

BT Budding Artists Fund celebrates 20th anniversary with 'Here I Am'

Performance brings together past and present beneficiaries of the fund

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The sold-out show, held at the Sota Drama Theatre on Oct 17 and 18, drew more than 600 people over the two nights. PHOTO: TRCL

[SINGAPORE] The curtain came down on *Here I Am*, a theatre production celebrating the 20th anniversary of The Business Times Budding Artists Fund (BT BAF), which brought together alumni and current beneficiaries on stage.

Held at the School of the Arts (Sota) Drama Theatre on Oct 17 and 18, the sold-out show drew more than 600 people over the two nights.

Produced by arts charity TRCL in collaboration with The Little Arts Academy and 10 Square Youth, the show was written and directed by alumnus Vishnucharan Naidu.

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"*Here I Am* is especially meaningful to me. It brings together alumni I have known for years and current students I still teach," said Naidu. "I was a student here myself, so being part of this now feels (like coming) full circle. Seeing all these generations come together is incredibly heartwarming."



Director Vishnucharan Naidu engaging with young participants during a rehearsal session of "Here I Am". PHOTO: TRCL

The production featured performers who had themselves benefited from the fund. Since 2005, BT BAF has supported more than 25,000 children and youth through its arts education programmes.

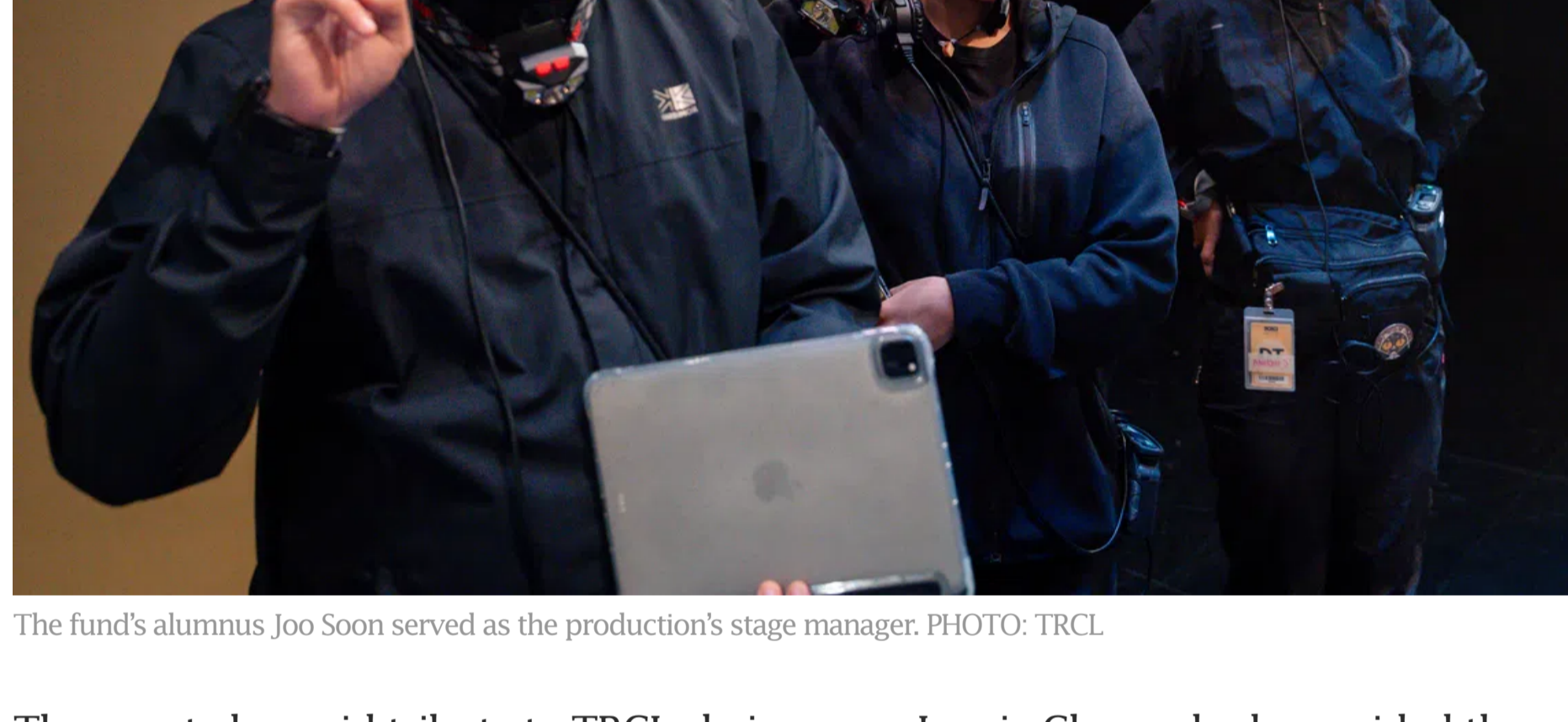
In her closing address, *The Business Times* editor Chen Huifen described the production as "a declaration" of the young artists' presence, talent and spirit.

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She noted that several alumni had returned as directors, stage managers and designers, including Joo Soon, who served as the production's stage manager.



The fund's alumnus Joo Soon served as the production's stage manager. PHOTO: TRCL

The event also paid tribute to TRCL chairperson Jennie Chua, who has guided the fund's growth over 20 years and championed its mission to make the arts accessible to all children and youth.

Chen also recognised former BT editor Alvin Tay and long-term corporate supporters such as UOB, the Hong Leong Group and BNP Paribas for sustaining the fund's work.

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"As we look to the next 20 years," she added, "the stage is set and the voices are ready to be heard."

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