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MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES NEW CREATIVE DIRECTOR

LOW Kee Hong has been appointed as Creative Director for Manchester International Festival (MIF), as the organisation prepares for The Factory, the landmark new cultural space which is due to open in the heart of Manchester in 2023.

As Creative Director, Kee Hong will work alongside John McGrath, Artistic Director & Chief Executive and the rest of the curatorial team on developing the artistic programme for The Factory. He will also lead on the future shape and programme for the Festival, which will continue to take place across the city every other year.

Kee Hong is currently Head of Theatre, Performing Arts at the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority in Hong Kong where he is responsible for formulating the district's artistic direction and strategies for Contemporary Performance, Dramatic and Theatre Arts. Previous roles include Artistic Director and General Manager of the Singapore Arts Festival and Founding Director and General Manager of the Singapore Biennale.

John McGrath, Artistic Director & Chief Executive MIF & The Factory says: *"I am delighted that Low Kee Hong will be joining MIF at this significant moment in our history. Kee Hong is admired by artists, producers and programmers around the world for his passionate, knowledgeable approach to curating festivals and venues. He has worked with many of the world's great creative figures and is also deeply committed to involving the widest possible range of communities and voices."*

"Kee Hong will join MIF in the year before we open The Factory and will be working with me and the curatorial team to develop an exciting range of new projects for the space. Equally importantly, he will be leading on the future programme for the Festival – re-imagining MIF for the years ahead in ways that connect both locally and globally. I look forward to welcoming him to Manchester."

Low Kee Hong says: *"I am truly honoured and excited to be given this amazing opportunity to work with Manchester International Festival and The Factory. It is an organisation I have always admired for its visionary and bold take on what tomorrow can look like. I look forward to working with a team of amazing humans who firmly believe in the extraordinary and transformative experience of the arts for our communities as we build towards futures we all want to be part of."*

Kee Hong will also oversee the work of the Creative Engagement, Curatorial and international

The logo for Manchester International Festival features a stylized, bold, black graphic of the letters 'MIF' on the left. To the right of this graphic, the words 'Manchester International Festival' are written in a clean, black, sans-serif font, stacked in three lines: 'Manchester', 'International', and 'Festival'.

departments as a key member of MIF's Executive leadership team which consists of John McGrath (Chief Executive & Artistic Director), Randel Bryan (Executive Director & Deputy Chief Executive), Sheena Wrigley (Venue Director) and Hannah Cork (Finance Director).

He will take up the post of Creative Director in April 2022.

Ends.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, IMAGES, QUOTES AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS PLEASE CONTACT:

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Low Kee Hong: Biography

Kee Hong is currently Head of Theatre, Performing Arts at the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Hong Kong SAR China. He is responsible for formulating the district's artistic direction and strategies for Contemporary Performance, Dramatic and Theatre Arts. In this role, Low has overseen the launch and co-presentation of many creation projects and programmes that engage in new discussion and discourse around contemporary modes of creation. These include Hong Kong's first International Workshop Festival of Theatre, a three year program focusing on new directions in Scenography (What is Stage), a 3 year program on dramaturgy called Dramaturgy and Beyond, international residency programs with Scotland, New Zealand and Australia and new commissions with international festivals such as Manchester International Festival, and GREC Festival Barcelona. Since 2018, he is the co-curator of the Hong Kong International Black Box Festival with Hong Kong Rep.

Before joining West Kowloon, he was the Artistic Director and General Manager of the Singapore Arts Festival from 2009 to 2012. Prior to this, Kee Hong was the Founding Director and General Manager of the Singapore Biennale between 2005 to 2009.

From 2002 to 2005, Kee Hong was the Associate Artistic Director of TheatreWorks (Singapore). During his appointment, he introduced a whole new genre of creative works that recalibrates the bounds between art, science, and 'live' performance. This process began with a new laboratory called the DAVINCIPROJECT. From the notes, discoveries, and wild ideas hot-housed in the DAVINCIPROJECT emerged collaborations like pulse.i am alive: installation + theatre + club (April 2003) and Balance: Space • Time • Movement (August 2003) that played to critical acclaim. For Balance, he was awarded the Best Director and Best Set Design awards at the 4th Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. He is also an active

The logo for Manchester International Festival features a stylized, bold, black letter 'M' on the left. The 'M' is composed of thick, blocky strokes with a modern, geometric feel. To the right of the 'M', the words 'Manchester International Festival' are written in a clean, sans-serif font, stacked in three lines: 'Manchester' on the top line, 'International' on the middle line, and 'Festival' on the bottom line.

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Lighting Designer and was awarded Best Lighting Design for his work on Checkpoint Theatre's production of *Language Of Their Own* at the 7th Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards.

Previously a seasoned performer on the international arts festival circuit, he has toured extensively in Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, and Indonesia between 1995 to 2001.

Kee Hong is also an active scholar, holds a Masters in Sociology with on-going research interests in cultural policy, urban planning and architecture, performance studies, vernacular and contemporary culture and arts of Southeast Asia. He has taught at the National University of Singapore (Sociology) from 1997 to 1999 and his academic writings have been published by Routledge and other critical journals.

About MIF & The Factory

Manchester International Festival (MIF) is an artist-focused festival of original, new work and special events reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture.

Staged every two years in Manchester, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Akram Khan, David Lynch, Ibrahim Mahama, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, The xx, and Robert Wilson.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work, staged in venues across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. MIF works closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible and ensures that work made at MIF goes on to be seen around the world.

MIF also supports a year-round Creative Engagement programme, bringing opportunities for people from all backgrounds, ages and from all corners of the city to get involved during the Festival and year-round, as volunteers, as participants in shows, through skills development and a host of creative activities.

MIF will also run The Factory, the landmark new cultural space currently being built in the heart of Manchester, designed by the internationally renowned Rem Koolhaas' Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) and backed by Manchester City Council and HM Government. The Factory will commission, present and produce one of Europe's most ambitious and adventurous year-round creative programmes, featuring bold new work from the world's greatest artists and offering a space to create, invent and experiment.

At 13,300 square metres, The Factory will be ultra-flexible, enabling large-scale artistic work of invention



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and ambition that isn't made anywhere else in the world: from large-scale multimedia performances to epic installations, to intimate performances and ground-breaking digital experiences. Outside, its public spaces will come alive with a year-round programme of pop-up music, fairs, and markets, creating a unique riverside destination for everyone to enjoy.

Attracting up to 850,000 visitors annually, The Factory will add £1.1 billion to the economy over a decade and create up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs. Its pioneering programme of skills, training and engagement will benefit local people and the next generation of creative talent from across the city, whilst apprenticeships and trainee schemes are already underway during the construction phase.

Located in the St John's neighbourhood next to the River Irwell, The Factory will be at the heart of a burgeoning city centre hub for culture, creativity and digital innovation.

The Factory will open in 2023. Programme plans will be announced from spring 2022.

mif.co.uk