

Exchanging tales

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IN THE art exchange programme Project Connect, the "exchange" begins before the participants even meet each other. The programme brings together some two dozens youths from Malaysia – primarily those living in the Klang Valley – and from York and London in Britain.

Themed *The Landscapes and Mindscapes of Malaysia and the UK*, Project Connect is a collaborative project between local art initiative The Dram Projects and experiential learning centre Cloudbreak.

The frame of the year-long project which began last September goes something like this. Each group of youths has its own pre-exchange programmes running up towards the "actual exchange" when they will pay a visit to each other's country. After that, they return to their own country to carry out community programmes that build public awareness on the arts.

"Project Connect gives participants exposure to different cultures and ideas. It promotes the importance of giving back to the community through arts and the idea of arts being beneficial to all levels of society, not just for the elite group," says project director Daphne Lee.

Over the past year, the 10 Malaysian participants selected to join the programme have been attending creative drama-based training and taking turns to lead workshops on anything that they are good at, ranging from general knowledge and photography to meditation and DIY art using junk items.

English Literature student Patricia Low and Law student Priya Kulasagaran, both 23, set up a poetry project called Project OMG, which stands for open mic gig.

"It's a platform where grassroots poets, artists, performers, musicians can showcase their work and a place where people like you



The York group performed a funny piece on the adventures of two brothers who were lost at sea based on items they received in a box from the Malaysian participants of Project Connect.