



YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD
2013

BANI HAYKAL
~

Bani Haykal was born in 1985 in Singapore. Bani is a multidisciplinary artist whose work spans the fields of visual and literary performances, using music and sound as primary mediums. A critically reflective artist and thinker, Bani's work examines the perceptions, relevance and culture of sound and music. He initiates collaborations with artists across all fields as a means to discover musical forms, language and expression.

Bani's exploration of music and text is carried out through his work in indie bands and collectives—mux, b-quartet and OFFCUFF. His solo musical work focuses on structured improvisation and comprises spoken-word, producing three studies to date—*Ergophobia* (2011), *how I got lost and died trying* (2011) and *Sketches of Syllables* (2013). He has also presented work in festivals locally and overseas, including Singapore Night Festival (2011), LitUp Festival (2010, 2011, 2012), Mosaic Music Festival (2011) and World Event Young Artist (UK, 2012). Since 2012, Bani has also

joined Singaporean avant rock band, The Observatory, with whom he has toured Norway (2012) and Italy (2013).

These musical explorations have also brought him to create sounds for the live performing arts stage, where each collaboration presents a fresh context to discover new musical expressions. Bani has composed for and collaborated extensively with some of Singapore's major theatre and dance companies, creating live music and soundscapes for works such as *Crossings* (The Necessary Stage, 2012), *Bleeding Grace* (Teater Ekamatra, 2012) and *Tahan* (Teater Ekamatra, 2013), *8 Women* (Sing'theatre, 2013) and *Silences We Are Familiar With* (T.H.E. Dance Company, 2012).

Besides musical performance, Bani also finds expression in writing—to date with one published book of poetry, *Sit Quietly In The Flood* (2007)—and through visual arts works where he creates new sonic palettes through play and (re)construction of narratives and instruments. As part

of the Substation's Associate Artist Research Programme, Bani developed *Rethinking Music and Collapse* (2011–2013). His exhibited works include *Dormant Music* (2013) created under a residency with The Art Incubator and presented at Platform 3 in Bandung, Indonesia and the Institute of Contemporary Art Singapore (ICAS) at LASALLE College of the Arts, and *inside the subject* (ICAS, 2013), a group exhibition in collaboration with Angie Seah and Mohamad Riduan.

Since 2011, Bani has been a mentor to younger musicians through the Noise Singapore's The Music Mentorship Programme.





Dormant Music (2013)
Photo Credit: Mish'aal Syed Nasar

A CONVERSATION WITH BANI HAYKAL

How did you first get into the arts?

My late father was a musician, my mum was a singer. Growing up, music was a staple at home but being interested in music wasn't an immediate thing. Instead I was attracted to board games, game books and video games; and the narrative that came with it. I was interested in the process of creating a narrative for others to participate or play in. This constant act of wanting to create things is quite possibly rooted in this. Music or sound is an immediate language I gravitate towards to create. Even when I am doing music today, I would say that my main interest is still to create narratives like those you'd find in games, hyperreal or surreal. That act of creating fiction with variables that can alter its own reality still fascinates me.

What are the biggest challenges you face as an artist?

That there's only 24 hours in a day.

What motivates you to continue despite these challenges?

The good things that happen in those hours.

When you set about creating a new work, what inspires you?

Mess. I say mess because maybe I am obsessed, perhaps curious, and more so, with reorganising or rethinking order. Somewhere in my head I think of initial order as making sense of chaos. Sometimes there is nothing wrong with that order except I'm not so comfortable with the idea of submitting to that order without bumping my head against a glass door several times before either uncovering an alternative route, or realising all paths tested didn't surface for a reason. Mess is a good start when it comes to an expression. Fact check the given mess then formulate stuff up without distorting the facts.

What do you hope your audience gets out of your work?

Stimuli, in one form or another.

What advice would you give if approached by an up and coming artist who wanted to learn from your experience?

Experiment, experiment, experiment.

What are your hopes for the arts scene in Singapore?

An ecosystem that encourages more independent, and alternative art spaces and initiatives to exist. I also hope for a collective consciousness and critical thinking.

What does the Young Artist Award mean to you?

I am very appreciative of it. I believe that this award is a reminder that as an art practitioner, there is a function and an anti-function that we bring to society. Receiving this award reminds me of the people who have generously supported and believed in whatever function I am capable of. In my best days, I hope to return that gesture of trust.



WORDS OF APPRECIATION

“ There are too many good people out there who have been very supportive and encouraging. I must credit the following samaritans; the people without whom I would not have been given an education.

Everyone at The Substation; I must acknowledge Effendy and Emily for the nomination. Thank you for your optimism and hospitality.

The Observatory; Dharma, Leslie and Vivian, I am grateful for your support and patience.

The usual suspects! The community of artists/curators/critics/directors. Literally everyone I've had the good fortune to collaborate or engage in healthy discussions with.

To the greatest hearts and minds in beings I call friends, Darius Shah, Gerald Leow, Jun, Luqman Hakim, Mohamad Riduan and Sirraaj Anwar. The few who are truly still sane in this world, thank you for your brutal honesty and openness.

My dearest Quartet; Faizal, Hidir and Raizan. It's been awhile.

For all the patience, grace and humility you've taught me, thank you Ila for being the most brilliant human being and for enduring my stubbornness.

And lastly, of which I would like to dedicate this award to, my parents, Bani Farook Mohamed and Suliah Mahmood for giving me an education. ”

Bani Haykal