



FLUID INSPIRATION

This year's NUS Arts Festival is taking things in a different direction, with a strong focus on environmental issues. We take a sneak peek at some of the water-inspired offerings in store.

Right: Dutch pianist Monique Copper
Below: Ms Copper at a performance of 'Water'

In the four years since its inception, the NUS Arts Festival has grown to become one of the highlights of the local arts calendar, with thought-provoking performances by professional talents, as well as NUS students and staff.

With more than 60 performances on offer over three weekends, including dance, music, theatre, visual arts, literary events and film screenings, the NUS Arts Festival caters to a broad spectrum of theatre-going audiences.

Primarily focused on the arts and education, this year's festival adds an extra element that's been making the headlines recently – environmental awareness. From exploring man's relationship with the environment to a critical look at environmentalism, the festival tackles all manner of issues relating to nature, including some specifically focused on water.

From India comes the Singapore premiere of *A Narmada Diary*, which chronicles the Save Narmada Movement's efforts to stymie the building of the Sarfar Sarover Dam on the Narmada River. The complexity of the struggle against the project, which has been estimated to have damaged 37,000 hectares of land and displaced 200,000 people in the Narmada Valley, was documented and filmed by Simantini Dhuru and Anand Patwardhan, also known as the Michael Moore of India.

Another water-themed performance to look forward to is the aptly-titled 'Water', by Dutch pianist Monique Copper. 'Water' is a multi-sensory tribute to the Netherlands, which, in her own words, is "full of water." Monique's performance is supplemented by poetry recitations and an art video on water in the Netherlands.



"The video is a composition of water surfaces, with its many colour changes. The projection covers the entire backdrop of the stage, in front of which the piano is positioned. The result is that it looks as if the piano is near or even in the water as I'm playing," explained Monique.

The performance itself is based on a very simple theme. "Water is about the many aspects and experiences one can have with water in a poetic way. I mean, the music and the poetry give you unexpected and inspiring images and sensations. It is a completely different way of experiencing music. Perhaps it is because water means a lot to everyone, and everyone is concerned in a different way about it," she added.

Hailing from the Netherlands, it's no wonder Monique has a lot to say about the liquid. Much of the country lies below sea level, and boasts an extensive network of rivers. "The history of the Netherlands is a history of water," she noted.

What does she hope audiences will take away from her performance? "A bucket full of good memories! I hope that the audience experiences classical and modern music in a different way, and that the performance as a whole will be inspirational."

The NUS Arts Festival 09 takes place weekends from 27 February - 15 March. Visit www.nus.edu.sg/cfa for more info

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

◀ **VARIANCE 变 BY T.H.E DANCE COMPANY 舞人**
Choreography by Kuik Swee Boon (Singapore) & Zhang Xiao Xiong (Taiwan). The opening show of the festival, *Variance* explores various interpretations of Man's relationship with his environment through dance.

◀ **TREE DUET BY SPELL #7**
Presented by local theatre group Spell #7, this eco-performance, which deals with issues like the history of the Malayan rubber industry, was nominated for Best Original Script in last year's Life! Theatre Awards.

◀ **STATE OF EMERGENCY BY ILSA TARI & NUS ELECTRONIC MUSIC LAB**
A multimedia performance featuring a short film, electronic music and contemporary Malay dance that deals with issues of the environment.