



**Esplanade  
Presents**

**The Studios**

# fifty

**50 plays. 5 weeks. A celebration.**

**Emily of Emerald Hill**

**2 – 5 Apr, Thu – Sun | Theatre Studio**

**Selected works of Haresh Sharma**

**3 Apr, Fri | Recital Studio**

**Beginnings – Selected works  
from the 1960s & 1970s**

**4 Apr, Sat | Rehearsal Studio**

**Selected works of Michael Chiang**

**5 Apr, Sun | Rehearsal Studio**

# About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

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Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre and one of the busiest arts centres in the world. Since its opening in 2002, the centre has presented more than 28,000 performances, drawing an audience of 20 million patrons and 80 million visitors. This architectural icon, with its distinctive twin shells, houses world-class performance spaces complemented by a comprehensive range of professional support services. Its two main venues are the 1,600-seat Concert Hall and a Theatre with a capacity of 2,000. In March 2014, Esplanade's Concert Hall was listed as one of the "world's 15 most beautiful concert halls" by Hamburg-based building data company Emporis.

Esplanade's vision is to be a performing arts centre for everyone and it seeks to enrich the lives of its community through the arts. The centre's programming is guided by its mission – to entertain, engage, educate and inspire. Its year-long arts calendar includes an annual roster of 15 festivals and 19 programme series. These cater to diverse audiences in Singapore and span different cultures and genres including dance, music, theatre, the visual arts and more, with a special focus on Asian culture. More than 70% of the 3,000 shows that take place each year at the centre are non-ticketed.

Esplanade regularly presents world-renowned companies and artists that attract international attention and add to Singapore's cultural vibrancy. The centre is also a popular performance home for arts groups and commercial presenters who hire its venues to stage a wide range of programmes. These carefully curated presentations complement Esplanade's own diverse offerings for our audiences.

Esplanade works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. The centre supports the creation of artistic content and develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd, which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character.

Visit [www.esplanade.com](http://www.esplanade.com) for more information.

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# ceo's

## message

Theatre is a mirror of society. It reflects the spirit of the time and enables us to make better sense of life and our society. As our nation commemorates its 50th birthday this year, *The Studios* marks this special occasion with a celebration of Singapore's English-language theatre and the practitioners, past and present.

This season brings you 5 full-length productions and 45 dramatised readings that span the past few decades of our theatre history. Directors Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit, Tracie Pang, Oliver Chong, Jeff Chen and Zizi Azah, lend their sensibilities and perspectives to full-length productions of works by Stella Kon, Huzir Sulaiman, Haresh Sharma, Kuo Pao Kun and Tan Tarn How, respectively. Presenting excerpts of 45 plays, we explore a gamut of themes that have been tackled by playwrights over the years, as well as revisit the oeuvres of those whose works have set them apart.

We invite you to join us in understanding our society and the world around us through these plays that have captured our imagination, challenged and moved us. From the early plays that galvanised the scene, to works by young playwrights of a new generation, we look at these thought-provoking stories and characters that have inspired us and shaped our collective identity.

Together with many theatre practitioners celebrating with us this season, we hope that you will find a deeper understanding of our rich theatre history.

Yours sincerely,



Benson Puah  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Esplanade Co Ltd

# curatorial

## message

### **“What’s the story we want to convey with 50 plays?”**

That was the question that we set out to answer when we embarked on this project that celebrates five decades of Singapore English-language Theatre. We subjected ourselves to months of discussions and debates before finally arriving at these plays, chosen from a wide and diverse range of works in these past decades of Singapore theatre history.

Admittedly, there’s always that inevitable subjectivity in any selection. We do not purport that the 50 plays are the most representative works in the Singapore English-language Theatre canon. We only hope to present the story of Singapore Theatre by marking its perennial concerns and themes that have shaped the scene, shifts in practices and artistic trajectories either through a playwright’s oeuvre or in the scene in general, and cover the range of style that has characterised dramatic writing in Singapore. If we have indeed seen more with each succeeding generation of writers, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

With this special season of *The Studios*, we honour and celebrate all practitioners, past and present, for making what Singapore English-language Theatre is today. We would also like to thank all the directors, actors and designers involved in *fifty*, for lending their fresh interpretations and insights to these 50 plays. We hope the plays will continue to inspire a new generation of audiences and practitioners alike, and contribute to our collective memories.

– Co-curator Chong Tze Chien and *The Studios* team



# fifty

Emily of  
Emerald Hill

Off  
Centre

Descendants of the  
Eunuch Admiral

Comrade Mayor  
Machine  
Jointly and Severably  
Balance  
Duets

The Lady of Soul and  
Her Ultimate "S" Machine

Everything but the Brain  
Fundamentally Happy  
How did the cat get so fat?  
The Car  
Good People

Hitting (On) women  
Nothing  
Gemuk Girls  
Temple  
The Last Temptation of Stamford Raffles

Boom  
Charged  
Fear of Writing  
The Good, the Bad and the Sholay  
Tahan  
For Better or for Worse  
The Way We Go

The Weight  
of Silk on Skin

Mimi Fan  
The Moon Is Less Bright  
Are You There, Singapore?  
One Year Back Home  
Madame Mao's Memories  
The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole  
Three Children  
Oh! Singapore  
No Parking on Odd Days  
Army Daze  
The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree  
Private Parts  
Three Fat Virgins  
Lest The Demons Get To Me  
Mergers and Accusations  
Titoudao  
Wills and Secession  
A Language of Their Own  
Family  
PIE  
Autumn Tomyam  
The Woman in a Tree on a Hill  
Watching The Clouds Go By



Production image courtesy of Margaret Chan and Jeremiah Choy  
Photo by Tuckys Photography

# Emily of Emerald Hill

2 – 5 Apr

Thu, 8pm | Fri & Sat, 3 & 8pm | Sun, 3pm

Theatre Studio

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

Playwright Stella Kon  
Director Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit  
Performer Karen Tan

There will be a dialogue with the artists after Friday evening's performance.

***"Emily of Emerald Hill was the breakthrough English-language production which many of us had been waiting for. We always knew that a made-in-Singapore play was possible, that we really didn't have to rely on transplanted plays or adaptations, and Emily proved us right...There can be no looking back now."* The Straits Times**

***"The English-language theatre of Singapore promises to be the custodian of the future... the performance of Emily might well be the entry point to a viable and distinct Singapore theatre."* Late Malaysian theatre director Krishen Jit after watching a staging of Emily of Emerald Hill**

# director's

## message

First story: About two years ago, I was selected to do a concert reading of *Emily of Emerald Hill: The Musical*. I had so much fun reading and singing the parts of Emily's aunt, her rich Peranakan mother-in-law, Doris the daughter and a few small roles. But the best takeaway from that experience was getting to know Stella Kon and her famous play. Getting to know the world of Emily, and the people in it, from the playwright was precious to me. But at that time, I didn't know how truly precious it would be...

Second story: When I was growing up, from as early as when I was in Primary Two, I spent a week in my maternal grandmother's big family house atop a hill in Lubok Cina, Melaka, each December holiday. The big, grand old house with its many inhabitants, the cousins and a few relatives, were managed and looked after by my Grandaunt Rokiah. During my stay, I learnt so many things. Besides catching fish in the river, waiting for durians to *runtuh* (drop), and picking mangoes and rambutan from the back of the house, I observed and helped the ladies in the kitchen. It was from them that I learnt to make dodol, kuih kochi, rendang and the most fragrant, pulut kuning. When I grew up, I stopped going back to Lubok Cina and the big, grand house. Two years ago, my Grandaunt Rokiah died. She was almost alone, accompanied only by one of her daughters. The house unkempt and in ruins, a shadow of its former glory. And again, I didn't know how the image of that big house was going to help me...

Third story: In the winter of 1994, I went to the UK to work on a project with The Necessary Stage. I travelled alone to Heathrow via Sofia, Bulgaria, on a 25-hour plane ride. Karen Tan was waiting for my arrival at the airport. She was then newly married and living in London with her husband. Oh, it was my first time meeting her, but she was a delightful host! I stayed overnight in her apartment near Kilburn Station and the next day, we



travelled to Glasgow, Scotland, to attend our theatre training workshops in Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama. In Glasgow, me and *Kak Karen* were housemates. I remember our address: it was 36 Garrioch Road. That winter, I forged a lovely friendship with this esteemed theatre colleague. Yet again, I really didn't know that this bond I have with *Kak Karen* will culminate to something wonderful...

You see, I have realised that through our years, we keep forging stories and somehow, all these small stories then turn into a meta-narrative of our lives.

The story of *Emily of Emerald Hill* is like that. A story of many stories. And the stories are little vignettes of history in the big meta-narrative of Singapore. And that is why, I feel compelled to see this play produced. We need to have these stories shared and revisited. Because we might find these stories and experiences useful in the future. Singapore is 50 this year and she has so many stories to tell. I wonder how these stories will culminate in the end.

My deepest love and gratitude to Esplanade for giving me this opportunity. Thanks to TC, Ryd and the Ladies, Stella, *Kak Karen*, Elnie and #TeamEmily collaborators. I love all of you!

**Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit**

# the play



*Written by Stella Kon, **Emily of Emerald Hill** (1982) is a monologue about a Nyonya matriarch, Emily Gan, who holds domineering power over a distinguished household, and yet eventually realises that she has lost what she loves most. Born in 1940s Singapore, Emily is an abandoned child left to survive in a man's world. However, by dint of her sharp wit and cunning mind, she becomes the matriarch of a distinguished household, respected and admired by society. Leaping through time and space, the play charts the life of Emily from girlhood to her twilight years.*

Stella Kon garnered the first prize in the National Playwriting competition with *Emily of Emerald Hill*. It was first produced by Five Arts Centre and performed by Leow Puay Tin in Seremban and Kuala Lumpur in 1984. In Singapore, the play was first directed by Max Le Blond and presented at the Singapore Drama Festival in 1985, with Margaret Chan playing Emily. In 1999, a fresh perspective was injected to the play when Ivan Heng, a male Singaporean actor, donned a kebaya and took on the role of the matriarch.

In spite of its traditional themes, *Emily* was regarded as somewhat avant-garde in the 1980s with one character who travels through time and space randomly while recounting her story from childhood to old age. When the play was first staged in 1984, it captivated the audience with its representation of a character whom they could identify with – not merely the Peranakan identity, but the larger Malayan/Singapore identity demonstrated through the themes of tradition, heritage, family, and displacement amidst modernisation. A highlight of that year's Drama Festival, Margaret Chan performed the piece while pregnant, and was afraid that her state would affect her performance strength. Clearly, it did not. Chan recalls vividly, in an interview with *The Straits Times* in 2014, of that inaugural staging, “whole audiences would burst into tears ... I believe that Stella wrote the play in a matter of weeks, and that remains the best – because it was not ‘crafted’ in a sense, she didn’t have to go and consciously put in all these structures.



It came from her heart and soul; so it was very real."

A generation of young Singaporeans from various disciplines came to be inspired by *Emily of Emerald Hill's* first appearance and diverse projects took off from there. Students in architecture and sociology took *Emily* as the springboard for their academic theses and the Peranakan Museum mounted an exhibition in 2012 and 2013 titled *Emily of Emerald Hill: Singaporean Identity on Stage*. The exhibition showcased artifacts from Kon's family, materials relating to the performances, and a special performance of the play by Margaret Chan.

The play also appeals to international audiences with its universal themes of the search for true self, the celebration of one's heritage, and the fighting spirit to overcome all odds. *Emily of Emerald Hill* has been staged in more than 50 different productions and performed over 500 times. The work has been translated into Japanese, Chinese, Icelandic and Kannada, and a French translation of the play by Marc Goldberg is now touring in France, as part of the Singapore in France Festival.



Interested to find out more about the work? For background information on this play, the playwright, past stagings and selected production photos, visit [www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg).

## credits

**Playwright**

**Director**

**Performer**

**Set Designer**

**Lighting Designer**

**Sound Designer**

**Costume Designer**

**Dramaturg**

**Producer / Production Manager**

**Stage Manager**

**Assistant Stage Manager**

**Make-up artist**

**Hair**

**Wardrobe Mistress**

**Dresser**

**Stella Kon**

**Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit**

**Karen Tan**

**Wong Chee Wai**

**Helmi Fita**

**James Lye**

**Hayden Ng**

**Ahmad Musta'ain Bin Khamis**

**Elnie S Mashari**

**Afifah Buang**

**Rashid Shiddiq & Sharmirul Aizan**

**Haslina Ismail**

**Ashley Lim (Ashley Salon)**

**Molizah Mohter**

**Nur Fazlin Abdul Malek**

**Special thanks to Hock Siong & Co**



# Biographies

## Stella Kon | Playwright

Stella Kon was born in Edinburgh in 1944, named Lim Sing Po “Stars and Ripples,” from which she later took the name of Stella which means “Star”. She grew up on Emerald Hill, the heartland of old Peranakan society, dominated by the matriarchal presence of her grandmother, which the inspiration of *Emily* came from.

Stella was educated at Raffles Girls’ School and the University of Singapore. After her marriage in 1966, she lived in Malaysia, in the towns of Ipoh and Kampar, mainly as a homemaker and writer. Between 1982–86, she lived in England and Scotland with her sons who received their education there. In 1986, Stella returned to Singapore.

Singapore’s Ministry of Culture organised the National Playwriting Competition in 1979, 1982 and 1985, and Stella won the First Prize on all three occasions. In 2002, she started writing musicals. In 2006, she became the Chairperson of Musical Theatre Limited, an arts charity which promotes the creation of the new Singapore musical. She has written several musicals with the group, the latest being *EMILY – the Musical*.



To date, Stella has written 30 plays, 10 scripts for musical theatre, 12 short stories and four novels, among other works. She is best known for her 1982 play *Emily of Emerald Hill*, which has been performed to local and international acclaim. Her works are being studied in local and foreign universities.

## **Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit | Director**

Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit graduated with a degree in Drama from Queensland University of Technology (Brisbane, Australia). Aidli writes, directs, acts, teaches, designs lighting and costume, and has produced arts education programmes for schools.

She has worked extensively with many local theatre companies like The Necessary Stage, Teater Kami, Wild Rice, Cake Theatre, Toy Factory, The Theatre Practice, Teater Ekamatra and Drama Box. Together with Noor Effendy Ibrahim and Alfian Sa'at, Aidli published an anthology of Malay plays in the book, *BISIK*.

She is also an experienced practitioner of Forum Theatre. She has toured to Scotland, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Romania, Hong Kong and Hungary, performing Singapore – brand theatre.

Aidli is the Founder/Director of Panggung ARTS and she is the recipient of the Young Artist Award for Theatre in 2008.

She is currently working in Temasek Polytechnic as the Section Head of the Arts Division, in the Student & Alumni Affairs department, while pursuing her Master of Education.

## **Karen Tan | Performer**

Karen is humbled and honoured to have worked with practically every theatre company in Singapore, in a career that has obviously gone on for too long. In that time, she has learnt to take reviews in her stride, knowing that she too has often been hasty and nasty in her opinions, even while performing, which really is not advisable.

Karen is a full Peranakan, though with no ability at all to make rempah, or tie a sarong. She does, however, love Nonya Chang.

## **Elnie S Mashari | Production Manager**

Elnie is a prolific theatre practitioner who performs, production/stage manages, directs. She has also been a drama trainer for the last 15 years.

As a production/stage manager, Elnie managed shows in the last few installments of the Singapore Arts Festival, Singapore Theatre Festival as well as touring productions to Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, Australia and India. For the last five years, she was the lead Stage Manager for the successful Marina Bay Singapore Countdown. As a performer, her last acting credit was for Panggung Arts' *F* directed by Helmi Fita. In 2004/2005, she was one of TNS actor-facilitator for a Forum Theatre Workshop in India collaborating with the students of Kirori Mal College, Delhi and with theatre practitioners in Banda Aceh as part of the reconstruction programme.

Currently, Elnie is the Section Head of ITE HNITEC in Performance Production, where she oversees technical theatre education in ITE College Central. Under her wing, students receive authentic learning experiences through industry projects such as the Singapore Night Festival and Esplanade Presents productions. Students produce their own events such as the ITE Vocal Exchange, Beat Box Competition as well as drama plays and musicals. She believes that through education, both performance and technical aspects of theatre can be further developed, resulting in a more vibrant Singapore arts scene.

# Biographies

## Helmi Fita (Taiwan/Singapore) | Lighting Designer

Helmi Fita is a full-time theatre practitioner and arts educator. He has worked with theatre companies in Singapore and around the world. With almost 25 years of theatre experience under his belt, Helmi has worked as an actor/performer, production manager, stage manager, lighting designer and technical manager. Helmi was given the honorable mention for special achievement in lighting at the 3rd DBS Life Theatre Awards 2003. In recent years since 2006, he has worked with established companies in Taiwan, such as The Puppet and Its Double, ShortOnePlayer Theatre Troupe and Ex-Theatre Asia, to name a few. *Derrick Wei x Der Schonste Moment* by The Puppet and Its Double and *True Calling* by Ex-Theatre Asia, which he worked on, were nominated for the top 10 Taishin Awards in Taiwan. In 2012, he made his directorial debut in Taiwan with *WiFi Lovers*.

## James Lye | Sound Designer

A Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree holder with first class honours, James read Music and Music Technology in the UK on two scholarships from the Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) and Keele University, specialising in digital sonic arts and musicology. Having worked as a film score composer and sound designer for documentaries and films in the audio-post production industry, he has also performed as a professional guitarist, working along side prominent Singapore music directors such as Babes Conde, Bang Wenfu and JimmyYe.

James has staged several sonic arts productions in Singapore as part of festivals such as The Singapore Biennale and The Substation's Septfest. He has also worked with prolific theatre company, The Theatre Practice, for the 2014 musical *If There're Seasons*. Currently an independent music producer, sound artist and guitarist, James Lye is producing and performing for several popular Singapore artistes, whilst continuing his research on sonic arts installations and musicology.

# Did you know?

1

Since the first staging in 1984, *Emily* has become the most performed English-language play in Singapore and Malaysia.



Photo credit: Stella Kon

2

Margaret Chan appeared in 5 stagings of *Emily* in 1985, 1986, 1993, 2010 and 2012.

3

Since Ivan Heng's first appearance in *Emily of Emerald Hill* in 1999, he has acted in 110 performances as Emily in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Australia, and Canada.



Photo courtesy of Wild Rice

4

It is Singapore's most staged play. Since 1984, *Emily* has been produced over 50 times, with over 500 performances. To date, *Emily* has been staged in Malaysia, Singapore, Scotland, Australia, USA, Hong Kong, and Canada, and broadcast over radio in Iceland.



5

The first director to tackle this seminal monodrama was Malaysian teacher Chin San Sooi, with Malaysian playwright Leow Puay Tin as the first Emily.

For more interesting facts, please visit:  
[www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg)

Dramatised Reading

# Selected works of Haresh Sharma

**3 Apr, Fri, 7.30pm**

**Recital Studio**

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Haresh Sharma</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>Ian Loy</b>
<b>Performers</b>	<b>Bright Ong, Seong Hui Xuan, Tan Beng Tian &amp; Amanda Tee</b>
<b>Musicians</b>	<b>Joseph Chian &amp; Serene Tan</b>
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	<b>Stev.e</b>
<b>Stage Manager</b>	<b>Mirabel Neo</b>

R18 (This reading contains mature themes, coarse language and issues dealing with paedophilia)  
The plays presented in this reading are selected excerpts from each script.



# director's

## message

Taking on Haresh Sharma's writings requires lots of responsibilities. Having spent part of my early years as an intern at The Necessary Stage helped me to understand the gravity of working on those writings. Haresh always spoke brilliantly with his heart on his sleeve and his feelings at the tip of his tongue or rather pen. Speaking to him is like listening to poetry happening on a current affairs channel. It evokes feelings and thoughts, it makes someone, anyone, even me to do something about a matter, to think about it or even act on it.

To all coming to participate in this reading, do listen attentively, for every word, sentence, punctuation, thought, issue and feeling was carefully crafted with intent. You may choose to be indifferent but I pray that you allow yourself to absorb a little that might just change something in you or the society around you.

Thank you Tze Chien and *The Studios* team for the opportunity.

To my fellow practitioners and managers who collaborated with me in this reading, thank you for your heart and belief in the project.

Thank you Haresh, for your timeless writings that led the direction of this project, and Alvin Tan, for your great advice that helped me a lot.



Thank you, audience and friends, for coming and participating in this project.

Ian Loy

# the plays

## ***Gemuk Girls***

Written by Haresh Sharma in 2008, *Gemuk Girls* (“gemuk” means “fat” in Malay) is set in the 1960s, where Kartini and Juliana, a dynamic mother-daughter duo, receive news that Kartini’s father Marzuki has been accused of being a communist and detained without trial. While Kartini is flighty and whimsical, her daughter, Juliana is firm. The latter becomes an enraged activist who leads protests and makes a documentary about the injustice faced by her grandfather. This play takes a bold and darkly humorous look at issues of detention without trial and family politics.



## ***Fundamentally Happy***

Eric, a 30-year-old social worker, returns to his childhood neighbourhood and looks for his old neighbours, Habiba and her husband Uncle Ismail. He finds that the couple are still living there, older, and now have children. As Eric and Habiba reminisce on “the old days”, he reveals that Uncle Ismail is a paedophile who sexually abused him as a child. The revelation leads to emotional reactions and the questioning of trust, integrity and honesty in a friendship.



## ***Good People***

Centred on the relationships between a high-strung doctor, a jaded nurse and a terminally-ill patient, *Good People* explores social themes, personal choices and the grey area between right and wrong.



Interested to find out more about the work?

For interviews, videos and background information on these plays, visit [www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg).

Photos courtesy of The Necessary Stage

# Biographies

## Haresh Sharma | Playwright

Haresh Sharma (b.1965, Singapore) is the Resident Playwright of The Necessary Stage. To date, he has written more than 100 plays. *Off Centre* was selected by the Ministry of Education as a Literature text for 'O' and 'N' Levels, and re-published by The Necessary Stage in 2006. In 2008, Ethos Books published *Interlogue: Studies in Singapore Literature, Vol. 6*, written by Prof David Birch and edited by A/P Kirpal Singh, which presented an extensive investigation of Haresh's work over the past 20 years up to 2007. A collection of Haresh's plays has been translated into Mandarin and published by Global Publishing.

Haresh was awarded Best Original Script for *Fundamentally Happy*, *Good People* and *Gemuk Girls* during the 2007, 2008 and 2009 Life! Theatre Awards respectively. In 2010, The Necessary Stage also published the above-mentioned plays in the collection entitled *Trilogy*. In 2011 and 2012, two collections of short plays by Haresh, *Shorts 1* and *Shorts 2*, as well as a collection, *Plays for Schools*, were published. 2013 saw the publication of a new collection of Haresh's plays on medical-related issues; titled *Don't Forget to Remember Me*, it launched at the Singapore Writers Festival. Most recently in 2014, Haresh's plays, *Best Of* (staged in Singapore and Malaysia) and *Eclipse*



Photo Credit: Lee Jian Wei

(staged in both Singapore and Scotland), were published.

Haresh is the first non-American to be awarded the prestigious Goldberg Master Playwright by New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2011. He also participated in the inaugural Singapore Literature Festival in New York in October 2014. In 2014, Haresh was awarded the Southeast Asian Writers (or S.E.A. Write) Award (Singapore), which recognises and honours literary excellence in the ASEAN region.

# Biographies

## Ian Loy | Director

Ian Loy has been immensely involved in the theatre industry as a performer, director and playwright since 1999. He graduated from LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts in 2002 with a Diploma in Drama with Distinction, and was also a recipient of the NAC Georgette Chen Arts Scholarship. He has used his expertise in theatre arts to work with various schools in Singapore and established theatre companies locally and regionally.

Ian Loy founded MySuperFuture Theatrical Productions in 2009. Through the company, he involves himself with many community outreach and theatre projects with people of all ages, whether coaching or creating theatre art for them, especially for the young audiences. Ian was invited to collaborate with Esplanade's *Playtime!* on many occasions to create theatre for their young audiences and also with various institutions creating solutions for their dramatic needs.

Ian was recently awarded the Singapore Young Artist Award 2014. It represents Singapore's highest award for young arts practitioners aged 35 years and below, whose artistic achievements and commitment have distinguished them among their peers. This has encouraged him to continue pursuing excellence in the arts, and to continue inspiring others.

## Amanda Tee | Performer

Amanda Tee has been involved in the Singapore Repertory Theatre's productions such as: *Shakespeare in the Park's Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Nights dream*, (Campari D'Cruz) *Fried Rice Paradise the Musical*, *The Jungle Book*, *Pinocchio the Musical* and *Bear and Chicken Goes to School*. Her TheatreWorks productions include *National Broadway Company* and *Dust: A Recollection*. Her Sightlines Productions include *Boom*, *Everything But The Brain*, *Sisters* by Jean Tay. Her Singapore Arts Festival productions include *Visible Cities*, *Pandemic: They Only Come At Night*. Other Productions include *Hansel and Gretel: An Eco Adventure*, *The Couple in the Hotel Room* and *K (变形记)*.

Her TV and film credits include Wee Li Lin's *Hong Bao's & Kisses*, *KNS Parody News Channel* webisodes Mediagroup's *The White Red Rose Event* and Okto's *The Band*.

Amanda also performed with the Kevin Spacey Foundation in New York, 2012. She has trained with the SIT Company in New York (2011), the Suzuki Company of Toga in Japan (2014) and graduated from the Acting BA at LASALLE College of the Arts (2009).

## Bright Ong | Performer

Bright is a professional theatre practitioner and a puppeteer who has Cirque du Soleil and The Muppets to thank for being the catalyst to his performing arts career.

An SRT alumni Young Co. scholar, he is also a graduate of National University of Singapore, where he obtained a degree in geography.

He was the puppeteer for Latif on *ZooMoo*, an international puppet show about wildlife, as well as Cracker the Cat on another international television Programme, *Mr Hooty's Toyshop*.

With a vested interest in theatre for young audiences, and the combination of puppetry and physical theatre, Bright has been working closely with Esplanade's *PLAYtime!* series since 2011, clocking in at over a 160 shows for young audiences.

Theatre credits include *Macbeth*, as part of Shakespeare in the Park by SRT, 2011; *Lan Fang Chronicles*, featured at Singapore Arts Festival, 2012; *Lord of the Flies* by SRT Young Co, 2012; *Marco Polo* by Theatreworks, 2014; *2 Houses*, performed during Georgetown Festival, 2014; *Words and Music*, at NUS Festival of the Arts, 2015; *Pretty Things* by Pat Toh in 2012, which was nominated at the 2013 Life! Theatre Awards for Best Production of the Year and Best Ensemble. Bright is scheduled to appear in Skinned Knee Productions' *Ragnarok* this year.

## Seong Hui Xuan | Performer

Hui Xuan works as a freelance actress, singer, and dancer. She is an experienced dance, piano and drama teacher and also choreographs for dance and theatre shows. Selected credits include: *Great World Cabaret*; *2 Houses*; *Rising Son*; *Crazy Christmas*; *Gruesome Playground Injuries*; *Machine*; *Songs For A New World*; *Rabbit Hole*; *La Cage aux Folles*; *Twelfth Night*; *Spring Awakening*; *Into The Woods*; *Sweet Charity and Company*, for which she won Best Supporting Actress at the 13th Life! Theatre Awards. A graduate of LASALLE College of the Arts, she has a BA (first-class Hons.) in Musical Theatre.

Instagram: [huishspace](#)

Web: [www.seonghuixuan.com](http://www.seonghuixuan.com)

## Tan Beng Tian | Performer

Beng Tian is the co-founder and artistic director of The Finger Players, which was established in 1999. She is a recipient of JCCI Singapore Foundation Culture Award 2005 and is the resident director of The Necessary Stage's Theatre For Seniors. A performer, designer, puppet builder and instructor, she has worked with local theatre companies including Drama Box, iTheatre, The Necessary Stage, The Theatre Practice, TheatreWorks, Toy Factory Productions and Wild Rice. Beng Tian has also collaborated with overseas arts companies such as The Fantasy Puppet Theatre (Hong Kong) and Zuni Icosahedron (Hong Kong).



# Biographies

## Serene Tan | Musician

Serene graduated from LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts with a Diploma in Classical Music. She is a full-time piano teacher who also conducts gamelan and world music lessons in schools around Singapore.

She has performed for former US President George Bush at the Asian Civilisations Museum, former President SR Nathan and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the re-opening of the Malay Heritage Centre in 2012. In July 2011, she conceptualised music for a reworking of *Hamlet* by Teater Dian.

Serene's projects have taken her to Edinburgh, Kuala Lumpur, Poland and Indonesia. Her collaborators include Esplanade, Wild Rice, iTheatre, SimplyWorks and MySuperFuture.

The Artistic Director of Kulcha, a new performing arts group focused on blending traditional music with contemporary soundscapes, Serene is also the founder of piano studio, My Piano Room, which aims to educate and inspire young minds. She has been the music director of Esplanade's *Playtime!* since 2009.

## Joseph Chian | Musician

Joseph has participated in many local festivals such as the Chingay Parade, Singapore Arts Festival, Esplanade's *Pesta Raya – Malay Festival of Arts*, Reflections at Republic Polytechnic, and *Mosaic Music Festival*. He performed at the re-opening of Singapore's Malay Heritage Centre, graced by guest-of-honour Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Internationally, he has given performances at the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival and the International Gamelan Festival in Bandung, and in 2012, performed with Gamma:rays in Shanghai at a private event for Hewlett-Packard (HP). He conducts both world drumming workshops and gamelan workshops in schools as well as for members of the public.

## Stev.e | Lighting Designer

Stev.e is a technical theatre graduate of LASALLE College of the Arts who feels passionately about how lighting influences the mood and receptiveness of audiences. He works on every project with technical precision and professionalism. The last production he was involved in was RE: DanceTheatre's *Prologue*.

## Mirabel Neo | Stage Manager

Mirabel is a Stage Manager who obtained her BA(Hons) in Technical Theatre from LASALLE College of the Arts in 2009. Since her graduation, Mirabel has worked with Singapore Lyric Opera, I Theatre and Drama Box as a stage manager. Her most recent stage managing credits include *Terra Incognita*, as part of the M1 Fringe Festival 2015, and *PLAYtime!*, an *Esplanade Presents* series she has been a part of since 2013. Mirabel has also established herself as a production stage manager with New Opera Singapore. She was involved in *Die Fledermaus* and *Dido and Aeneas*.

# Did you know?



**Gemuk Girls**

**1**

*Gemuk Girls* ("gemuk" is fat in Malay) is a tongue-in-cheek take on the American television sitcom, *Gilmore Girls*.

**2**

Actor Najib Soiman, who won the Best Actor award at 2009 Life! Theatre Awards, quit his engineering job in 2004 to pursue his passion for acting. The award was his first nomination and win.



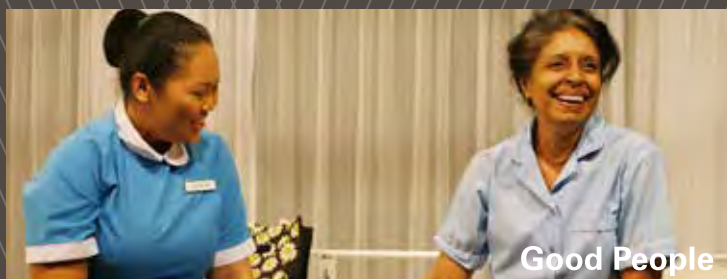
**Fundamentally Happy**

**1**

Haresh Sharma and director Alvin Tan spent two months discussing the story and characters with the actors, right down to details like the type of dentures the characters would sport.

**2**

In a 2006 *The Straits Times* interview, Haresh was asked, "Ruling out food, sex and money, what do you reckon will make people 'fundamentally happy'?" His answer was, "Death".



**Good People**

**1**

Haresh's Best Original Script win at the 2008 Life! Theatre Awards was shared with Ovidia Yu's *Hitting (On) Women*.

**2**

The cast and creative team spent nine months researching, spending time in hospices, speaking with doctors and nurses – before the script reached its final form.

For more interesting facts, please visit: [www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg)

Photos courtesy of The Necessary Stage

Dramatised Reading

# **Beginnings**

## **— Selected works from the 1960s & 1970s**

**4 Apr, Sat, 6pm**

**Rehearsal Studio**

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

**Playwright**

**Goh Poh Seng, Lim Chor Pee & Robert Yeo**

**Director**

**Tan Shou Chen**

**Performers**

**Isabella Chiam, Shafiqah Effandi & Darren Guo  
featuring Robert Yeo**

**Multimedia Designer**

**Marcus Lim**

**Stage Manager**

**Nadia Noordin**

The plays presented in this reading are selected excerpts from each script.

# director's

## message

I never studied Theatre formally, and having spent all but the first six years my education in the US, what I knew about Singapore Theatre came mostly from anecdotes shared by colleagues, and from reading various bits of published literature. So when Dr Robin Loon asked me in 2013 if I wanted to sit in his Singapore English-Language Theatre module at NUS, I jumped at the opportunity. This was my first encounter with *Mimi Fan*, *The Moon is Less Bright* and *Are You There, Singapore?* When the chance to be part of *The Studio: fifty* was presented, I was pulled towards this part of our theatre history. All great stories have a beginning. Working on this piece has given me the opportunity to excavate and appreciate the tremendous work and heart that sowed the seeds of the industry and community which I am now part of. *Beginnings* is a homage, a recognition of the germ from which Singapore's theatre industry was born.

I would like to thank Tze Chien, and *The Studios* team for the opportunity to be part of this season. I would also like to thank the cast and crew. Thank you Robert for agreeing to be part of this piece. Thank you Robin for giving me lineage. And to the audience, thank you for sharing this evening with us.

*"Remember tonight...for it is the beginning of always." – attributed to Dante Alighieri*

**Tan Shou Chen**



Photo credit: ChrisYap

# the plays



Image courtesy of Epigram Books

## ***Mimi Fan***

**Written by Lim Chor Pee**

Set in the swinging '60s, a one-night stand between two strangers sets them on a path to discover the meaning of love and life. Written by Lim Chor Pee, Singapore's first English-language play *Mimi Fan* (1962) is a haunting tale about relationships, escapism and broken hearts searching for healing.

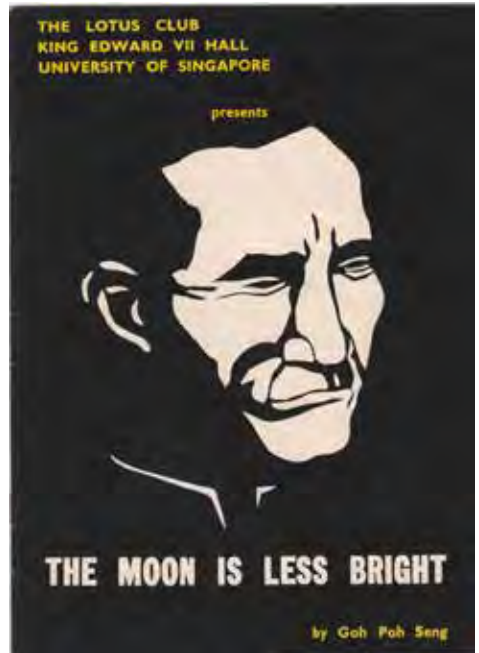


Image courtesy of the Estate of Goh Poh Seng

## ***The Moon is Less Bright***

**Written by Goh Poh Seng**

*The Moon is Less Bright* (1964) is set in a small farmhouse on the outskirts of Singapore just before and during the Japanese occupation. A shopkeeper brother who lives in town has to stay with his farmer brother in the country to escape the danger and hardship caused by the invading Japanese. Through the interaction and behaviour of the two families, the contrasting attitudes and values of the town and country folks are uncovered. The play traces the conflict of personalities and clash of beliefs between two families living in fear.



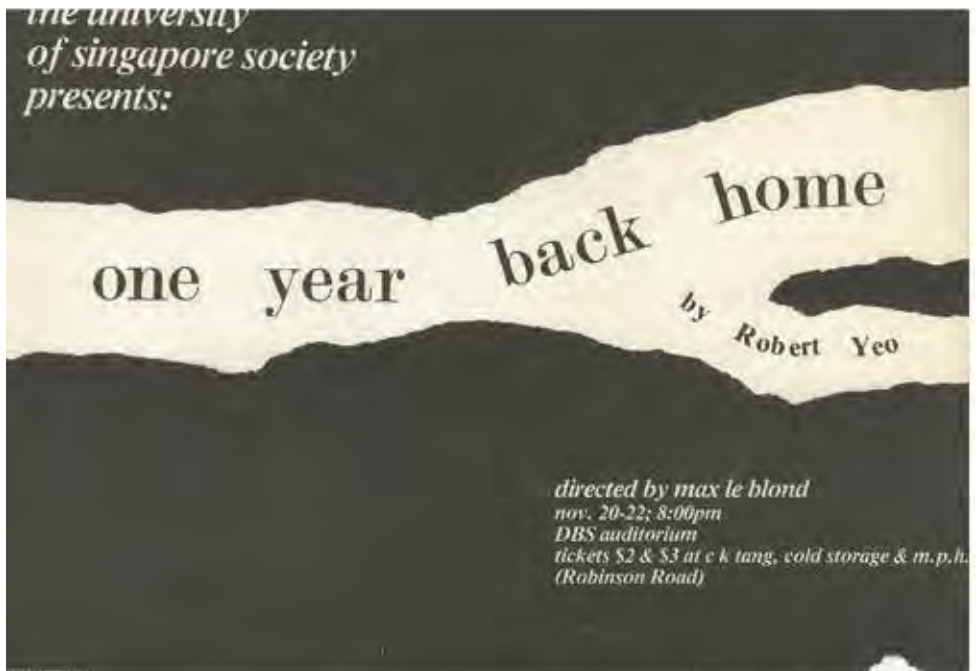


Image courtesy of Robert Yeo

## ***Are You There, Singapore?***

**Written by Robert Yeo**

*Are You There, Singapore?* (1974) is the first of Yeo's *The Singapore Trilogy* which includes *One Year Back Home* (1980) and *Changi* (1997). It traces the lives of four Singaporean undergraduates in London and their views on post-independent Singapore at the time. They are very much influenced by the city charged with anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, campaigns to free political prisoners, and the exercise of sexual freedom.

Interested to find out more about the work?

For background information on these plays, the playwrights, past staging and selected production photos, visit [www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg).

# Biographies

## Goh Poh Seng | Playwright of *The Moon is Less Bright*

Dr Goh Poh Seng (b. 1936, Malaya -d.10 January 2010, Canada) was a physician, poet laureate, prize-winning writer and entrepreneur. Goh was born and educated in Malaya, and graduated in medicine from University College, Dublin. In 1961, he moved to Singapore, where he practised medicine for 25 years. He emigrated to Canada in 1986 and continued to practise medicine until 1995, when Parkinson's disease forced him to retire.

Goh played an active role in Singapore's arts scene following the country's independence. He was one of the first chairmen of the National Theatre Trust and was the vice-chairman of the Arts Council from 1967 to 1973. As one of Singapore's earliest dramatists, Goh wrote three plays which he also produced in the 1960s: *The Moon is Less Bright* (1964), *When Smiles are Done* (1965) and *The Elder Brother* (1966). Thereafter, Goh turned to poetry and novel writing. His first novel *If We Dream Too Long* (1972) is widely regarded as the first Singaporean novel. The novel won the National Book Development Council of Singapore's Fiction Book Award in 1976. As a cultural activist, he also founded Centre65 which organised arts activities like poetry recitals, painting exhibitions, talks and forums. In 1964, Goh set up Island Press, and started *Tumasek*, one of the earliest literary magazines.

An entrepreneur and a visionary, Goh opened Singapore's first disco and live music venue, Rainbow Lounge at the Ming Arcade, and Bistro Toulouse-Lautrec, a poetry and jazz cafe in Tanglin Shopping Centre in 1983. Goh also served in other portfolios: the board of governors of the People's Association, the board of the National Youth Leadership Training Institute, and the director of the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board. In addition, he was a member of the Termination

of Pregnancy advisory board of the Ministry of Health.

Goh received the Cultural Medallion for Literature in 1982. He died of pneumonia on 10 January 2010.

## Lim Chor Pee | Playwright of *Mimi Fan*

Lim Chor Pee (b. 1936, Malaysia) was a pioneer Singapore playwright who wrote in English in the early 1960s. He was part of a circle of writers and theatre practitioners who were searching for a voice as Singapore gained self-government and independence in the 1960s.

Born in Penang, Lim attended the Penang Free School. In 1955, he left for England where he read law at St. John's College, Cambridge University. Upon graduation in 1958, he moved to London to sit for the English Bar exams. He came to Singapore in 1959 and joined the Singapore Legal Service. He later established himself in private practice.

Lim was the president of the Experimental Theatre Club (ETC), which he set up in 1961 to foster the growth of English-language Malayan theatre in a time when the local theatre scene was dominated by expatriates and Western plays. He wrote his first play *Mimi Fan*, which was staged by ETC at the Cultural Centre Theatre. His second play *A White Rose at Midnight* was staged in 1964. He contributed articles on the development of local theatre to *Tumasek*, a literary journal, for which he also served as a member of its editorial advisory board.

Lim also maintained a successful private law practice until his passing in 2006. He was survived by his wife, three children and three grandchildren.

## Robert Yeo | Playwright of *Are You There, Singapore?* and Performer

Robert Yeo (b. 1940, Singapore) is a Singaporean poet, playwright and novelist. A retired lecturer of the National Institute of Education and Nanyang Technological University, he is currently an adjunct professor of creative writing at the Singapore Management University. Yeo also mentors the National Arts Council's Mentor Access Programme.

Yeo graduated with a BA (Hons) in English from the National University of Singapore in 1961. After which, he received a scholarship from the Public Service Commission and headed to London in 1966 to pursue a Masters in Comparative Education. The two years in London were significant to his artistic development as it inspired and shaped his artistic beliefs. In London, Yeo joined the Poetry Society of the Institute of Education and served as its President; and attended plays and poetry readings in his leisure. In 1978, he attended the University of Iowa's International Writing Program and was awarded as a Fulbright Scholar in 1995.

Yeo's first play, *Are You There, Singapore?* was drafted in 1968 upon his return from London. However, it was performed only in 1974. Yeo followed this first play with *One Year Back Home* in 1980, which caused a controversy with its opposition politician character, Fernandez. The character returns in *Changi*—the concluding instalment of his trilogy of plays—penned in 1997, and continues to contemplate the issue of political censorship and detention in Singapore. His other plays include *Second Chance* (1988) and *The Eye of History* (1992).

Living through Singapore's transition to independence, Yeo has been described as having documented the history and the development of the country, and capturing the changing Singaporean psyche through his poetry and plays. For more than a decade, from 1977 onwards, he was chairman of the Drama Advisory Committee, which helped develop theatre in Singapore. For this work, he received the *Bintang Bakti Masyarakat* (Public Service Star) in 1991. He was awarded the S.E.A. Write Award in 2011.

## Tan Shou Chen | Director

Tan Shou Chen is a theatre practitioner known for his versatility. A new director, his debut work *MEDEA* developed under The Substation's inaugural Director's Lab Program last year was received well. His most recent directorial work was the opening show for the NUS Arts Festival *Words and Music*, featuring the words of Wang Liansheng and jazz maestro Jeremy Monteiro. His performing credits span music, theatre, film, TV, and radio. *The Straits Times* billed him as one of Singapore's 30 under 30 actors to look out for. Later this year, he will act in *Ragnarok*, by Skinned Knee Productions; and the Lee Kuan Yew musical. More information about Shou Chen can be found at [www.shouchen.net](http://www.shouchen.net) IG: @shouchentan FB: [www.facebook.com/shouchentan](https://www.facebook.com/shouchentan)

# Biographies

## Isabella Chiam | Performer

Isabella is an actor and theatre practitioner who loves the stage and embraces it as an acute reflection of life and its possibilities. A graduate of NUS Theatre Studies and proud member of the Nine Years Theatre Ensemble, she has performed in plays such as *Girl in the White Sandbox* (Dramabox) and *Tahan* (Teater Ekamatra), and musicals such as *Jack & the Beanstalk* (Wild Rice) and *Sing to the Dawn* (I Theatre). She received a Life! Theatre Award for Best Ensemble for her work in *Mad Forest*, and was last seen playing Nerissa in SRT's *Merchant of Venice*, and Siti in Hatch Theatrics' *Hawa*. As a director, she has worked mostly with I Theatre and The Theatre Practice, most recently as the assistant director for TTP's production of *Legends of the Southern Arch*.

## Shafiqah Effandi | Performer

A graduate of LASALLE College of the Arts, where she obtained a BA(Hons) in Acting, Shafiqah has worked with local directors Effendy Ibrahim in *A Doll's House*, and Natalie Hennedige in *6 Characters in Search of an Author*. She has also worked with Edith Podesta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*, and Stefanos Rassios in *Woyzeck* and *Attempts on Her Life*. She has an interest in the Malay theatre scene and hopes to be involved in future productions by Malay theatre groups. She also hopes to work in more productions where music plays a big part as she would like to pursue it in the future.

## Darren Guo | Performer

A graduate of NAFA's theatre course, Darren is a bilingual actor who has worked with professional theatre companies including Drama Box, Toy Factory, and I Theatre. He has been in various productions including *P.I.E.* and *Macbeth*. During the 2009 and 2010 Singapore Arts Festival, Darren performed with international arts groups as part of Arts on the Move, in *The Agency* by The DCP (Belgium) and *The Hood* by La Passionata Svironi (Israel), respectively. He was last seen in *Playtime's Out of the Box* and I Theatre's *Aesop's Fables*. Other credits include Toy Factory's *Glass Anatomy* (Shanghai Tour); *People and Under the Dragon Moon* by Creative Edge; *Hop & Honk* and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, by I Theatre; and *Poor Theatre Series* by The Theatre Practice.

## Marcus Lim | Multimedia Designer

Marcus Lim is Creative Director and Lead Visual Producer of Militancy Filmed Entertainment. As a boutique creative agency, Militancy has worked with clients as diverse as the Singapore Repertory Theatre, Pathe France, Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Lionsgate.

Militancy's body of work is informed by Marcus' eye for direction, passion for strong storytelling and depth of experience in the media world.

In theatre, Marcus has performed on stage and television in productions by SRT, Toy Factory, Weiyou Films and Film Formations.

# Did you know?

## *Mimi Fan*

1

Lim Teong Qwee, now a retired judicial commissioner and father of well-known actor Lim Yu-Beng, was one of the original cast members.

2

Annie Wee, the performer who played the titular role in the 1962 staging, said in an interview with *The Straits Times* that her stage debut came about by accident when her roommate at the University of Singapore, who was supposed to play *Mimi Fan*, backed out due to a scheduling conflict.

3

The rehearsals for the 1962 staging were held at the Tangle Inn, a pub along Tanglin Road, which the cast had visited to understand the environment of a bar.

## *The Moon is Less Bright*

1

Centre 42's name was inspired by Centre 65, a centre started by the late Goh Poh Seng, to promote the arts in 1965.

2

As a playwright in the 1960s, Goh was one of the first to use Singlish in drama with his second play *When Smiles Are Done* (1965).

3

As an entrepreneur and producer, Goh brought British rock star David Bowie to Singapore in 1983.

## *Are You There, Singapore?*

1

Robert Yeo met his wife Esther Leong during the making of the play. She landed the role of Siew Hua after responding to an audition call in the newspapers. They married after a whirlwind, two-month courtship and have, since, had two daughters.

2

Yeo left for further studies in London in 1966, a year after Singapore's separation from Malaysia. The question of identity was a worrying issue among the Singaporean students including himself abroad then, and that was reflected in the play.

3

Lim Kay Tong, a veteran Singapore actor, who was completing his national service then and eager to work in theatre, landed the role of Ang Siew Chye through an audition in 1973.



Dramatised Reading

# Selected works of Michael Chiang

**5 Apr, Sun, 6pm**

**Rehearsal Studio**

(2hr, no intermission)

<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Michael Chiang</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>Danny Yeo</b>
<b>Performers</b>	<b>Caleb Goh, Helmi Fita, Audrey Luo, Ong Chin Hwee, Oliver Pang &amp; Yeo Kok Siew</b>
<b>Stage Manager</b>	<b>Tan Xiang Yi</b>

Advisory: This reading contains mature themes.  
Recommended for patrons ages 16 years and above.

The plays presented in this reading are selected excerpts from each script.

# director's

## message

The Chinese term 剧本 (jù běn) gives many meanings to the word "script". More than just "the book", it's also the beginning, the basis and foundation, the origins and roots, the volume and version, the current and present. I love the simplicity of the term and the complexity of its ideas. 一剧之本..... without a script, a play would not exist.

Tze Chien's words during our first meeting were clear: these iconic works have historical significance works and artistic breakthroughs – CELEBRATE THE WRITING

Michael Chiang is a celebrated theatre playwright. His works are well-loved, much staged, and very Singaporean. It's an honour and a privilege to do this.

I have fond memories of watching the full productions at the (original) Drama Centre and World Trade Centre Auditorium, where I caught both *Army Daze* and *Private Parts*, the latter of which was in English and Mandarin. I wish for more of Michael's works to be translated into Mandarin. All of his scripts are published in a recently released anthology *Play Things*, available in both blue and pink. The book was a rich source for studying his measured words and for imagining how to celebrate the two selected plays in a dramatised reading.

It feels like two productions, really. Kudos to the team for jumping in so readily and enthusiastically. Audrey, Caleb, Chin Hwee, Helmi, Oliver, Kok Siew, and Xiangyi, we are platoon mates who've seen each other's private parts, ha! Thank you for your dedication, patience and hard work. You



Photo credit: Jeff Chang

made this possible. It has been challenging due to limitations but I believe we are all contributing a new page in local theatre history. Thank you Robin Loon for *Things in Play*, the reader's introduction which gave insight to Michael's creations. Thank you too, The Finger Players and the Esplanade.

Thank you Michael for your involvement, generosity and the sessions at a cosy cafe in Katong. You are the inspiration, the vision, and the reason.

To the audience, thank you for supporting Singapore theatre. Do continue to be our ambassadors and spread the word. Beyond SG50, continue to celebrate, us.

Danny Yeo

# the plays



## **Army Daze**

First staged in 1987, *Army Daze* is a coming-of-age story about five 18-year-olds going through basic military training for the first time. This runaway hit has since enjoyed regular stage revivals, a wildly successful film adaptation, and a musical makeover.

## **Private Parts**

Written by Michael Chiang, *Private Parts* (1992) revolves around a successful yuppie talk-show host and the private lives of three transsexuals whose lives take an unexpected turn when they open their lives to public scrutiny.

Warren Lee, who fronts a current affairs talk show, ends up in a sex-change clinic with three transsexuals due to an injury of his manhood in an accident. After befriending them, he gets to understand their fears and need for respect. However, a few months after a public debate about plans to revive Bugis World, an old transvestite haunt, he tries to get them on his show to share their experiences.



Interested to find out more about the work?

For background information on these plays, the playwright, past staging and selected production photos, visit [www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg).

Photo courtesy of Theatre Works

# Biographies

## Michael Chiang | Playwright

Michael Chiang (b. 1955, Malaysia) started his playwriting venture in 1984, when he was an entertainment journalist and editor for *The SundayTimes*. He stumbled into playwriting by accident that year, when the producers of *Bumboat*, a stage production company, invited him to submit a light-hearted play for the Singapore Arts Festival. As a result, *Beauty Box*, a spoof on beauty queens and shopping malls, was created. Following that, Michael wrote another play *Love & Belachan* (1985), and a novel about life in National Service entitled *Army Daze*. The novel was so popular that TheatreWorks approached Michael to adapt it for a stage version in 1987. The play went on to receive popular acclaim and was eventually made into a film in 1996. In 1988, Chiang wrote *Beauty World*, one of Singapore's first major, original homegrown musicals. He later went on to pen *Mixed Signals* (1989), *Private Parts* (1992), *My Art Belongs to Me* (1995), *Mortal Sins* (1995), *My Lonely Tarts* (1999), and *High Class* (2013), all of which played to packed houses.

The success of his plays has been attributed to his ability to entertain audiences with humorous and astute observations of local life. The strong local flavour in his plays is found in themes that Singaporeans can identify with: shopping and Singaporean competitiveness in *Beauty Box*; fears of singlehood in *Love & Belachan*; the life of army recruits in *Army Daze*; Cantonese melodrama and nostalgia in *Beauty World*;



governmental matchmaking and romantic relationships in *Mixed Signals*; the plight of transsexuals in *Private Parts*; the question of art in society in *My Art Belongs to Me*; censorship issues in *Mortal Sins*; and a Malaysian immigrant's search for identity in *My Lonely Tarts*.

Most recently, Michael wrote the screenplay of *Our Sister Mambo*, a film due for release in July 2015 in celebration of Cathay Organisation's 80th anniversary.

# Biographies

## Danny Yeo | Director

A veteran cross-media personality, Danny is a multi-hyphenate with more than two decades of rich experience in radio, television, print, film and teaching. He has written dialogues and screenplays for five films, and has published five books.

Since 1994, he has played leading roles in more than 20 plays, facilitated forum theatre productions, community outreach programmes and training workshops under the mentorship of Kok Heng Leun at Drama Box. He has also performed with Theatre Practice and The Necessary Stage.

Danny started writing and directing in 2004; his works include *angel-ism* (WILD Rice's Singapore Theatre Festival 2008) and site-specific *ignorLAND* series (2007-09). He received a Best Director nomination in Life! Theatre Awards 2010 for *Bondage*. In 2012, Danny attended La MaMa's International Symposium for Directors in Italy with NAC's grant. Subsequently, he presented workshops at SDEA's Theatre Arts Conference 2013 and Intervarsity Theatre Forum 2014. In 2014, his collaborative work *other(s)* was staged in Singapore and New York; *Body X* was sold-out at Singapore Writers Festival 2014; and he started an online platform *Wo You Hou Tai* to reach out to theatregoers through topical sharing.

As an effectively bilingual theatre practitioner, Danny has been involved in all of The Little Company's groundbreaking team effort to stage children's musicals in Mandarin, including *Three Little Pigs*, *Nightingale*, *Goldilocks* and *The Three Bears* and *Ugly Duckling*. Danny is an Associate Artist with Singapore Repertory Theatre and a Board Director of Drama Box.

## Caleb Goh | Performer

Caleb graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Drama, from the Queensland University of Technology in Australia, and received his master's degree in musical theatre at San Diego State University. He has worked professionally as an actor, singer, playwright, director, choreographer and dancer in over 70 stage productions, a dozen television series, and four feature films. He has worked with numerous professional US theatre companies including Moonlight Stage Productions, Lamb's Players Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Musical Theatre, Starlight Theatre, as well as over a dozen Singapore theatre companies including Wild Rice, Singapore Repertory Theatre, Toy Factory, The Finger Players, Theatreworks and The Necessary Stage. For the past decade, Caleb was the glee club director and full-time drama, dance and musical theatre teacher at La Jolla Country Day School in California. In 2012, the Caleb Goh Dance Award was named after him to honour his contribution to the dance and musical theatre curriculum at the school.

He is currently completing his PhD in Musical Theatre at the WAAPA in Australia while teaching musical theatre at LASALLE in Singapore. Caleb also directs and choreographs the musical theatre productions at the university and was previously the artist-in-residence, mentor and musical theatre lecturer at the College of Alice and Peter Tan at NUS.

[www.facebook.com/calebygoh](http://www.facebook.com/calebygoh)



## Helmi Fita (Taiwan/Singapore) | Performer

Helmi Fita is a full-time theatre practitioner and arts educator. He has worked with theatre companies in Singapore and around the world. With almost 25 years of theatre experience under his belt, Helmi has worked as an actor/performer, production manager, stage manager, lighting designer and technical manager. Helmi was given the honorable mention for special achievement in lighting at the 3rd DBS Life Theatre Awards 2003. In recent years since 2006, he has worked with established companies in Taiwan, such as The Puppet and Its Double, ShortOnePlayer Theatre Troupe and Ex-Theatre Asia, to name a few. *Derrick Wei x Der Schonste Moment* by The Puppet and Its Double and *True Calling* by Ex-Theatre Asia, which he worked on, were nominated for the top 10 Taishin Awards in Taiwan. In 2012, he made his directorial debut in Taiwan with *WiFi Lovers*.

## Oliver Pang | Performer

In 1996, Oliver studied acting at LASALLE-SIA, but left in 1997 upon receiving a scholarship to London's Middlesex University, where he obtained a BA (Hon) in Musical Theatre. He also studied at London Studio Centre, and after graduating in 1999, he toured with the European Chamber Opera as a dancer. Later, he went to the London Contemporary Dance School to continue his dance training. From 2000-2002, he joined King & I, which was staged at the Palladium, West End, as part of the ensemble and was the understudy for the role of Kralahome. In 2005, he went back to England to tour with the *King & I*, playing Simon of Legree, and in 2009, as Luntah. Some of Oliver's roles in Singapore include: Cha (*The Three Little Pigs*, SRT), Wang Hu (*AH Q*, Theatre Practice), Ah Yong (*If there're Seasons...* Theatre Practice), Dayong (*Shanghai Blues*, Toy Factory), Father Bear (*Goldilocks*, SRT), Baloo (*Jungle Book*, SRT), Emperor (*Forbidden City*, SRT), Destinee (*Private Parts*), Bob Ewell (*To Kill a Mocking Bird*), Emperor (*Nightingale*, I-theatre), Beefcakes (*Dim Sum Dollies*, Dream Academy). Oliver is glad to be revisiting Michael Chiang's work with Danny Yeo.

## Audrey Luo | Performer

Audrey leads a career as a bilingual actress, singer and host. An alumnus of NUS Theatre Studies and pioneer member of W!LD RICE's young & W!LD, some of the companies she has collaborated with include: Running Into The Sun, The Finger Players, TheatreWorks, Toy Factory, The Theatre Practice, Drama Box, ECNAD, I-Theatre, Paper Monkey, STAGES. In 2012, she was involved in the overseas tour of *The Story after Ah Q* in Taipei Arts Festival. In the same year, Audrey won Best Supporting Actress in 12th ST Life! Theatre Awards for her role in 881 The Musical. A versatile artist, she was the crosstalk performer for consecutively two years in *Meet the BaoZ* (2013) and *BaoMao X-talk* (2014) for The Esplanade Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts. Audrey is looking forward to her debut feature film, Cathay's 80th anniversary movie *Our Sister Mamba* which is slated to be released in July 2015. She was last seen playing the titular role in Toy Factory's *Titoudao*.

## Yeo Kok Siew | Performer

Kok Siew has been involved in a myriad of projects - theatre, television, film - in various capacities for which he finds himself most at home in a talent or directorial role. Kok Siew has performed with The Theatre Practice and Toy Factory. He was most recently seen in Our Company's production of *Dear Nora*, a local adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, and *Body X*, a site-specific experiential murder-mystery production commissioned for the Singapore Writers Festival 2014.

## Tan Xiang Yi | Stage Manager

Xiang Yi enjoys working in production/stage management field. Some of her credits include: *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (Mandarin) by Singapore Repertory Theatre; *IgnorLAND of its Time* by Drama Box; *The Red Queen* (2014) by Lim Chin Huat; ART by Nine Years Theatre; *DiverCity* (2013); *The Rite of Spring: A People's Stravinsky* by The Philharmonic Orchestra Singapore & The Arts Fission Company; *Rabbit Hole* by Pandemonium; Singapore Arts Festival 2012, Main Stage at The Festival Village.

# Did you know?

## Army Daze

1

*Army Daze* was made into a movie in 1996 by Cathay Films as its first project upon returning to the movie-making business after a long hiatus of 20 years. The movie grossed \$1.6 million at the box office, and held the record for being the highest-grossing local English-language movie for more than 15 years.

2

*Army Daze* was first written as a novel, which instantly became a bestseller and promptly knocked Sidney Sheldon off the No. 1 spot on the bestsellers' list.

3

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Army Daze*, the play returned to the stage as a musical with original songs composed by Don Richmond in 2012.

1

Koh Boon Pin was not Michael Chiang's first choice for the role of Mirabella. He wanted Mirabella to be older, less successful in the transition, very witty, slightly past her prime. He thought that Boon Pin was too attractive for the part, but trusted Ong Keng Sen's direction.

## Private Parts

2

Fashion director Daniel Boey starred as the transexual Lavinia in the 1994 staging of the play.

3

Golden Horse Award-winning actress Yeo Yann Yann (*Ilo Ilo*) played the role of Edward in the third staging of *Private Parts* in 2004.

4

The rerun of *Private Parts* in 1994 by Wow International played to about 25,000 people at World Trade Centre Auditorium for four weeks.

For more interesting facts, please visit: [www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg)

# The Studios website: Get to know the plays and playwrights



The playwrights featured in this photo were dressed in the outfits they wear when they write.

Photo by Tuckys Photography

Call it a beginner's guide, a one-stop portal or simply, a starting point.  
On *The Studios: fifty* website, you will be able to find out more  
about the fifty plays that we are celebrating this season.

Background information on the plays, the playwrights, past stagings  
and selected production photos have been made available on this site  
to give you a deeper understanding of the works.

**[www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg)**



# The Studios: fifty - season credits

## **Curation**

### **Co-curators**

Chong Tze Chien &  
*The Studios* programming team  
Rydwan Anwar, Joyce Yao,  
Marlene Ditzig & Fezhah Maznan

### **Consultant for research phase**

Dr Robin Loon

### **Assistant to co-curator**

Myra Loke

## **Marketing & publicity**

### ***The Studios* marketing team**

Elizabeth Wong, Koh Sian Eng,  
Lim Jean Nie & Lim LiTing

### **Concept design**

Roots

### **Publicity photography**

Tuckys Photography

## **Website research & editorial**

### **Research team**

Pearlyn Chua & Gracie Teo

### **Editorial team**

Multistory Communications  
& *The Studios* team

## **Production & administration**

### **The Studios production management**

Isis Koh, Lynn Liu & Cindy Yeong

### **Production manager (dramatised readings & forums)**

Lam Dan Fong

### **Assistant production manager (dramatised readings & forums)**

Tan Xiang Yi

### **Admin managers (dramatised readings & forums)**

Natalie Chai & Ang Hui Bin

### ***The Studios* trainees**

Kimberly Cheng, Gillian Ong  
& Raycher Phua

# Acknowledgements

**Esplanade's *The Studios* team would like to say a big THANK YOU to the following organisations and individuals for their invaluable assistance and contribution to the season. *The Studios: fifty* would not have been possible without your support!**

ActionTheatre  
BooksActually  
CakeTheatrical Productions  
Centre 42  
Checkpoint Theatre  
Five Arts Centre  
library@esplanade  
Orgo  
Singapore Repertory Theatre  
Sightlines Productions  
Teater Ekamatra  
TheatreWorks  
The Finger Players  
The Necessary Stage  
The Theatre Practice  
Toy Factory Productions  
W!ld Rice  
Zizi Azah  
Margaret Chan  
Michael Chiang  
Chng Suan Tze  
Chong Tze Chien  
Jeremiah Choy  
Goh Boon Teck  
The family of Goh Poh Seng  
Ryan Goh  
Russell Heng

Natalie Henedige  
Jean Tay Inn  
Haslina Ismail  
Irfan Kasban  
Stella Kon  
The family of Kuo Pao Kun  
Leow Puay Tin  
The family of Lim Chor Pee  
Robin Loon  
Low Kee Hong  
JP Nathan  
Faith Ng  
Ng Yi-Sheng  
Henry Ong  
Paul Rae  
Haresh Sharma  
Desmond Sim  
Huzir Sulaiman  
Kaylene Tan  
Joel Tan  
Jobina Tan  
Tan Tarn How  
Shiv Tandan  
Verena Tay  
Eleanor Wong  
Robert Yeo  
Ovidia Yu  
Yuen Chee Wai

All the directors, performers, designers, crew, forum chair persons and speakers, as well as the media who gave their time and resources in support of this season.



# fifty

## Season calendar

Venue		Thu 2 Apr	Fri 3 Apr	Sat 4 Apr	Sun 5 Apr
Theatre Studio		<b>Emily of Emerald Hill</b> 2 – 5 Apr Thu, 8pm   Fri & Sat, 3 & 8pm   Sun, 3pm <			
Recital Studio			Selected works of Haresh Sharma 7.30pm <b>R18</b>		
Rehearsal Studio				Beginnings - selected works from the 1960s & 1970s 6pm <b>A</b>	Selected works of Michael Chiang 6pm <b>A</b>
library@esplanade				Beginning and Becoming: Identity and Language in the Theatre, 1960s-1980s 4pm	
		9 Apr	10 Apr	11 Apr	12 Apr
Theatre Studio		<b>The Weight of Silk on Skin</b> 9 – 12 Apr Thu – Sat, 8pm   Sat & Sun, 3pm <			
Recital Studio			Family relations in Singapore plays 7.30pm		
Rehearsal Studio				New Voices - Selected works from a new generation 6pm <b>A</b>	Selected works of Ovidia Yu 6pm <b>A</b>
library@esplanade				Singapore Plays and Play Texts as Resources for Learning and Living 4pm	

Venue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		23 Apr	24 Apr	25 Apr	26 Apr
Theatre Studio	<div>Off Centre</div> <div>23 – 26 Apr</div> <div>v Thu – Sat, 8pm   Sat &amp; Sun, 3pm</div> <div>A</div>				
Recital Studio				Gender and Sexuality – Selected works 7.30pm	R18
Rehearsal Studio		Traditions Contemporised – Selected works 7.30pm	Reimagining History 4.30pm		
library@esplanade				Plays of Difference: Excavating, Experimenting, Exploring... 2pm	
	29 Apr	30 Apr	1 May	2 May	3 May
Theatre Studio	<div>Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral</div> <div>30 Apr – 3 May</div> <div>v Thu – Sat, 8pm   Sat &amp; Sun, 3pm</div> <div>A</div>				
Recital Studio		Selected works of Eleanor Wong 7pm	Selected works of Kuo Pao Kun 7.30pm		
Rehearsal Studio			Selected works of Paul Rae & Kaylene Tan 7.30pm	Contemporary & New Wave 6pm	
library@esplanade				Acting Singaporean: Back Story and Fore Play 4pm	
	7 May	8 May	9 May	10 May	
Theatre Studio	<div>The Lady of Soul and Her Ultimate “S” Machine</div> <div>7 – 10 May</div> <div>v Thu – Sat, 8pm   Sat &amp; Sun, 3pm</div> <div>A</div>				
Recital Studio					
Rehearsal Studio		Selected works of Chong Tze Chien 7.30pm	Selected works of Tan Tarn How 7.30pm	Politics and Society – Selected works from three generations 6pm	
library@esplanade				Fear of Writing? The Development of Political Theatre in Singapore 4pm	

# BooksActually ~~X~~ The Studios: fifty

Here's one for all the bibliophiles and theatre geeks. BooksActually will be having a pop-up store at Esplanade during *The Studios: fifty*, featuring the published plays showcased in the season, as well as other works by the playwrights. We hope to see you there!

## Dates

**2 Apr – 10 May**

## Operating hours

**Open 1 hr before each performance or reading  
to 30 mins after the end of each performance or reading**

## Venues

**Outside the Theatre Studio & Recital Studio, on performance days only**

Payment by Cash or NETS only

In conjunction with *The Studios: fifty*

## ***The Studios Bar*** **by ORGO**

The first drink of the season:  
**Pink Matriarch**



**Toast this season of local theatre—The Studios style!  
Celebrate some of the most memorable works with  
specially-created cocktails inspired by the five full-  
length plays in this edition.**

Turn pink with Peranakan passion when you savour this first drink of the season. A refreshing concoction of gin, fresh raspberry, yogurt, lime and hand-crafted pandan leaf syrup, the Pink Matriarch is a harmonious blend of ingredients that evoke the vibrant Peranakan culture of bold colours and rich flavours.

### **Cocktails: \$15**

**(Cash payment for drinks sold at Theatre Studio foyer)**

Cocktails\* available from 2 Apr – 10 May

Bar operational hours at Esplanade Theatre Studio foyer, on performance days only.  
(Drinks can also be purchased at ORGO located at Esplanade's Rooftop)

For more info, please visit: [www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg)

\*Mocktails available at \$10

# 15<sup>th</sup> M1-THE STRAITS TIMES LIFE! THEATRE AWARDS 2015

**WILL THE PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR BE:**

**ART**  
by Nine Years Theatre



**THE RISE & FALL OF LITTLE VOICE**  
by Pangdemonium



**MONKEY GOES WEST**  
by Wild Rice



The winning play will be announced at the awards ceremony on April 20

For the full list of nominees, go to  
[www.straitstimes.com/life-theatre-awards-2015](http://www.straitstimes.com/life-theatre-awards-2015)

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An SPH Event



[www.thestudios.com.sg](http://www.thestudios.com.sg)

#### About The Studios

Eclectic, genre-bending and running the gamut from neo-realism to experimental, *The Studios* features works that challenge the boundaries in theatre and performance. Where inspiration, innovation and imagination meet, local artists take centre stage as they delve into the human condition and beyond.

*The Studios* is an Esplanade Presents series that develops, produces and presents local theatre productions. Supporting local artists in international collaborations, co-productions, as well as restagings, it offers a space for dialogue and reflection, for both artist and audience.

**the  
studios**

