



**Esplanade
Presents**

The Studios

fifty

50 plays. 5 weeks. A celebration.

The Weight of Silk on Skin

9 – 12 Apr 2015, Thu – Sun | Theatre Studio

Family relations in Singapore plays

10 Apr 2015, Fri | Recital Studio

New Voices – Selected works from a new generation

11 Apr 2015, Sat | Rehearsal Studio

Selected works of Ovidia Yu

12 Apr 2015, Sun | Rehearsal Studio

About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

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 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 five 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, which have been chosen from a wide and diverse range of works in five 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 covering 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 is Singapore English-language theatre 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 ChongTze 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



**"Perhaps one of the best [works] that
Singapore theatre has seen in recent
years... Powerful and emotive."
The BusinessTimes**

Premiere production photo by Albert Lim, Courtesy of Wild Rice
Photo by Tuckys Photography.

The Weight of Silk on Skin

9 – 12 Apr

Thu – Sat, 8pm | Sat & Sun, 3pm

Theatre Studio

Written by Huzir Sulaiman
Directed by Tracie Pang
(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

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

"Huzir is in a class of his own. His use of language effusive yet meticulous; rough yet refined; old school romantic yet crisp, clinical and modern; witty and sardonic in the most subtle of ways but at the same time almost naively heartfelt."

TODAY Online

R18 (Some sexual references)

director's

message

I was delighted to be invited to direct one of the plays for the Esplanade's *The Studios: fifty* season. I decided to choose one of the newest plays on the list as I thought it was important that both the favourite classic plays and the modern Singapore plays were represented in this celebration of Singapore writing. When I first saw *The Weight of Silk on Skin*, I was very taken with its poetic language and ability to transport me directly into the broken soul of a fiercely masculine man. I am very excited to be able to take you back there in the very intimate setting of the Esplanade studio, with Adrian in the title role.

Thank you to the Esplanade team for supporting this important celebration of Singapore writing, to my wonderful team of designers, the production team, and Adrian for daring to join me on this show.

Tracie Pang



the play



Photos by Crispian Chan

Written by Huzir Sulaiman, *The Weight of Silk on Skin* (2011) is a monodrama that portrays an upper-class, middle-aged lothario, who is obsessed with elegant clothing, addicted to sex yet tormented by lost love.

Born into an upper middle-class family, protagonist John AuYong's only pleasures in life are sex and money. However, he begins to reflect on the things that are of real value and importance in life, when he is about to meet his old college sweetheart Anna again. The impending meeting triggers memories of his past loves and losses, his boxed-in teenage years in Singapore, and his liberating experience in New York. Through

his recollections, AuYong unlocks a cutting, unrestrained monologue about his affluent lifestyle, and his fast-paced but empty life.

The Weight of Silk on Skin is a sensual play about love and loss that foregrounds a class of modern Singaporean aristocrats: foreign-educated, elite-schooled and wealthy. Despite the protagonist's hyper-confident sexual adventures and materialistic pursuits, the play gradually exposes the vulnerable underbelly of his emotional landscape.

In vocalising his fears and hopes, Huzir's AuYong speaks for the urban set that his play identifies with. "For *The Weight of Silk on Skin*, I was trying to look at what it's like for



men in their late 30s, late 40s, to think about love and loss and the emotional life of middle-aged straight men, which is not a subject that a lot of this region has adequately explored," the playwright had reflected in 2011 prior to the opening of the ManTheatre Festival.

At the same time, the play is also a metaphor for the current state of Singapore—affluent, rich, developed and successful; apparently not lacking in anything.

The Weight of Silk on Skin is deeply moving, provocative and powerful, and it is at the same time lyrical and poetic. Linguistically, the use of language is effusive, yet mellifluous. In 2011, *The Business Times* lauded it as "One of the best writing that Singapore theatre has seen in recent years... beautifully crafted phrases that were almost poetic, yet always crisp."

The Weight of Silk on Skin was first produced by Wild Rice, in collaboration with Checkpoint Theatre and opened at the Drama Centre Theatre, Singapore, on 3 August 2011.

Performed by Ivan Heng
 Directed by Claire Wong
 Produced by Koh Bee Bee
 Set Design Claire Wong, Huzir Sulaiman, and Ivan Heng
 Lighting Design Lim Woan Wen

Interested to find out more about the work?
 For background information on the play, the playwright, past staging and selected production photos, visit www.thestudios.com.sg.

credits

Playwright	Huzir Sulaiman
Director	Tracie Pang
Performer	Adrian Pang
Set Designer	Wai Yin Kwok
Lighting Designer	Lim Yu-Beng
Sound Designer	Guo Ningru
Production Stage Manager	Victoria Lim
Production Assistant	Timothy Koh

Shoes provided by Ed Et Al Shoemakers

biographies



Photo by Joel Lim @ Callere Pictures,
Courtesy of Checkpoint Theatre

Huzir Sulaiman | Playwright

Huzir Sulaiman is the co-founder and Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre. As a playwright, his most recent play *The Weight of Silk on Skin* won Best Original Script at the 2012 Life! Theatre Awards. His *Collected Plays 1998-2012* was published in 2013.

Huzir last directed *#UnicornMoment* (2014), the 15th anniversary production of *Atomic Jaya* (2013), and *City Night Songs* (2012), to critical and popular acclaim. He was nominated Best Director at the 2012 Life! Theatre Awards for his production of *The Good, the Bad, and the Sholay* (2011).

Huzir is an Adjunct Associate Professor with the National University of Singapore's University Scholars Programme and has taught playwriting at NUS, SOTA, NYUTisch Asia, and NTU.

He also heads Studio Wong Huzir, a creative consultancy, and publishes POSKOD.SG, an online magazine about Singapore. He was educated at Princeton University, where he won the Bain-Swiggett Poetry Prize, and is a Yale World Fellow.

Tracie Pang | Director

Tracie trained at Croydon College, London, and clocked up 25 years working throughout the UK and Asia working with Quicksilver Theatre Company, Johnny Ball Productions, Mu-Lan Theatre Company, Pimlico Opera, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Surrey Opera, and Theatreworks.

Tracie helped to set up and establish The Little Company, a theatre company that provides quality plays for children aged 3 –14, for whom she has written and directed numerous productions. She was Associate Artistic Director for Singapore Repertory Theatre from 2006 - 2010.

In 2009 Tracie founded Pangdemonium Theatre Company with her husband Adrian, and went on to direct *The Full Monty*; *Closer*; *Dealer's Choice*; *Spring Awakening*; *Swimming with Sharks*; *Rabbit Hole*; *Next to Normal*; *Gruesome Playground Injuries*; *Fat Pig*; *The Rise & Fall of Little Voice*; *Frozen*; and *Circle Mirror Transformation*. Tracie will be directing *Tribes* in May and *Chinglish* in October for Pangdemonium. She has been nominated for the Best Director Award eight times at the Life! Theatre Awards for her work on *The Dresser*; *The Snow Queen*; *The Pillowman*; *The Full Monty*; *Dealer's Choice*; *Rabbit Hole*; *Next to Normal* and *Fat Pig*.

Tracie is very proud to have won the AWA International Woman of the Year Award.

Adrian Pang | Performer

Adrian's UK theatre credits include *Hair*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *The Comedy of Errors*; *The Magic Fundoshi*; *The Men's Womb*; *A Christmas Carol*; *Tormented*; *The Circles of Paradise*; *One For The Road*; *Sleeping Beauty*; *New Territories*; *Take Away*; and *Privates On Parade*. His Singapore stage work includes the title roles in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*; *Twelfth Night*; *Into The Woods*; *The Glass Menagerie*; *Boeing Boeing*; *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Forbidden City*; *Barefoot in the Park*; *They're Playing Our Song*; and *God Of Carnage*. At the Life! Theatre Awards Adrian earned Best Actor nominations for *The Full Monty*; *Dealer's Choice*; *Swimming With Sharks*; *Next to Normal*; *Frozen*; *The Odd Couple*; and *The Pillowman*. He won the Best Actor Award for *The Dresser*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Rabbit Hole*.

Adrian and his wife Tracie are Artistic Directors of Pangdemonium. They have staged *The Full Monty*; *Dealer's Choice*; *Swimming With Sharks*; *Rabbit Hole*; *Next To Normal* (Production of the Year at the Life! Theatre Awards); *Gruesome Playground Injuries*; *Fat Pig*; *The Rise & Fall of Little Voice*; *Frozen* and *Circle Mirror Transformation*. Their upcoming productions in 2015 include *Tribes* in May and *Chinglish* in October.

biographies

Wai Yin Kwok | Set Designer

Wai Yin is a creative theatre designer, who has worked extensively in the UK and abroad for the last ten years. Creating inspiring work for musicals, plays, children's theatre, touring theatre, site-specific performances and community events. She has mentored in several schools, including the leading British drama school Rose Bruford College, where she graduated in theatre design. In Singapore, she has had the work with SRT as props coordinator for *The Merchant of Venice* and on her first short film *Departures* last year. Wai Yin has also been made associate set designer and props maker for I Theatre. Her productions include *Aesop's Fables*, *Hop & Honk*, *Puss in Boots*, *Spot The Difference* and *Round The Moon*, which toured to Hong Kong, Japan and Malaysia. www.waiyinkwok.com

Guo Ningru | Sound Design

Ningru has always been intrigued by the magic of theatre. She has a BA (Hons) in Technical Theatre Arts (Production Sound Design) from LASALLE College of The Arts, and has worked as a sound designer on many productions including *The Laramie Project* (Singapore Repertory Theatre); *Fat Pig* and *Gruesome Playground Injuries* (Pangdemonium); *Pursuant* (Singapore Lyric Opera) and *Edges* (Sightlines Productions). She was Associate Sound Designer for *Frozen* (Pangdemonium); *Ah Boys to Men Musical* (Running Into The Sun) as well as the premiere of *Incanto* by ResortsWorld Sentosa. Production sound credits also include: *Lightseeker* (Resort World Theatre); *Three Little Pigs* (Singapore Repertory Theatre); *Rabbit Hole* (Pangdemonium) and *Lao Jiu* (The Theatre Practice).

Lim Yu-Beng | Lighting Design

Best known for his work in acting, Yu-Beng won Best Actor in 2005, Best Supporting Actor in 2004, and Best Acting Ensemble in 2002 at the Life! Theatre Awards. In 2005 he was nominated for Best Actor at the Asian Television Awards.

Within production circles however, Yu-Beng is also a lighting designer who most recently received a nomination this year for his work on *The House of Bernarda Alba*, and an Honourable Mention at the 2003 Life! Theatre Awards for his design for *Fireface*. Other works include *Little Voice*, *Spring Awakening*, *LIAO ZHAI ROCKS!*, *Beauty World*, and eight major operas, including *Carmen*, *La Boheme*, *Turandot*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Salome*, and more.

In recent years, he wrote and directed *2 Houses*, a special commission for the GeorgeTown Festival in Penang, and *It's My Life*, an original musical. He continues to explore new ground, working extensively as an actor, director, writer, acting coach, lighting designer, fight choreographer and whatever it takes to get the show up.

did you know?

1

In addition to his interest in exploring the emotional and sexual issues of a middle-aged man, Huzir Sulaiman wrote the role of John Au Yong especially for actor Ivan Heng, whom he has known for more than 10 years. Ivan played the character in the premiere staging.

2

Huzir designed the costumes; he took Ivan shopping, bought fabric and supervised the tailoring of the character's suits.

3

In preparing Ivan for the role, director Claire Wong took him through a number of exercises and improvisations to bring him into the world view and rhythms of the character John Au Yong. These included working with jazz music and reciting monologues while polishing his shoes.



Photo courtesy of Wild Rice

4

In the two months that Huzir took to write the play, he realised that the script was becoming very poetic and lyrical. He took it upon himself to introduce line breaks and indentations into the text, much like poetry, which "allowed the rhythms to emerge".

5

From a young age, Huzir's interest in knowledge and learning was influenced by his love for writing and his parents, both of whom were lawyers and academics.

Dramatised Reading

Family relations in Singapore plays

10 Apr, Fri, 7.30pm

Recital Studio

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

Playwright	Jean Tay & Verena Tay
Director	Thong Pei Qin
Lighting Designer	Petrina Dawn Tan
Cast	Amanda Tee, Andy Pang, Michael Cheng, Ghazali Muzakir & Tan Beng Tian
Stage Manager	Syafiqah Adzan

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

director's

message

On the 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence, I found it apt to revisit Jean Tay's *Boom* and *Everything but the Brain*, and Verena Tay's *The Car*, in a fervent search for what I could identify as home, as family. Fervent is this search, because there exists a great yearning for someone from my generation to hold on to a recognisable anchor, having witnessed our society's often displaced elderly, and the new generation of bright-eyed children who will likely never get to play in sandy HDB playgrounds like I did.

A man's loyal attachment to his old car, a mother's stubborn refusal to part with her tree, a daughter's steadfast wish to keep her father alive—in these poignant, powerful and moving stories of ordinary people told through the extraordinary lenses of playwrights Jean and Verena, I found what I was looking for.

Singapore needs these stories. We need to always tell, and retell these stories, to our parents, ourselves and our children.

Piecing together extracts from all three plays as responses to one another was a mammoth task. Selecting the most salient parts with a focus on parent-child relationships, and on certain characters' determination to stay true to their fundamental beliefs at all costs, we wish to present a complete piece of work with depth, humility and compassion.

Theatre that is inquisitive, that we can hold dear and true to our hearts — this is the kind of theatre that we, as a team, would like to create for our audience members.

I would like to thank playwrights Jean Tay and Verena Tay for their trust in my direction, and for their generosity. My immense gratitude also goes out to my



Photo by Peggy Leong

mentor and co-curator of *The Studios: fifty* series, Chong Tze Chien of The Finger Players, as well as Esplanade's *The Studios* team for this valuable opportunity. Thank you for believing in us. I am also grateful for my wonderfully supportive, dedicated and fun-loving cast members, Amanda, Andy, Beng Tian, Ghazali and Michael, as well as the behind-the-scenes heroes of *Family Relations*, Dan Fong, Petrina and Syafiqah. All of you certainly feel like family!

Thong Pei Qin

the plays

***Boom* by Jean Tay**

Boom (2008) is a tragicomedy intertwined with two narratives: one of an elderly woman and her property agent son, Boon, who are struggling over the potential en bloc sale of their home; another of a corpse who refuses to be exhumed after 15 years as required by government policy. Boon's mother wants to remain at her old apartment despite pressures from her neighbours to participate in the en bloc sale. Their stories are interwoven with that of a civil servant, Jeremiah, who is facing the greatest challenge of his career – persuading a reluctant corpse to relocate.



Photo courtesy of Singapore Repertory Theatre



Photo courtesy of Action Theatre

***The Car* by Verena Tay**

The Car (2005) depicts the dilemma of a young woman as she deliberates over keeping, selling or destroying her late father's aging Fiat Marvelette—a vehicle that transports her back to memories that are at once both joyful and painful. *The Car* is an unpretentious and intimate work that explores the complex relationships between daughters and fathers.

***Everything But the Brain* by Jean Tay**

Everything but the Brain (2005) centres on Elaine Lim, a 36-year-old physics teacher, who takes a year's leave to nurse her stroke-stricken father, Lim Chong Boon, a retired professor. She attempts to reverse time using the Theory of Relativity in order to save her dying father. Recalling a childhood tale told by her father, she theorises that she can stop the effects of his illness by taking him on a train travelling close to the speed of light.



Photo by Crispian Chan,
Courtesy of Sightlines Productions

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.

biographies



Jean Tay | Playwright, *Boom* and *Everything But the Brain*

Jean Tay graduated in 1997 with a double degree in creative writing and economics from Brown University, USA. She won the Weston Prize for Fiction from Brown, the Golden Point Award (Short Story) and Perishable Theatre's Annual Women's Playwriting Festival Award.

Jean is the author of more than 10 plays, which have been staged in Singapore, the US, the UK and Europe. Two of her plays, *Boom* and *Everything but the Brain*, have been published by Epigram Books, and are currently used as GCE 'O' and 'N' levels Literature texts. *Everything but the Brain* is also winner of Best Original Script at the Life! Theatre Awards in 2006. Her other plays include *Plunge* (2000), *Sisters* (2013) and *Senang* (2014).

Jean attended the International Playwriting Residency at the Royal Court Theatre, London in 2007. She was playwright-in-residence at Singapore Repertory Theatre from 2006-2009, and has developed and helmed SRT's Young Company Writing Programme since 2012. She was the NTU-NAC Writer in Residence (National) for 2012-2013.



Verena Tay | Playwright, *The Car*

Verena Tay acts, directs and writes for English-language theatre in Singapore. She has worked with The Necessary Stage, Action Theatre, TheatreWorks and The Theatre Practice. Verena obtained an MA in English Literature (1993) from the National University of Singapore and an MA in Voice Studies (2005) at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Verena has created various solo and collaborative performances, often based on original material created when she was an Associate Artist with The Substation (2002–2009). To date, three collections of her plays have been published: *In the Company of Women* (2004), *In the Company of Heroes* (2011) and *Victimology* (2011).

An Honorary Fellow at the International Writing Program, University of Iowa (Aug–Nov 2007), Verena now writes and edits fiction. *Spectre: Stories from Dark to Light* (2012) is her first collection of short stories. Since 2012, she has also edited seven books, including the popular *Balik Kampung* series of short stories, published by Math Paper Press. In addition, Verena is a storyteller and also teaches voice, speech and presentation skills at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, National University of Singapore, LASALLE College of the Arts, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and other local institutions.

biographies

Thong Pei Qin | Director

Pei Qin's theatre journey began as a student director for National University of Singapore (NUS) Theatre Studies' *The West Wing*, which toured to Shanghai in 2008. She graduated with a Theatre Studies BA honours degree in 2009, and eventually brought NUS Thespis' devised work, *Re: Almost Left Behind*, to the Singapore Arts Festival 2011, as a site-specific production spread throughout The Substation.

Thereafter, she earned her MA degree in Theatre Directing with distinctions from the University of Essex, East 15 Acting School. Directing overseas, she collaborated with international artists on William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Rhoding House, London, 2012), before training in directing at GITIS: The Russian University of Theatre Arts, Moscow. She also assisted in directing David Schneider's premiere of *Making Stalin Laugh* (Tristan Bates Theatre, London, 2013).

Back in Singapore, some of her directorial credits include Alan Ayckbourn's *Ernie's Incredible Illusions* (The Arts House, 2014) for children, as well as Ovidia Yu's *Life Choices* (Centre 42, 2014). She has worked with different theatre companies such as TheatreWorks, Nine Years Theatre and Faust International Youth Theatre, and enjoys staging picture book adaptations for disadvantaged children.

Currently, she is honoured to be on board The Finger Players' Watch This Space (Directors' Cycle, 2014-15), and to teach theatre modules at both NUS and the National Institute of Education.

Amanda Tee | Performer

Amanda Tee has been involved in Singapore Repertory Theatre productions, such as Shakespeare in the Park's *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's dream*, *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*, and *Sisters* by Jean Tay. Her Singapore Arts Festival productions include *Visible Cities* and *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 television and film credits include Wee Li Lin's Hong *Bao's & Kisses*, KNS Parody News Channel webisodes, Mediacorp's *The White Red Rose Event* and Okto's *The Band*.

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

Andy Pang | Performer

Andy graduated from NAFA with a BA in Theatre Arts (Acting) and was the recipient of the NAFA President Award in 2011. A bilingual actor, his acting credits include Cassio in Shakespeare's *Othello*, Father/Yew Beng in *Pan-Island Expressway*, and Silvio in *Servant of Two Masters* (performed in Mandarin), and Mimosa in *It Appears That...*

After his actor's training, Andy ventured overseas to obtain a Masters in Theatre Directing, training with East 15 Acting School (UK) and GITIS (Russian University of Theatre Arts, Moscow). Past directing credits include Chekhov's *Vaudevilles*, *Pazhi* (Sleuth, performed in Tamil), *Bastien und Bastienne* (Mozart's opera sung in German), *The Danny Crowe Show* and *La Princesse Jaune* (Camille Saint-Saëns' opera sung in French).

Andy is an associate artist with Ravindran Drama Group (RDG), and is currently a freelance theatre director, actor and educator.

Ghazali Muzakir | Performer

Ghazali is an actor, director, producer, educator, video maker and blood donor. He loves to weave lost dreams and string thoughts into aesthetically meaningful narratives.

As an actor he has performed internationally to audiences in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Berlin, Shanghai and Japan. Acting credits include *Own Time Own Target* with W!LD RICE; *Hakim & The Giant Turtle*, *Puss in Boots* and *Aesop's Fables* with I Theatre; *Bedok Reservoir* by Pinball Collective; and the lead role in *H is for Hantu* with STAGES. In 2013, he was invited to perform with the wacky GUMBO Theatre Group (Japan) in an international tour of *Ring-a-Ring-o Rosie*.

Ghazali has also written scripts, directed plays for children and produced independent theatrical shows. As a drama educator, he has taught and developed programmes with The Learning Connections, NAFA Young Talents and Faust Youth International, specialising in early childhood drama education.

Ghazali is also part of the pioneer team of clown doctors in Asia, who bring fun and happiness to children in hospitals and support senior citizens' health, by implementing humour in the healthcare system. Managed by Clown Doctors Singapore Ltd, he is undergoing his training to be a certified medical clown.

Tan Beng Tian | Performer

Tan Beng Tian holds a Diploma of Graphics Design from LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts. 1994 marked the turning point in her theatre career when she left for Fujian, China, to undertake an intensive course on traditional hand puppetry from renowned late puppet master Li Bo Fen.

Upon her return, she co-founded The Finger Players. As Artistic Director, the company grew from a two-member outfit to a six-member company.

She has also worked with many theatre companies such as Drama Box, I Theatre, The Theatre Practice, Toy Factory Productions and W!ld Rice as a actor/puppet trainer/designer/builder. She has participated in many important Singapore works such as *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (The Theatre Practice), *Lao Jiu* (TheatreWorks) and *The Coffin Is Too Big For The Hole* (as part of Esplanade's *Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts 2010*). She has also worked with overseas companies The Fantasy Puppet Theatre (Hong Kong) and Zuni Icosahedron (Hong Kong).

biographies

Michael Cheng | Performer

Michael Cheng is a graduate of the Centre for Playback Theatre (U.S.A.) and currently sits on its board of directors. He is Artistic Director of Tapestry Playback Theatre and a member of the Singapore Drama Educators Association (SDEA).

He is an applied drama practitioner that works mainly with people with special needs and other similar communities. He believes that we all have a story, and every story deserves a chance to be heard.

As a performer, most of his work has been with Tapestry, which tackles social issues through its community performances. Last year, he was in *Oh Ah Bey Ah Som!*, *Maybe If* and *Left Behind*, the last of which was also staged in Taiwan.

Michael has also performed or facilitated Forum Theatre productions for Drama Box. He was the Dragon King in Paper Monkey Theatre's 2014 production of *The Legend of Nezha*. This is his first time playing a car, an old father, a young husband, and a corpse, all in the same show. He is incredibly excited and privileged to be working with Ghaz, Amanda, Beng Tian and Pei Qin in this celebration of Singaporean stories.

Petrina Dawn Tan | Lighting Designer

Petrina trained in Lighting Design as part of LASALLE's BA (Hons) Technical Theatre programme. She is a recipient of the Georgette Chen Scholarship (2009) and the NAC Arts Scholarship (Local, 2010).

Her recent lighting design credits include *The Tin Can People* (NAFA English Theatre), *Pigeons* (BUDS Theatre), *The Way We Go* (Checkpoint Theatre), *Angels in America* (Lasalle College of the Arts), *Intermezzo* (Singapore Dance Theatre for da:ns Festival 2014), and *Innamorati* (Toy Factory).

She was the Associate Lighting Designer for *The Nightingale* (SRT) and Assistant Lighting Designer for *RED* (Blank Space Theatre), *Cook A Pot of Curry* (Wild Rice) and *The Art of the Brick* (MBS Art Science Museum).

Petrina is happy and thankful to be working with her fellow collaborators.

did you know?



Photo courtesy of Singapore Repertory Theatre

Boom

1

The play was chosen as an 'O' and 'N' level literature text in 2010. It is the second local play to be selected for the secondary school syllabus after Haresh Sharma's *Off Centre*.

2

Jean Tay's inspiration for *Boom* came when her civil servant husband told her about the government's exhumation rule, which limits burial periods to 15 years so that Singapore will not run out of burial space.



Photo courtesy of Action Theatre

The Car

1

The Car is semi-autobiographical, with a number of creative departures.

2

It took Verena Tay nine years to complete the play, finally finishing it under Action Theatre's Playwriting Spa and Theatre Idol programmes in 2005. It was presented as a fully-staged production in June 2006.

3

The Fiat Marvelette did exist in real life. It was sold to Verena's cousin after the passing of her father as she could no longer keep it.



Photo by Crispian Chan, Courtesy of Sightlines Productions

Everything but the Brain

1

Gerald Chew is the only actor to have played the role of the father in the play's eight-year history.

2

Everything but the Brain was the last play directed by the respected late Malaysian director Krishen Jit, who passed away at the age of 66, three months after he directed the play in 2005.

Dramatised Reading

New Voices

— Selected works from a new generation

11 Apr, Sat, 6pm

Rehearsal Studio

(2hrs, no intermission)

Playwright

Faith Ng, Joel Tan, Irfan Kasban & Shiv Tandan

Director

Tan Liting

Performers

**Chng Xin Xuan, Edward Choy,
Rachel Poh & Mohammed Shafie**

Stage Manager

Natasha May

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

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

director's

message

The four plays you will hear today belong to young playwrights from diverse backgrounds. Through the process of putting this reading together, I had the privilege of meeting most of them. Their energy excites me. This energy translates in the selection of works presented today, and while not representative, projects a vision of a new generation of theatre makers. This is a generation writing in a new era of smart phones, the internet and hyperconnectivity. Yet these writers have found a way to cut through the rough and focus on the things that make us essentially human, be it through an exploration of relationships old and new, or finding your way in uncharted worlds. In this process, they have looked inwards, at their lives growing up in Singapore, and have made an attempt to create from the stories they hear, writing in the languages they are familiar with. This voice is a distinct change in the character of Singapore English-language theatre. It is one that recognises the evolution of the English language in Singapore, and celebrates the diversity of "Singlish".



This reading presents excerpts of each playwright's work, grouped into two major themes. Joel Tan and Faith Ng examine relationships in contemporary Singapore, capturing their language and behavioral idiosyncrasies through different generations. Shiv Tandan and Irfan Kasban take us through the process of growing up and coming of age, exploring the insecurities of finding a place for yourself. It is my sincere hope that in hearing these new voices, you might get a sense of the spirit

and character of new writing in Singapore. The voices possess a zeal for life with a fearless do-or-die attitude; they signal a positive move forward in the growth of our theatre industry. We are (quite literally) setting the stage for the next wave of Singapore Theatre, and I believe it'll be an exciting one.

Thank you for joining us this evening.

Tan Liting

the plays

For Better or for Worse by Faith Ng

For Better or for Worse (2013) traces the love-hate marriage of middle-aged couple Gerald and Swen.

Set against the backdrop of everyday life in modern Singapore, the play tracks the history of the couple from courtship to the present day, and recounts how they are hopelessly yet passionately bound by their marriage vows: to depend on each other for better or for worse, till death do they part. *For Better or for Worse* is a moving account of the ups and downs of love and marriage, and of staying together through the uncertainties of life.



Photo by Memphis West Pictures,
Courtesy of Checkpoint Theatre



Tahan by Irfan Kasban

Tahan (2013) is a coming-of-age story about a young man, Adil, who has to endure—or “tahan” in Malay—his two years of compulsory national service served out at a neighbourhood police post as a law enforcer.

At this post, Adil likens the policemen to angels, which according to Islamic beliefs are thought to carry out higher orders with no emotional attachment. Gradually, Adil finds himself learning and re-learning new ideas and skills while carrying out his duties. His preconceived notions about police officers are debunked as he uncovers the human truth behind the police force.



Photo by Kairos Photography,
Courtesy of Teater Ekamatra



Photo by Chong Yew,
Courtesy of Checkpoint Theatre

The Way We Go by Joel Tan

The Way We Go (2014) cycles through 12 years, fleshing out the relationships between the protagonist Agatha Mao and her best friend Violet, Agatha and her intellectual partner Edmund, and Agatha's former students, Lee-Ying and Gillian.

When the play opens, Agatha, former principal of the Convent of Our Lady of Lourdes, is already dead with a funeral in process. From there, the play leaps back and forth through time, with flashbacks to Agatha's days as a principal, her romantic relationship with Edmund, and interactions with Violet.

It explores the romantic and platonic love among those who are getting on in their years.



Photo by Memphis West Pictures,
Courtesy of Checkpoint Theatre

The Good, the Bad and the Sholay by Shiv Tandan

Written under the mentorship of playwright Huzir Sulaiman, *The Good, the Bad and the Sholay* (2011) is a semi-autobiographical play based on the Indian-born playwright's experiences in his journey from his homeland to being an undergraduate in Singapore; at the same time, it also weaves in scenes and excerpts inspired from the

1975 classic Bollywood action-adventure film, *Sholay*.

The play chronicles Raghav's journey from boyhood in the small Indian town of Ambala to the metropolis of Singapore in a tender coming-of-age story. Peppered with larger-than-life cinema heroes and cultural misadventures, Tandan's tale is an endearing update of the uncertainties that come with the territory of growing up.

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.

biographies



Faith Ng | Playwright, *For Better or for Worse*

Faith Ng is an Associate Artist with Checkpoint Theatre. She also teaches playwriting at the National University of Singapore. Faith's immense interest in reading, writing and creating contemporary plays began during her days as an NUS Theatre Studies undergraduate. The guidance of her then lecturer, Huzir Sulaiman, fuelled her pursuit of playwriting.

Faith's plays include *wo(men)* and *For Better Or For Worse*, both of which were nominated for Best Original Script in the Life! Theatre Awards. She holds a Master of Arts with Distinction in Creative Writing (Scriptwriting) from the University of East Anglia, which she obtained with the help of the National Arts Council Postgraduate Scholarship. She was also writer-in-residence for the Singapore Creative Writing Residency 2014.



Irfan Kasban | Playwright, *Tahan*

Irfan Kasban is a director and performer. His first engagement with theatre was when he represented Temasek Polytechnic in an inter-tertiary theatre competition organised by Teater Ekamatra—and won the Most Outstanding Script and Challenge Trophy. He went on to join Teater Ekamatra's Playwright Mentorship Programme under the guidance of Noor Effendy Ibrahim. There, he also wrote *W.C.* (2010), which explored the boundaries of comfort and displacement, framed by the motif of a Hajj pilgrimage.

He was commissioned by the M1 Fringe Festival 2009 to stage *We Live in a Box*, his first English-language full-length play which questioned the notion of a home and family. He also staged *Offerings for the Victims of Amnesia*, a trilogy of plays which tackled the issue of faith from various aspects of Islam, for the M1 Fringe Festival 2012. His other plays include *Genap 40* (2007), about a pregnant woman struggling with an angel on fate and faith; *94:05* (2013), a monologue about the life of character Ahmad bin Abdullah as he recounts the life of the Prophet Muhammad; and *Tahan* (2013).

In 2012, Irfan was selected for the Italian-based La MaMa International Symposium for Directors to sharpen his craft as a director. He was Associate Artist of Teater Ekamatra from 2011 to 2013, and was the company's Associate Artistic Director from 2013 to 2014. He currently works and collaborates with different artists and festivals as a director and playwright.



Joel Tan | Playwright, *The Way We Go*

Joel Tan is an Associate Artist with Checkpoint Theatre. A playwright, director and performer, his work crosses genres, styles and theatre-making cultures, including poetry, contemporary drama, dance theatre and musical theatre. He made his playwriting debut at the 2011 Man Singapore Theatre Festival with *Family Outing*, which was produced by Wild Rice and directed by Glen Goei.

Since then, Joel has worked as a writer, director, dramaturg and actor with youth theatre groups like NUS Stage (*City Night Songs*, 2012), USProductions (*People*, 2013), Take Off Productions (*Postgrads*, 2012, *Mosaic*, 2013 and 2015) and Creative Edge (*People*, 2014). Tan mentors young writers in playwriting, most extensively at Buds Youth Theatre, and frequently gives talks on writing, theatre and literature at schools. He also works with veteran theatre-makers, and has written for professional theatre companies such as Wild Rice (*Jack and the Beansprout!*, 2013), The Finger Players (*The Next Page*, 2014) and Checkpoint Theatre (*The Way We Go*, 2014).



Shiv Tandan | Playwright, *The Good, the Bad and the Sholay*

Shiv Tandan was a Singapore Airlines (SIA) Youth scholar who moved from India to study at Anderson Junior College in Singapore at the age of 17. He graduated from the National University of Singapore with a degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering.

Shiv is an Associate Artist with Checkpoint Theatre. His directorial credits include *#UnicornMoment* (2014) and *Mind Games* (2010). As a playwright, he wrote and acted in *The Good, the Bad and the Sholay* (2011), which was produced by Checkpoint Theatre and NUS Stage as part of the NUS Arts Festival 2011. The play received three nominations at the 2012 Life! Theatre Awards for Best Director, Best Original Script and Production of the Year, and was published in *Voices Clear and True: New Singapore Plays Volume 1*.

Shiv is also a television actor and film director. He has starred in Channel 5's sitcom, *Payday* (2011). His short film, *The Guide* (2009), won Faith Shorts 2010, an international short film competition on inter-faith harmony, and was screened at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA). He is Co-Founder and Creative Director at The Film Guys, a budding film company.

biographies

Tan Liting | Director

Liting is a full-time theatre practitioner with an interest in devising performance from personal stories. Her past directorial credits include *Taking The Subs* (The Substation Director's Lab), *The Eulogy Project I: Muah Chee Mei and I* (Potluck Productions), (*When I'm* *Sixty Four* (AgelessTheatre), *Re: Almost Left Behind* (Singapore Arts Festival 2011), and *Almost Left Behind* (NUS Thespis). Liting likes conversation, hearing and telling a good story. She also likes guitars, sneakers and referring to herself in third person. Liting is a founding member of Theatre Cell.

Chng Xin Xuan | Performer

Xin Xuan is a graduate of LASALLE College of the Arts with a BA(Hons) in Acting. During her time at LASALLE, she appeared in numerous productions including *The Winter's Tale* directed by Adam Marple, *All In The Timing* directed by Edith Podesta, and *Orpheus Descending* directed by Stefanos Rassios.

Her professional theatrical credits include *Warpaint*, directed by Patricia Toh under *The Director's Lab* programme at The Substation; *The Way We Go* (Checkpoint Theatre); *A Magical Spring Garden* (Cake Theatrical), as part of the Children's Festival at Gardens by the Bay; and *Dream Country: A Lost Monologue* for the Singapore Arts Festival 2012.

Xin Xuan served as the Assistant Director of *Seven Doors* under Stefanos Rassios, and hopes to explore the craft of directing at some point in her theatre career.

Off stage, she works as a drama trainer with Voiceworks and PLAYInc. Her other skills include hosting, singing, and dancing.

Edward Choy | Performer

Edward is a master's graduate of the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Theatre Studies Programme with 16 years of experience as an actor. He voices regularly on MediaCorp Radio's advertisements and was last seen on local television in the sci-fi series *2025*. His professional engagements include work as an actor, host, model, voice-over artist, and corporate trainer for MNCs and foreign governments.

Mohammed Shafie | Performer

Shafie graduated from Nanyang Technological University with a major in English literature and a minor in drama and performance. His venture into theatre began when he was 15 years old, when he performed in the Singapore Youth Festival and found his love for theatre. Shafie has progressed from being an actor, stage manager and finally to director. He has worked with Avant Theatre on *Romz and Julez*, *Sakuni* and *Fourlies* and *Fourplays*. He has also worked on *2 Tango Dazzle* for Kullanari. Recently, he directed three performances, *Nurhalizah*, *Nurhalizah Revisited*, *Misprision*, under Alterity Productions, and *Appu*, for Pathey Nimidam, a 10-minute Tamil play competition organised by Ravindran Drama Group. His most recent work is *Absence|Presence* under the Just Theatre banner in which he collaborated with Noor Effendy Ibrahim.

Shafie has a keen interest in cultural and community-based studies. Having done his thesis on cinema and culture, he has experience working with people with special needs and volunteer welfare organisations, as well as the training and teaching of secondary school youths for theatre.

Rachel Poh | Performer

As a performer, Rachel appeared in *Dream Country – A Lost Monologue* (Singapore Arts Festival, 2012), *This Placement*, *The Waste Land* (Teater Ekamatra), *Juxtaposition* (Singapore Biennale 2013), *Decimal Points 810* (Cake Theatrical Productions), *Rock Out – The Baybeats Edition* (Esplanade's *On The Waterfront*) and *Taxi: Between You & Me* (The Substation Director's Lab). She turns to film for escape and inspiration, and when she is not performing, Rachel collects bruises in dance classes and crawls through bushes in search of abandoned spaces.

Natasha May | Stage Manager

A fresh graduate of Ngee Ann Polytechnic with a Diploma in Arts Business Management, Natasha has been involved in various theatrical productions such as Theatreworks' *LIFT: Love Is Flower The*, *Running Into The Sun's Ah Boys To Men: The Musical* and *The O.P.E.N.*, to name a few. She is very grateful to be part of *The Studios: fifty* and would like to thank The Finger Players for giving her this opportunity.

did you know?



For Better or for Worse

1

The first meeting that playwright Faith Ng had with actors Jean Ng and Julius Foo was through Skype, as she was in the UK pursuing her Master of Arts.



Photo by Kairo Photography,
Courtesy of Teater Ekamatra

Tahan

1

The play is partly autobiographical, with material gleaned from the playwright's two years in the police force.

2

When Faith told Huzir Sulaiman and Claire Wong, co-artistic directors of Checkpoint Theatre, stories about her parents and made fun of them affectionately during lunch, Huzir Sulaiman immediately advised her to write a script based on their stories.

3

In addition to drawing inspiration from the quirks and humour in her parents' marriage, she also drew material from her own relationship with her fiancé for the play.

2

Due to restrictions on the use of cigarettes in the venue, the actors "smoked" incense sticks instead during the performances.

3

In playwright Irfan Kasban's years in the police force, he encountered a man who stole a piece of bread and a drink from a 7-Eleven store because he wanted to go back into prison. This was one of the experiences that prompted him to write *Tahan*.



Photo by Chong Yew,
Courtesy of Checkpoint Theatre

The Way We Go

2

The Way We Go marked the Singapore debut of well-known Malaysian actor Patrick Teoh.



The Good, the Bad and the Sholay

1

The Good, the Bad and the Sholay was playwright Shiv Tandan's first full-length play, mentored by Huzir Sulaiman.

1

The production marks the return of Hollywood-based actress Lydia Look to the Singapore stage, her last production in Singapore before this was Action Theatre's *Pillow Talk* in 2001.

3

The source of inspiration for the play was a conversation Joel had on a bus with his university friend, who was a convent school girl. They were swapping stories about their various mission school memories, and one particular story about his friend's former school principal—a woman who is imposing yet gentle—stood out to him.

2

There were three different endings written by Tandan during the process, all of which were rejected by Sulaiman, who directed the play. Finally, during a 10-minute break in rehearsals, Tandan was inspired to write the delicate and moving ending that was eventually performed.

3

The six actors played all 15 characters, creating different voices and physicalities for each. Each rehearsal devoted a full hour to the physical conditioning of the performers.

Photos of *For Better or for Worse* and *The Good, the Bad and the Sholay* are by MemphisWest Pictures, Courtesy of Checkpoint Theatre.

For more interesting facts, please visit: www.thestudios.com.sg

Dramatised Reading

Selected works of Ovidia Yu

12 Apr, Sun, 6pm

Rehearsal Studio

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

Playwright

Ovidia Yu

Director & Stage Manager

Lok Meng Chue

Performers

Lok Meng Chue, Low Kah Wei, Amanda Tee & Jean Ng

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

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

director's

message

Reading Ovidia's plays again brought back memories of the struggles, ambitions and lessons of the early years of English-language theatre. Then came the realisation that so many local plays have been written, performed, and had public readings, and many more have not. These plays reflect what was important to the playwrights at that time, ideas, thoughts and feelings that they were burning to explore and share.

In 1988, I watched Ovidia's *Round And Round The Dining Table*, a popular play at that time, at LT13, NUS, thinking, "Eh, that's written by one of own writers, not an adaptation". It sounded different but acceptable, at times appealing, but I also felt that we had quite a long way to go. It was only an instinct, not any informed or real strong opinion, or at least not as far as I can recall.

As a young director, working closely with Ovidia on an adaptation of Emile Zola's *Therese Raquin* in 1995 was enjoyable and a great learning experience. She has strong opinions about many matters but was open to my ideas and suggestions. I especially like the clarity of her writing, her command of the English language to create dialogue and images to illustrate thoughts, emotions coupled with strong rhythms driving the narrative of the play. Most importantly, there was mutual respect as we were both aware of the need to support each other in this new adventure called theatre.



Two decades have passed and things have certainly changed, naturally. I wonder if this testament to the passion and hard work of the early writers, theatre companies that encouraged and presented their works, will happen again in another 50 years?

Lok Meng Chue

the plays

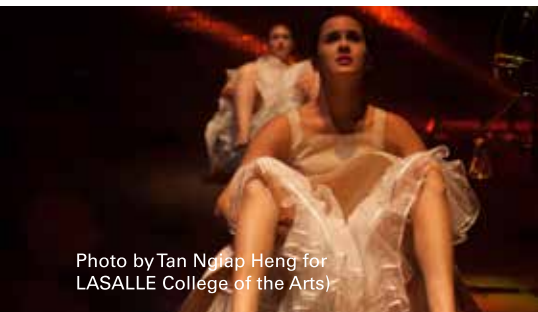


Photo by Tan Ngai Heng for LASALLE College of the Arts

Hitting (On) Women

Hitting (On) Women (2007) is about a troubled woman coming to terms with her past relationship with an abusive lover, Karen. The play begins when a woman learns of the death of Karen, an ex-lover she has not seen for 20 years. Trying to decide whether to attend the memorial service, she is “visited” by the dead Karen. They return to the private world they shared to resolve the past issues of abuse, hurt and loss.



Photo courtesy of Wild Rice

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.

“I don’t think I could reflect what people want, I can only do what I want to do. If they don’t like it, they just don’t buy tickets. If artists are only to reflect the majority view, then what do you need artists for? The public already knows what it wants. It’s the concern of the theatre group putting up the play to decide whether the public will accept it. I just write. I have to earn a living but I wouldn’t write something that goes against what I believe.”

—Ovidia Yu, interview with *The Straits Times*, 1992

Three Fat Virgins

“Inside every fat virgin is a thin schoolgirl. There is no sadness like the inner sadness of fat virgins and skinny schoolgirls. There is no sadness like the sadness of a dreamy schoolgirl trapped inside the body of a fat virgin.”

Three Fat Virgins (1992) is an insightful but playful commentary on what it means to be a woman in contemporary Singapore society.

In the play, being a “fat virgin” takes on multiple meanings. The work explores the objectification of women, language and sexuality, and illustrate the refusal of women to be subjected to patriarchal expectations.



Photo courtesy of Action Theatre

The Woman in a tree on a hill

An interweaving narrative of a contemporary Singapore couple, the biblical pairing of Noah and his wife, and mythical Chinese deity Nu Wa and a sage, are the diverse characters brought together in Ovidia Yu’s tale of *The Woman in a Tree on the Hill* (2001).

In threading together these three sets of characters, Yu explores themes of love, oppression, violence and freedom.

biographies

Ovidia Yu | Playwright

Ovidia Yu is an award-winning female novelist, short story writer and playwright. She is the recipient of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Singapore Foundation Culture Award (1996) for outstanding contribution to the development of arts, the National Arts Council Young Artist Award (1996), the Singapore Youth Award for Arts and Culture (1997) and the Fulbright Award. She obtained a master's degree in English from National University of Singapore and a PhD from Cambridge University. Her plays have been performed locally and abroad.

She has written over 30 plays, including *The Woman in a Tree on the Hill*, and is acclaimed to be "Singapore's first truly feminist writer and chronicler of all things female," notes theatre academic, K K Seet. "She has no literary precedent as such," he adds.

Ovidia won (and to date, is the only playwright from Singapore to win) the first major award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1993. Her first play *Dead On Cue* won the NUS-Shell Short Play Competition in 1987, performed by Alvin Tan and Haresh Sharma before they founded The Necessary Stage. Yu has dramatised the



situation of Singaporean women in both serious and humorous ways. Her other notable works include *Mistress* (1990), *Breast Issues* (1997), *Viva Viagra* (1999), and *Hitting (On) Women* (2007). *Three Fat Virgins* won her the National Book Development Council of Singapore (Highly Commended) Book Award in 1994.

biographies

Lok Meng Chue | Director

Meng Chue was involved in most of TheatreWorks' productions from 1985–1995, including *Army Daze*, *Beauty World* and *3 Children*. She directed *Undercover*, *Dirty Laundry* and *Watching the Clouds Go By*. In 2010, she won the Life! Theatre Awards for Best Supporting Actress in *wo(Men)*. In the Singapore Arts Festival 2011, she was a performer and research coordinator in *Inhabitants* and performed in Tan Tarn How's *Fear Of Writing*, which was nominated for Best Production at the Life! Theatre Awards. In 2012, she was the Associate Director for *National Broadway Company*, commissioned by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, and was last seen in Pandemonium's *Rabbit Hole*.

Amanda Tee | Performer

Amanda Tee has been involved in Singapore Repertory Theatre productions, such as Shakespeare in the Park's *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's dream*, *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*, and *Sisters* by Jean Tay. Her Singapore Arts Festival productions include *Visible Cities* and *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 television and film credits include Wee Li Lin's Hong *Bao's & Kisses*, KNS Parody News Channel webisodes, Mediacorp's *The White Red Rose Event* and Okto's *The Band*.

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

Low Kah Wei | Performer

A founding member of The Necessary Stage, Kah Wei was involved in many of the early productions by The Necessary Stage like *Lanterns Never Go Out* and *Off Centre*.

Jean Ng | Performer

Jean Ng was trained at the Jacques Lecoq School in Paris. She is an actor, director and educator.

did you know?



Three Fat Virgins

(Photo by Tan Ngiap Heng for
LASALLE College of the Arts)

1

Ovidia Yu said in an interview that her former boss supported her when she wrote *Three Fat Virgins* by giving her advice on the play, as well as turning a blind eye when she wrote the play on office time.

2

In the 1995 staging of *Three Fat Virgins* directed by Ivan Heng, the three female protagonists were played by male actors Lim Yu-Beng, Ernest Seah and Ferlin Jeyatissa.

3

Ovidia initially attended the National University of Singapore to study medicine but dropped out of school in the first year when she realised it was not the path she wanted to take. Yu applied for a place in the arts faculty and got into the Department of English Language and Literature. She graduated with a master's degree in English.

did you know?

Hitting (On) Women

1

There was a special performance of *Hitting (On) Women* as part of *IndigNation*, the LGBT Pride season in Singapore, on 11 August 2007.

2

Ovidia Yu shared the Best Original Script award for *Hitting (On) Women* with Haresh Sharma for his play *Good People at Life!* Theatre Awards 2008.

3

Ovidia said during an interview with *The Straits Times* in 2007 that she wrote the play in three weeks after sitting on her notes for nearly a year.



Photo courtesy of Wild Rice

The Woman in a tree on a hill

1

The play was staged again by Wild Rice in 2001 as part of the Singapore Arts Festival, directed by Ivan Heng. They collaborated with Korean drumming group Gong Myong. The set featured a mountain of household appliances and a deluge of 3,000 recycled mineral water bottles.

2

The Woman in a Tree on the Hill remains the only Singapore play to have won a major award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival – the 1993 Edinburgh Fringe First Award.

For more interesting facts, please visit: www.thestudios.com.sg

The Studios website: Get to know the plays and playwrights



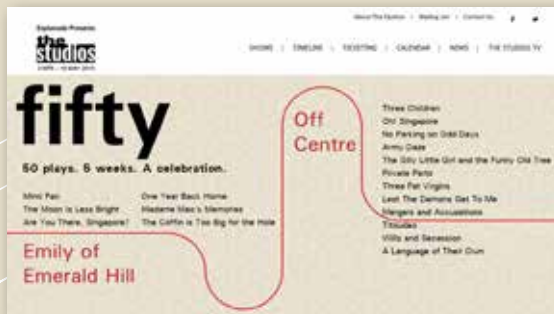
The playwrights featured in this photo were dressed in the outfits they wear when they write.

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



Forums *free*



Singapore Plays and Play Texts as Resources for Learning and Living

Chaired by Michele Lim

Speakers include representatives from SDEA, NAC and Centre 42

11 Apr, Sat

4pm, Dance Village

Demonstration using plays as a resource: Limited to first 25 participants

4.50pm, Open Stage

Panel discussion: Open to all

(1hr 30mins)

library@esplanade,

Dance Village and Open Stage

Open your eyes to the multi-faceted possibilities that Singapore plays and play texts can offer educators, arts practitioners, corporate trainers, and anyone interested in learning and engaging with the world.

Representatives from the National Arts Council (NAC), Singapore Drama Educators' Association (SDEA) and Centre 42 will shed light on the versatility of Singapore plays and play texts as a starting point for learning and research, its relevance here in Singapore as well as teaching approaches in using these resources. Leveraging on the demonstrations, the panel discussion will allow discussion on the range of use and applications.



Plays of Difference: Excavating, Experimenting, Exploring...

Chaired by Charlene Rajendran

Speakers: Chong Tze Chien, Natalie Henedige, Leow Puay Tin, Sean Tobin & Eleanor Wong

25 Apr, Sat, 2pm

(1hr 30mins)

library@esplanade, Open Stage

Living with difference is a critical challenge for the 21st century. The skills needed to deal empathetically and effectively with diverse lifestyles, politics, cultures and beliefs are urgent and crucial to wellbeing, if not survival.

Contemporary theatre in Singapore has placed a strong focus on issues of difference; it engages audiences in provocative performances about negotiating multiplicity as part of everyday life. Theatre practitioners have experimented with different forms of theatre, mixing language, content and style to create complex images and ideas about what it means to live with difference in Singapore.

What motivates the theatre practitioner to do this? Why excavate personal stories, cultural memories and historical realities that reflect difference as necessary to living in contemporary society? What are theatre people exploring when they make difference central to their play-making and imagining?

Keep abreast of the topics and issues related to the Singapore theatre scene. Join practitioners, academics and other industry players as they discuss pertinent issues and chart the development of Singapore theatre in these forums for the public.



Acting Singaporean: Back Story and Fore Play

Chaired by T. Sasitharan

Speakers: Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit, Alfian Sa'at,
Lok Meng Chue & Claire Wong

2 May, Sat, 4pm

(1hr 30mins)

library@esplanade, Open Stage

How is the Singapore identity represented, depicted and performed on stage? Taking reference from the plays featured in this season of *The Studios*, T. Sasitharan leads this discussion and investigation into the range of factors that inform and influence representation, performance and performativity.



Fear of Writing? The Development of Political Theatre in Singapore

Chaired by Janice Koh

Speakers: Ivan Heng, Alvin Tan,
Tan Tarn How & Robert Yeo

9 May, Sat, 4pm

(1hr 30mins)

library@esplanade, Open Stage

Despite our relatively brief theatre history, the Singapore stage has had no shortage of plays and performances that have courted controversy or compelled the use of the censor's red pencil for their political content and commentary. How has political theatre in Singapore changed and developed over the years, if at all? What is the role of political plays here, and how effective or impactful have they been as a forum for reflection and transformation? What is the relationship between the artist, the State and audiences? In a place where artistic content continues to be regulated through licensing and funding, how have our theatre-makers found ways and strategies to be heard? Can art really speak truth to power? Is there a fear of writing?

In a panel discussion moderated by Janice Koh, playwrights Robert Yeo and Tarn Tan How, together with theatre directors Ivan Heng and Alvin Tan, come clean on the subject.

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 Li Ting

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!

Action Theatre
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		Emily of Emerald Hill 2 – 5 Apr Thu, 8pm Fri & Sat, 3 & 8pm Sun, 3pm <			
Recital Studio			Selected works of Hareesh Sharma 7.30pm R18		
Rehearsal Studio				Beginnings - selected works from the 1960s & 1970s 6pm A	Selected works of Michael Chiang 6pm A
library@esplanade				Beginning and Becoming: Identity and Language in the Theatre, 1960s-1980s 4pm	
		9 Apr	10 Apr	11 Apr	12 Apr
Theatre Studio		The Weight of Silk on Skin 9 – 12 Apr Thu – Sat, 8pm Sat & Sun, 3pm < R18			
Recital Studio			Family relations in Singapore plays 7.30pm		
Rehearsal Studio				New Voices - Selected works from a new generation 6pm A	Selected works of Ovidia Yu 6pm A
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	Off Centre 23 – 26 Apr Thu – Sat, 8pm Sat & Sun, 3pm <div>A</div>				
Recital Studio			Gender and Sexuality – Selected works 7.30pm <div>R18</div>		
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	Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral 30 Apr – 3 May Thu – Sat, 8pm Sat & Sun, 3pm <div>A</div>				
Recital Studio	Selected works of Eleanor Wong 7pm <div>R18</div>	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	The Lady of Soul and Her Ultimate “S” Machine 7 – 10 May Thu – Sat, 8pm Sat & Sun, 3pm <div>A</div>				
Recital Studio					
Rehearsal Studio		Selected works of Chong Tze Chien 7.30pm <div>R18</div>	Selected works of Tan Tarn How 7.30pm <div>A</div>	Politics and Society - Selected works from three generations 6pm <div>A</div>	
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 second drink of the season:
3.6 Grams



**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.**

Made with whiskey, blood orange, fresh
pomegranate, lime, bitters and sugar, this
cocktail is smooth and sleek.

Cocktails: \$15 - \$20
(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

*Mocktails available at \$10 - \$15

15th 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

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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.

