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Singapore Government

# PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR ONG TENG CHEONG, SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,  
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE SINGAPORE DANCE THEATRE  
AT THE ROYAL PAVILION BALLROOM OF THE PAVILION INTER-  
CONTINENTAL SINGAPORE ON FRIDAY, 4 MARCH 1988 AT 6.00 PM

This evening holds special significance in the history of cultural development in Singapore. We are gathering here not only to witness the birth of our long-awaited first professional dance company but also to usher our performing artistes into a new era. It is indeed good news to all those who have been dreaming of having such a professional dance company for many years.

Three-and-a-half years ago, in September '84, the former Ministry of Culture set up a core group of ballet dancers under the National Dance Company to complement its efforts in promoting local dances. Their main task was to explore new forms of expression through dances. With the assistance of the Singapore Cultural Foundation, Mdm Goh Soo Khim and Mr Anthony Then were appointed Artistic Directors of the group. Their task was to build the group into a professional dance company.

With hardwork, courage and initiative, Madam Goh Soo Khim and Mr Anthony Then have now turned the dream to reality. The founding of the Singapore Dance Theatre is a timely move, in line with the Government's vision to transform Singapore into a cultured society by 1999, and in promoting excellence in the arts. It therefore deserves the support of every citizen.

We have made good progress in the field of social and economic development since Singapore became independent 23 years ago. Our standard of living to-day is much higher than before. The time is now ripe for us to channel more resources to develop culture and the arts to enrich our spiritual life and to put our leisure time to good use.

The goal set by the Government for the next phase of our nation building is to build a gracious, cultivated and confident society where people have a fulfilling life and enjoy the fruits of their hard work. To translate these ideas into actions and turn the plans into realities, the Government has recently announced the formation of six advisory councils, one of which is on culture and the arts. The advisory councils will gather views and suggestions from interested individuals and organisations on how best this vision can be attained.

The Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts will get down to work soon, and would, among other things, examine ways and means the Government could help the professional art groups in Singapore to develop and grow.

Patronage is essential to the well-being of the arts. The success of the Singapore Dance Theatre depends very much on sponsorship from both the public and private sectors. The time has come for all of us to be actively involved in developing our new cultural programmes, promoting high standards of performance and fostering artistic talent. With your active support and encouragement, I am confident that the Singapore Dance Theatre will grow and become a dance company of high repute.

We are indeed fortunate to have Justice Lai Kew Chai as Chairman. He will be assisted by a team of talented and enthusiastic directors on the Board. We have a good team here. But they have a challenging task ahead. I wish them every success.

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