

A. Purpose of travel and intended use of bursary funds

My main purpose in applying for this bursary is to fund my enrolment into a distinguished summer acting programme in San Francisco to enrich and grow my skills as a professional actor, theatre-maker and arts educator. I intend to use the \$4000 bursary to partially fund the cost of tuition and travel to the US this summer to attend a 5-week intensive core acting skills programme at San Francisco's Tony-Award winning American Conservatory Theatre (A.C.T).

A.C.T. is one of the top acting conservatories globally, boasting world famous alumnae working in the acting industry, with an acclaimed full-time acting programme. The Summer Training Congress programme provides an intensive 5-week course training the core skills of performance, including movement, voice, speech, text, improvisation, clowning and audition technique, taught by A.C.T.'s distinguished faculty of teaching artists and visiting alumnae. Graduation from this course is assessed with an internal showcase held in A.C.T.'s self-owned theatres in downtown San Francisco. I have chosen to apply for A.C.T.'s Summer Training Congress programme as it offers one of the most affordable tuition fees (\$2,750) while still ranking highly amongst the world's best acting programmes. This was mainly a decision made in comparison to other equally distinguished acting summer programmes, such as those in NYU Tisch School of Drama (~\$12,000) and Yale School of Drama (~\$9,000), which had also been in my consideration. I have attached a budget table below for a more specific breakdown.

Receiving financial support to receive formal training in a prestigious conservatory in the United States, the epicentre of global entertainment and the performing arts, will be a major step forward in my journey to become a professional performing artist. I believe admission into this summer course will push my pre-existing skills and portfolio in professional acting to breakthrough national borders and develop my career on an international level. I understand that it may be confusing to qualify myself as a professional actor since I am still at university, therefore it may help if I contextualised my journey with a brief introduction.

My pursuit of professional acting began four years ago in 2017. After graduating from the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) with a perfect score of 45, I negotiated with my parents on the possibility of going to acting school full-time. When my proposal was rejected, I told them that I would apply to Cambridge University (every Asian parent's dream) on the condition that they allowed me to take a gap year to pursue *my* childhood dream of becoming an actor. They were hesitant, given the premature state of Singapore's arts scene and my untraditional ambition to become a professional artist despite faring well in school. But by God's grace, I had successfully received an offer from Cambridge, so my parents relented. Having been inducted into a strictly academic educational system in Singapore my whole life, I finally had the time and space to pursue acting. I began my gap year by first enrolling myself into a two year part-time course for young actors in Singapore Repertory Theatre, one of the most established theatre companies locally. To ensure I would graduate from the programme before going to university overseas, I extended my gap year into two full years, and found myself working as a part-time drama teacher and professional free-lance actor in Singapore.

Within those two years, I was receiving training through short-term acting workshops and showcases in private drama associations, while concurrently juggling a full time free-lance career as an actor. After hustling, training and shamelessly auditioning for anything I could get, I was able to successfully establish my name within the local industry as a budding newcomer.

Back then, at only 18 years old, I was often the youngest performer working on several professional TV, film and theatre productions (*which can be referenced in my acting resume which I will attach below*). I have thus far had the privilege of collaborating with Singapore's top actors, directors and production companies, even working with international companies like the Warner Bros. on the set of "Crazy Rich Asians" when they filmed in Singapore. By the end of the two gap years, I had also graduated from the Singapore Repertory Theatre course as the top student of the cohort. This was despite not having prior training, unlike most of my peers who had already been studying acting in local art schools. Since matriculating into Cambridge, I continue to pursue my love for drama by performing and producing theatre and film productions with the ADC and other drama societies, though it has not been easy being a performer of minority ethnicity in Cambridge. Nonetheless, every winter and summer break, I return to Singapore to continue acting in professional productions to upkeep the momentum of my career in the local industry.

This bursary would mean the world to me, as it would be my first time finally receiving the formal training in acting in an established conservatory, something I never had the chance to pursue all my years growing up in a conservative Asian society. In the past three years that I have been able to independently grow my acting career with pure grit and passion, I have gained a long list of acting experience since starting out as a 'nobody', without training or representation from any arts school or talent agency. Now that I am 21 years old, I can't help but wonder how much more I can achieve as a young artist if I could receive formal training from professional teachers. A conservatory would not only provide personal and intimate teaching, but also allow a safe space to fail and learn in a way that I cannot when working on professional sets that dictate my income and reputation in the local industry. Furthermore, America offers training in professional acting that is far more robust than anything Singapore's premature arts scene can provide. Enrolling in an American acting school would add onto the breadth of styles and methods of acting that differ greatly in different cultures, for example in comparison to the acting pedagogy in Singapore or Britain. My love and desire for acting and representation only grows stronger with more international exposure. Having gained confidence after a year of acting in student theatre in Cambridge having overcome some of the systemic barriers as a person of colour, I know that I cannot let this opportunity to receive formal training in America slip through my fingers again.

After graduating from Cambridge in 2021, my goal is to apply for a Master's programme in acting in London or America, before officially stepping into the arts and arts education industry full-time. However, most conservatories demand a Bachelor's degree in acting as a prerequisite for admission, although there are exceptions if applicants are able to prove their level of experience and pass the audition. With my highly academic Cambridge degree, I may be disadvantaged in the selection process as I lack the formal training in performing art conservatories that many other applicants will have under their belt. Therefore, I believe admittance into this prestigious American summer programme will significantly boost my application and portfolio by proving my level of training and experience while also giving me the confidence I need to thrive in an international scene as a person of colour.

As a student in the Education, English, Drama and the Arts faculty, I have discovered a newfound passion in sharing and transferring the gifts of the arts and drama to children and youth through the domain of education. The performing arts has definitely played a key role in my personal transformation and growth over the past ten years. Having thrived in both academia and the arts like many students in Cambridge, I have personally witnessed the profound benefits that exposure and participation in the arts can offer to an individual's holistic

education in emotional literacy and mental wellbeing. Having migrated all the way from Singapore to study Education and Drama in Cambridge, I would like to make full use of my schooling abroad to not just study drama, but to learn how arts education and arts discourse is being conducted in the West. Aside from the formal training in performance in A.C.T., I intend to use these 5 weeks in acting school as a possible opportunity to conduct qualitative educational research for my dissertation thesis in my Part II Education and Drama course. As for now, I am keen to write my thesis on the importance of teaching the arts in normative education and schooling, specifically using a cross-cultural analysis of cases from Singapore, the UK and hopefully America, experimenting with research methodologies such as ethnography and qualitative case studies to examine why education and professionalisation in the arts is valued differentially across Asian and Western cultures.

The creation of a diverse and harmonious world begins with the representation of faces and voices that we grow up watching and listening to from childhood. My aspiration to become an internationally trained artist of Asian descent is rooted in a desire to be part of an international movement to make the arts accessible and profitable to people of all walks of life, and to nurture children everywhere to imagine a more vibrant, empathetic and collaborative society. My ultimate aim is to share my love for the arts through performance, education and policy. I believe that by re-examining and reproducing the generative capacity of the arts, we can create a society that is more compassionate, emotionally literate and mentally healthy. I hope that learning from the world's best conservatories in America and Britain will enrich my perspectives and add to my toolbox new approaches in my work as an artist and arts educator.

Training under the American Conservatory Theatre programme will be the first major step in formally training my skills, creativity and confidence that will kickstart a new chapter for my journey as an Asian artist on an international stage. I am so grateful to Newnham College and the US Alumnae Committee for your generosity in giving students like me the chance to pursue our ambitions across national and cultural borders. I hope to receive the support of the Newnham US Alumnae Committee to help bring me closer to my ambition of becoming a working and teaching artist in this critical stage of my journey as a young performer and changemaker.

B. Budget breakdown

*Bursary: *Newnham US Alumnae Committee Travel Bursary*

**Self-funding for outstanding cost: *Family contribution (Savings)*

Expense	Funding Source	Cost/ USD
Tuition	*Bursary	\$2750
Housing	*Bursary, shared accommodation with roommate	~\$1250
Food	**Self-funded	\$650
Flight tickets (two-way)	**Self-funded	\$450
Miscellaneous (transport, daily expenditure)	**Self-funded	\$400
Total Cost	-	\$5500
Bursary Fund	-	\$4000
Outstanding Cost	**Self-funded	<i>\$1500</i>

E. Selected photos of recent theatre and film productions



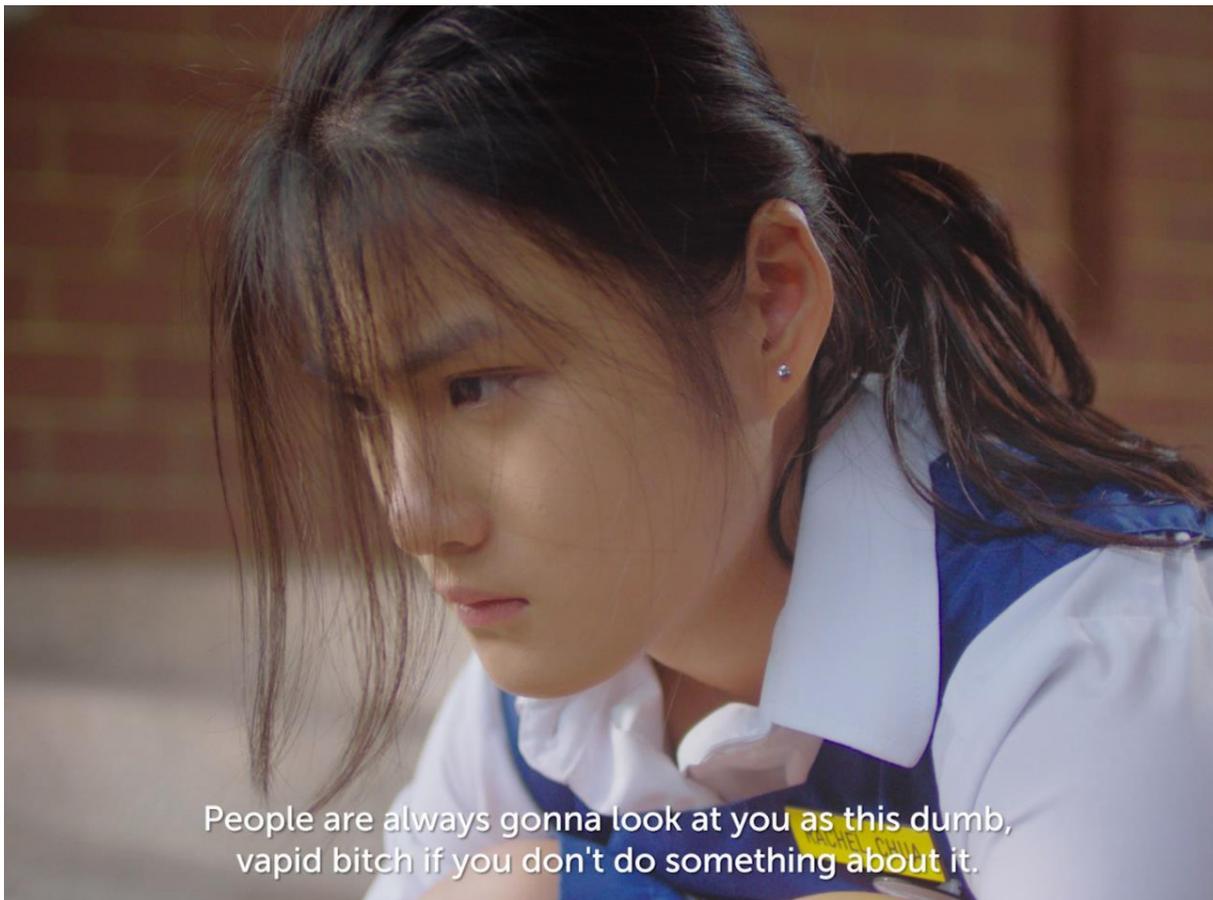
Singapore Repertory Theatre's The Young Company Graduation Showcase: The Fall (2018)



Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club: as Dr Mary Yuen in Atomic Jaya (2019)



Short film: Celebration of Death by Lionel Seah (2020)



People are always gonna look at you as this dumb, vapid bitch if you don't do something about it.

Webseries: Girls, Girls, Girls by NSFTV directed by Alexis Therese (2019)



Singapore Repertory Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park: Julius Caesar (2018)



Singapore Repertory Theatre Musical: Forbidden City – Portrait of an Empress (2017)