CURATOR PROFILE



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ASIAN PLAYWRIGHTS MEETING



THA

Jarunun "Jaa"
Phantachat

Is a theatre maker and co-founder of B-Floor Theatre, a Bangkok-based collective.

Her plays—including *The Other Land*, *Demographic Survey*, and *I say Mingalaba: You say goodbye* — explore social structures, identity, and political imagination through non-linear dramaturgy and performative language, often developed through collective authorship. Alongside writing, she directs and produces, contributing to B-Floor's international collaborations.

Jaa is a recipient of Thailand's Silpathorn Award and multiple IATC-Thailand awards. She is currently developing a new play drawing from the diary of a former political prisoner charged under Thailand's lèse-majesté law. In October 2026, under the name Collective Thai Scripts — a group she co-founded with two other Thai theatre makers — she will present a script reading commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 6 October 1976 Massacre, a violent suppression of student protesters at Thammasat University — a largely unresolved chapter in Thai political history.



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ASIAN PLAYWRIGHTS MEETING



PHIL

**James Harvey
Estrada**

Is a Filipino theatre-maker, playwright, and interdisciplinary performance artist whose practice centers decolonial inquiry, radical care, and transnational collaboration. Grounded in Babaylan-informed methodologies, he reactivates pre-colonial ritual and collective authorship within contemporary performance. His works have been presented internationally in Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, the United States, and Switzerland, including the Tokyo Festival, Gwangju and Suwon Fringe Festivals, Toyooka Theatre Festival, and Pro Helvetia-supported platforms. These projects explore hybrid dramaturgies that connect artists across Asia and beyond.

In the Philippines, James is a member of Filipino Screenwriters Guild and an award-winning playwright recognized for *Maikling Dasal*, *Mahabang Gabi* and other works staged at the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Pasinaya and national festivals. His writing also extends to film and broadcast, with internationally awarded television projects. Across theatre, media, and performance, his work foregrounds marginalized voices while positioning care as both artistic method and political gesture in a fractured global landscape.



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ZHANG Yuan
张渊

ZHANG Yuan is a curator based in Shanghai. Critically situated in the context of contemporary China, his practices explore the potential of alternative modes of producing theatre and its implications for cultural exchange.

Apart from having served as Performing Arts Curator at Ming Contemporary Art Museum and as Theatre Producer at Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center, Yuan has participated in curating independent projects such as *"2020: The Whole World Has Become a Theatre"*, an archival exhibition on contemporary performance in China since the late 1990s, and *"Being in Asia"*, a performance series initiating conversations between practitioners in China and various places across Asia. He is one of the co-curators for Theater der Welt 2026.