



**Esplanade
Presents**

The Studios

fifty

50 plays. 5 weeks. A celebration.

Selected works of Eleanor Wong

29 Apr 2015, Wed, 7pm | Recital Studio

Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral

30 Apr – 3 May 2015, Thu – Sun | Theatre Studio

Selected works of Kuo Pao Kun

30 Apr 2015, Thu, 7.30pm | Recital Studio

Selected works of Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan

1 May 2015, Fri, 7.30pm | Rehearsal Studio

Contemporary & New Wave

2 May 2015, Sat, 6pm | 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 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, 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



Premiere production image courtesy of Theatreworks
Photo by Tuckys Photography

Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral

30 Apr - 3 May

Thu – Sat, 8pm | Sat & Sun, 3pm

Theatre Studio

Written by Kuo Pao Kun

Directed by Jeff Chen

(2hrs, no intermission)

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

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

"As a playwright, Kuo was not only interested in the idea of castration – both real and symbolic. In the idea of the eunuch admiral setting sail for faraway lands, the play is also a search for a utopia that is at once fatalistic and full of yearning."

The Straits Times

director's

message

"...a worthy failure is more valuable than a mediocre success."

Kuo Pao Kun

This oft-cited quote was part of a statement made by Kuo in 1993 that described The Substation's belief in supporting works that were characterised by "creative rawness".¹ For Kuo, "[t]his hallmark of new Singaporean works [was] snubbed by some as 'immature'". However, he insisted on seeing it as exhibiting "'sparks of originality' – something peculiar to all 'untried, new creations'".

For me, reading Kuo's defence of exploratory works led me to a series of questions. Has the space for failure and the "untried" widened over the last two decades? Or has it shrunk? What is the state of exploration in Singapore theatre today? Have we yielded to the exigencies of the mainstream, the establishment, and the market? Are we aware that the avant garde of the past is the status quo of the present? Have we grown complacent in our resistance against the normal? Are we still leading our audiences

on adventures into uncharted territories? Or have we lost the courage to be snubbed?

This performance of *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* is my response to Kuo's audacity to fail. In this pursuit of "sparks of originality", I have consciously chosen to juxtapose disparate dramatic and performative fragments with Kuo's evocative text. Ghosts from my previous works and newly devised materials have been arranged according to a schema of play to make new meaning of this beloved piece of local theatre writing.

I thank the actors, voiceover talents, designers, and production and administrative personnel for their infinite kindness and generosity in contributing to the making of this work. To T. Sasitharan, I owe an intellectual debt as his article led me to Kuo's elaboration of his philosophy of artistic exploration. I am much obliged to Nine Years Theatre for allowing me to use the set design again. Finally, I extend my gratitude to the audience for joining me on this creative journey.

Jeff Chen

¹ Kuo, Pao Kun. "The Guinness RawTheatre." *Arts on Campus* 3.1 (1993): 8-9.

² Sasitharan, T. "Theatre Doyen Sells Himself to Raise Funds." *The Straits Times*, 11 May 1994.

³ The set design by Wong Chee Wai was first used in Nine Years Theatre's production of *Twelve Angry Men* at Esplanade Theatre Studio in February 2013. It was then used in my production of *LIFT: Love is Flower* at Theatreworks' 72-13 in September 2013.

the play



Photo courtesy of TheatreWorks

Written by the late Kuo Pao Kun, *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (first staged in 1995) was inspired by the stories of the legendary eunuch of China, Admiral Zheng He. It weaves a powerful tale about castration and politics as it recounts the legacy of Admiral Zheng He, who was responsible for China's most extensive maritime expeditions in the 15th century. Using the metaphor of castration, parallels are drawn between the power struggles of court eunuchs and the displacement of modern urbanites who make sacrifices in their lives in order to survive in a highly competitive and industrious society.

Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral was written in both Chinese and English by Kuo himself. The story takes off from the mythologised traveller, the Grand Eunuch Admiral Zheng He, and examines the journey of a contemporary man in a modern and capitalistic society by juxtaposing the tension between tradition and modernity.

Admiral Zheng He was a Ming dynasty courtier and eunuch who travelled across China, India,

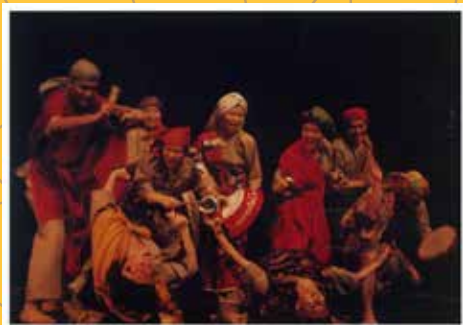
Ceylon, Southeast Asia and even Africa for his maritime missions – along the way, he chose to accept and integrate the many religions and cultures he encountered, making him one of the best-known global citizens in the annals of history. For Kuo, Zheng He represented a model of thriving multiculturalism, who apparently accepted the disadvantage of castration, and integrated his identity with the uncertainties of varied cultural encounters, to become someone greater than the sum of his parts.

Staged in an era when Singapore was developing into a cosmopolitan state with an equally cosmopolitan identity, the play explores the issue of rootlessness of modern man through the motif of castration and multiculturalism. With the Zheng He allegory, Kuo refers to the diaspora of migrant cultures in Singapore as the metaphorical “descendants” of this visionary eunuch.

Descendants was first staged in English, directed by Ong Ken Sen and presented by TheatreWorks at the 2nd Festival of Asian



Photos courtesy of The Theatre Practice



Performing Arts in Singapore in June 1995, at the Victoria Theatre. In the same year, The Theatre Practice presented the Mandarin version of *Descendants* at Victoria Theatre, directed by Kuo. Ong restaged *Descendants* in 1996 and 1998; The Theatre Practice revisited

Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral with different stagings in 2003 and 2010.

Descendants remains a powerful play for its insightful examination of identities in flux and the shifting dynamics between past and present.

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.

credits

Playwright
Script Editors
Director
Assistant Director

Performers

Featuring the voices of

Trombone

Production / Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager / Props Master
Technical Coordinator
Set Designer
Lighting Designer
Composer
Sound Designer
Costume Designer
Multimedia Designer
Hair/ Make-up Artist
Stage Crew

Kuo Pao Kun
Noorlinah Mohamed & Jeff Chen
Jeff Chen
Andrew Sutherland

Koh Wan Ching, Jean Ng, Timothy Nga,
Nora Samosir & Najib Soiman

Serene Chen, Nelson Chia, Julius Foo,
Ivan Heng, Noor Effendy Ibrahim,
Janice Koh, Lok Meng Chue, Lim Kay Siu,
Lim Yu-Beng, Neo Swee Lin, Remesh Panicker,
T. Sasitharan, Cindy Sim, Karen Tan,
Lucas Yeo & Siti Khalijah Zainal

Lee Wei Ting

Tennie Su
Jason Ng
Jed Lim
Wong Chee Wai
Andy Lim
Chong Li-Chuan
Jeffrey Yue (Ctrl Fre@k)
Anthony Tan
Kelvin Chew
Haslina Ismail
Chen Ruiyu & Shahid Nasheer

biographies



Kuo Pao Kun | Playwright

Playwright and director Kuo Pao Kun, was a pioneer of Singapore theatre and one of the most significant dramatists in Asia. He was awarded the Cultural Medallion in 1989 for his contributions to Singapore theatre. Many of his plays, written in both Chinese and English, have been translated into Malay, Tamil, German, Japanese, and Arabic. His works have been produced and performed by theatre companies locally, as well as internationally in Asia, Australia, USA, Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Kuo was born in the Hebei province of China. He moved to Singapore in 1949. In 1963, he pursued his interest in arts at the National Institute for Dramatic Art in Sydney, where he graduated with a diploma in production. Kuo returned to Singapore in 1965 and married Goh Lay Kuan, a dancer-choreographer. In the same year, they set up the Singapore Performing Arts School, which was later renamed Practice Performing Arts School. In March 1976, Kuo was detained under the Internal Security Act for alleged communist activities and had

his citizenship revoked in 1977. He was later released in 1980, and had his citizenship reinstated in 1992.

In 1986, Kuo co-founded The Practice Theatre Ensemble, a bilingual theatre company, later renamed The Theatre Practice. In 1990, Kuo founded The Substation, a multi-disciplinary and multi-lingual arts centre. In 2000, he initiated the Theatre Training and Research Programme (now known as the Intercultural Theatre Institute), a three-year performer-centred programme for training actors in intercultural theatre.

In his lifetime, Kuo wrote 24 plays; amongst them were *The Coffin Is Too Big for the Hole* (1984), *The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree* (1987), *Mama Looking for Her Cat* (1988) and *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (1990); many of these are now considered classic Singapore plays, and have been staged by numerous local and overseas theatre companies.

Jeff Chen | Director

Jeff Chen is a theatre director, dramaturg, and teacher. His directorial efforts include *sex.violence.blood.gore* (1999), *Asian Boys Vol. 1* (2000), *The Untitled Series* (2000-2004), *BOTE: The Beginning of the End* (2002), and *Boner* (2002). From 2000 to 2004, *The Untitled Series* was invited to festivals in Ireland, India, Korea, and Macau. Jeff was awarded a British Council Fellowship in 2001 to study choreography at Laban Centre London and scenography at the Slade School of Art. In 2006, he was awarded a Lee Foundation Study Grant, and a St Edmund's College Commonwealth Trust Grant to pursue his doctoral studies in film and cultural history at the University of Cambridge. Jeff returned to theatre in 2012 after obtaining his doctoral degree and an eight-year hiatus. His comeback project *LIFT: Love is Flower the* (2013) won a grant from the Arts Creation Fund of the National Arts Council and was presented by Theatreworks under its Associate Artist Scheme.

Nora Samosir | Performer

Nora Samosir has more than 30 years of professional theatre experience in more than 90 stage productions including *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* (2014); *LIFT: Love is Flower The* (2013); *Casting Back* (2012); *The Art of Living in the in-Between* (2010); *Temple* (2008); *Doubt* (2006); *Asian Boys Vol. 2: Landmarks* (2004); *Proof* (2002); *Asian Boys Vol.1* (2000); *Ah Kong's Birthday Party* (1998); *Beauty World* (1998; 1992); *Lao Jiu* (1997; 1994); and *Trojan Women* (1991). She has appeared in television programmes such as *Guru Paarvai*, *Ah Girl*, *Masters of the Sea* and, most recently on HBO Asia in *Grace*. Nora has a Postgraduate Diploma in Voice Studies from the Central School of Speech and Drama, London and an MA in Theatre Studies from NUS. Aside from her voice work in the theatre, she has conducted voice workshops for SDEA members, Images of Singapore Live performers and also to the general public through various training companies.

Andrew Sutherland | Assistant Director

Originally from Australia, Andrew Sutherland has worked as a playwright, deviser and performer in Singapore, Perth and Melbourne. He studied the classics and ancient history at the University of Western Australia, and is a 2014 graduate of the BA (Hons) Acting programme at LASALLE College of the Arts. His play *Ragnarok* (dir. Aole T Miller) was staged at the Substation in April 2015 by Skinned Knee Productions.

He also recently presented a staged reading of his work *Ribcage* as part of the Arts House open house programme. At LASALLE College of the Arts, he was the assistant director of *Spring Awakening* (dir. Aole T Miller) and *The Trojan Women: an Elegy* (dir. Stefanos Rassios). He also took part in *The Orange Playground* devising laboratory under Alvin Tan and Haresh Sharma of The Necessary Stage. In 2013, he created the original cabaret *Messianic Trash*, which was workshopped in Singapore and premiered in Melbourne. His performance highlights include *The Boys in the Band* (dir. Tony Knight), *The Visit* (dir. Natalie Henedige), and *Starring Hitler as Jekyll & Hyde* (wr. and dir. Chong Tze Chien).

Jean Ng | Performer

Trained at the Jacques Lecoq Theatre School in Paris, Jean Ng is an actor, director and educator.

biographies

Timothy Nga | Performer

Timothy is a Singapore-based actor/director who is interested in works that reveal the complexities of human nature.

His recent theatre acting credits include: *Dark Room x 8* (dir. Edith Podesta, 2014); *Farewell* (Dramabox, 2013); Roland Schimmelpfennig's *The Woman Before* (dir. Cherilyn Woo, 2013); 男男自语 *A Language of their Own* (dir. Casey Lim, 2012); *The Art of Living in the In Between* (Cake Theatre, 2010), which won Best Ensemble at the 2011 Life! Theatre Awards; and *A Cage Goes in Search of a Bird* (A Group Of People, 2010), which won Production of the Year at the 2011 Life! Theatre Awards).

Tim was also a performer and researcher in *Inhabitants* Singapore, a sensory theatre experience by Barcelona-based, Teatro de los Sentidos, staged as part of Singapore Arts Festival 2011.

As a director, Timothy recently completed a residency under The Substation Directors' Lab programme for new directors. He created *Taxi: Between You and Me*, a verbatim theatre performance about taxi drivers and our interactions with them.

He was trained in Anne Bogart's Viewpoints and the Suzuki Method at the SIT Company Summer Intensive 2008 and Soif Compagnie/ SIT Company 2013, and continues to apply these acting techniques in his practice.

Timothy also works extensively with multinational corporations and executives across the region as a communications consultant, conference moderator, developmental coach, learning facilitator and business role player.

Koh Wan Ching | Performer

Wan Ching is a bilingual performer who has worked with theatre companies including Drama Box, Nine Years Theatre, The Theatre Practice, Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble, as well as puppet theatre companies The Finger Players and Paper Monkey Theatre. She has performed in the International Theatre Festival 2010 in Beijing, the Zuni 2011 Theatre Season in Hong Kong, Suzuki Company of Toga Summer Season 2012 in Japan, Macao Arts Festival 2013 as well as Seoul Fringe Festival 2014. Recent theatre credits include *Invisibility* directed by Kok Heng Leun as well as *Tartuffe* directed by Nelson Chia. Besides creating and devising with collaborators, Wan Ching also directs and teaches. She has trained with SIT Company as well as the Suzuki Company of Toga and is a graduate of the inaugural SIT Conservatory Program, a full-time, nine month immersion program for international theatre artists.

Najib Soiman | Performer

A prominent figure on stage and screen, Najib Soiman is an award-winning actor of Malay and English theatre. Having been in the scene for over two decades, Najib has performed locally and internationally, in Croatia, Austria, Italy, Japan and China.

Besides being known for his acting chops, Najib is also an avid writer, playwright and director. His visions are boundless, as evident in his execution of work over a slew of platforms, from black-box theatre to the musical stage, even concert halls and rock concerts. An impassioned educator, Najib trains students in drama at Temasek Polytechnic and is an adjunct lecturer of acting and production at Singapore Polytechnic.

Andy Lim | Lighting Designer

Lighting designer Andy Lim has worked on many productions across theatre, television and film.

His theatre credits include:

Illogic (Cake Theatrical Production, 2013); *Fear of Writing* (TheatreWorks, 2011); *Macbeth* (Singapore Repertory Theatre, 2011); *The Magnanimous Cuckold* (Drama Box, 2010); *Friend's Season – Tenderness for the future* (TheatreWorks, 2010); *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole* (Drama Box, 2010); and *Vivien & the Shadows* (TheatreWorks, 2008).

Festival productions include:

Ten Thousand Tigers (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2014), staged at Wiener Festwochen in Vienna 2014 and as part of Esplanade's *The Studios 2014*; *Notion: Dance Fiction* (Choy Ka Fai, 2012), staged at Festival Tokyo 2011, Inshadow 2011, as part of Esplanade's *da:ns Festival 2012*, Kyoto Experiment 2012, and Exodos Festival 2013; *The Cloud of Unknowing* (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2011), staged at Venice Biennale 2011, Sundance Festival 2012, and Auckland Triennial 2013; *Refractions – A Double Bill: As Above, So Below/Nameless* (Singapore Dance Theatre, 2010), staged at Esplanade's *da:ns Festival 2010*; *Diaspora* (TheatreWorks, 2006), performed at Edinburgh International Festival; *Invisible Room* (The Observatory, in collaboration with Ho Tzu Nyen and Kok Heng Leun, 2009), staged at Singapore Arts Festival 2009 and Theater der Welt 2010; *King Lear Project - A Trilogy* (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2008), presented at the Kunsten Festival des Arts and Singapore Arts Festival 2008; and *VIRUS* (COLLECTIVE mayhem, 2008), staged as part of NUS Arts Festival.

Television and film credits include:

The Kitchen Musical (Cheek, 2011); *The Cloud of Unknowing* (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2011); *Endless Day* (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2011); *Earth* (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2010); *Zarathustra: A Film for Everyone and No One* (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2009); and *Sunsilk Academy Fantasia* (Refinery Media).

<http://stagelive.blogspot.com>

Wong Chee Wai | Set Designer

Chee Wai is a full-time freelance set designer. He has designed and worked with performing arts companies across Singapore.

Some of his recent works include *Public Enemy* (Wild Rice, 2015); *Legends of The Southern Arch* (The Theatre Practice, 2015); *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Pangdemonium, 2015); *Monkey Goes West* (Wild Rice, 2014); *GITANJALI [I feel the earth Move]* (The Necessary Stage, 2014); *A Singaporean In Paris* (Singtheatre, 2014); *Blank Red* (Blank Space Theatre, 2014); *If There're Seasons...* (The Theatre Practice, 2014); *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Wild Rice, 2014); *Art* (Nine Years Theatre, 2014); *Everything But The Brain* (Sightlines Productions, 2013); *Twelve Angry Men* (Nine Years Theatre, 2013), as part of *Huayi 2013*; *French Kiss* (Sing'theatre, 2013); *8 Women* (Singtheatre, 2013); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Nine Years Theatre, 2012), staged at *Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts 2012* and *Macau Arts Festival 2013*; and *Freud's Last Session* (Blank Space Theatre, 2012).

Chong Li-Chuan | Composer

Singapore-born composer Chong Li-Chuan (also known as Chuan) is a musician by training, an academic at large, and a design researcher in user experience and strategic design. As a composer and sound designer, Chuan collaborates with different practitioners in theatre, dance, visual arts, and architecture. Recently, he had the good fortune to work with landscape designer Chang Huai Yan, visual artist Donna Ong, and actor and director Pat Toh.

biographies

Jeffrey Yue | Sound Designer

Jeffrey was awarded the Glaxo-Wellcome/EDB scholarship to pursue a degree in technical theatre at the prestigious Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Upon graduation, he returned as a sound coordinator for Esplanade. With a focus on theatrical sound design, production engineering and programming, Jeffrey has worked extensively in Singapore, the UK and other parts of the world. Recent sound design works include *Rise of the Little Voice* (Pangdemonium!, 2014); *Next to Normal* (Pangdemonium!, 2013); *Garden Rhapsodies* at the Super Tree Grove, Gardens by the Bay; *Ten Thousand Tigers* (Ho Tzu Nyen, 2014); and *Lightseeker* at the Festive Grand, Resort World Sentosa. No stranger to the demands of touring sound productions, Jeffrey travels extensively for projects as designer, production sound engineer and audio / show control programmer. He has also participated in several international festivals including the Wiener Festwochen, Austria; Mam Project, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Sundance Film Festival, Utah, USA; forum international de dança, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; iDANs, Istanbul, Turkey, and Teater de Welt, Mulheim, Germany. Jeffrey is one of the founding directors of Ctrl Fre@k Pte, Ltd., a show design company which specialises in creative and system design for performing arts, themed entertainment, arts installations, venues and festivals.

Anthony Tan | Costume Designer

Anthony Tan has firmly established himself as a fashion and costume designer in Singapore. He works with different arts companies and is involved in collaborations that run across commercial works, theatre, musical and dance. Anthony has been designing costumes since 1993; he has accumulated a long list of collaborative projects including wardrobe management with Cirque Du Soleil.

Currently, Anthony is an arts and design educator with one of Singapore's leading arts institutions. He graduated from London College of Fashion (UK) with a BA(Hons) in Design Technology for the Fashion Industry (1999) and a MA in Costume Design for Performance (2010).

Some of Anthony's significant works include *The Crab Flower Club* (Toy Factory Productions, 2009), which was featured at the Singapore Arts Festival 2009 and was nominated for Best Costume Design at the Life! Theatre Awards 2010; *Twelve Angry Men* (Nine Years Theatre, 2013), as part of *Huayi 2013*, which was also nominated for Best Costume Design at the Life! Theatre Awards 2014.

Kelvin Chew | Multimedia Designer

Kelvin is a multimedia designer whose works are often a confluence of film, photography and interactive technologies. He approaches new media methodologies through the lenses of experimental multimedia design to portray and augment human interactions. His recent collaborations include *With/Out* (Loo Zihan, 2015), presented at M1 Fringe Festival 2015; *Don Quixote* (Singapore Dance Theatre, 2014); *Splice* (Re:Dance Theatre, 2015); and Spotlight Singapore – Mexico.

did you know?

1

Admiral Zheng He was born a Muslim though he is said to have embraced different religions as an adult.



3

Former NMP Janice Koh performed in the 1995 and 1998 productions of *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* produced by TheatreWorks.



2

Traditional arts forms had been creatively incorporated into the stagings of *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral*. The Five Arts Centre adopted elements from *bharatanatyam* and *wayang kulit* in its staging at The Experimental Theatre in Kuala Lumpur in 2000; Jose Ku Leng Un introduced elements of Japanese *noh* theatre in the staging that was presented at the Macao Cultural Centre in 2007.



4

Shortly after the Mandarin and English versions of *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* were staged in Singapore, the play was translated into Japanese and staged in Tokyo in 1996 by Black Tent Theatre, a Japanese theatre company, directed by Makoto Sato.

5

Both the Mandarin and Malay versions of *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* were presented at the Kuo Pao Kun Festival in 2003 at the Substation, Guinness Theatre.

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

Photos courtesy of TheatreWorks

Dramatised Reading

Selected works of Eleanor Wong

29 Apr, Wed, 7pm

Recital Studio

(4hrs, with breaks)

Playwright

Eleanor Wong

Director

Samantha Scott-Blackhall

Performers

**Serene Chen, Isabella Chiam, Lim Yu-Beng, Serena Ho,
Petrina Kow, Dawn Estelle Lee, Candice De Rozario,
Nicole Stinton, Tan Kheng Hua, Jean Toh & Harris Zaidi**

Lighting Designer

Petrina Dawn Tan

Stage Manager

Sheri Ramli Hogan

R18 (This reading contains mature themes)

The plays in this reading will be read in full.

director's

message

Invitation To Treat speaks for itself. "It's written SO well..." were the words muttered at almost every rehearsal. Thank you Eleanor, for your elegantly crafted words that flow off the page with such ease. A story that lives on today, remains relevant today and tugs at our heart strings...today.

Thank you to my talented, hardworking and committed cast, who see the relevance in putting up such an important piece of work and have invested their time willingly, because the theatre is home and our industry a family. Thank you Serene, Nicole, Serena, Petrina, Candice, Isabella, Jean, Dawn and Harris for being awesome. And Kheng Hua and Yu-Beng for lending me your hearts in re-visiting this monumental piece of work. A journey I'm glad to share with all those who have gone on the same journey before.

Samantha Scott-Blackhall



the plays

Mergers and Accusations

Mergers and Accusations (first staged in 1993) was Eleanor Wong's first play of the trilogy *Invitation To Treat*. In this early work, Ellen Toh, a lawyer, is hiding her sexual orientation at work and from society. She chooses to marry her best friend, Jonathan, who is aware of her inclination, but wades into this marriage of convenience with eyes open. In due time, a baby girl is conceived and the pair settle into a comfortable arrangement. The seemingly perfect picture is disrupted, however, when Ellen falls for the brash and openly gay Lesley. This precipitates the dissolution of the marriage, and paves the way for Ellen's new choices in life, to live honestly with herself.

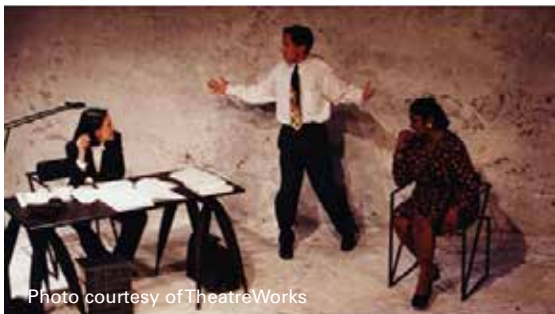


Photo courtesy of TheatreWorks

Wills and Secession

Wills and Secession (first staged in 1995) is set years after Wong's *Mergers & Accusations*, and it focuses on the same central character, Ellen. In this sequel, Ellen has left her husband and is now in a same-sex marriage. She returns from London to take care of her ailing father after her mother's death. Ellen also comes back to face a situation where she has to deal with her family's prejudices against her life, her own values and duties, and the impending death of her partner, Lesley.



Photo courtesy of TheatreWorks

Jointly and Severably

Jointly and Severably (first staged in 2003) is the final part of the trilogy *Invitation To Treat*. As with the preceding plays, it follows the life of protagonist Ellen Toh. Ellen now has to face up to a failing relationship as her spouse of 10 years, university professor Elizabeth, embarks on an affair with her young research assistant, Natalie. Natalie also happens to be a close friend of Ellen's daughter, Samantha, which complicates the situation further.



Photo courtesy of WILD RICE

Interested to find out more about the works?

For background information on these plays, the playwright, past stagings and selected production photos, visit www.thestudios.com.sg.

biographies



Eleanor Wong | Playwright

Eleanor Wong is a lawyer and playwright. She made her playwriting debut with *Peter's Passionate Pursuit* and is best known for her trilogy of plays *Invitation to Treat* (2005), which includes *Mergers and Accusations* (1993), *Wills and Secession* (1995) and *Jointly and Severably* (2003). The plays explore the themes of lesbianism, female sexuality and gender politics.

Samantha Scott-Blackhall | Director

Award-winning Singapore director Samantha Scott-Blackhall has directed over 50 professional theatre productions in the last 12 years. She has worked with several theatre companies in Singapore and continues to cast her net with film production and advertising companies alike. Theatre credits include: *Apocalypse: Live!*; *Quills*; *The Physicists*; *The Lover & The Dumb Waiter*; *Agnes of God*; *The House of Sleeping Beauties*; *Popcorn*; *Dead Certain*; the 2003/2005 production of *Modern Dance For Beginners*; *Death and the Maiden*; *I Think I Can*; *Doubt*; *The Car*, by Verena Tay; *Hitting (on) Women*; *Real Men*; *Fake Orgasms*; *Mama's Wedding*; *Singapore Love Letters*; and *Manhood*. Last year, Samantha directed Sing'theatre's production of *8 Women*.

In 2007, the Southeast Asian Premiere of *Lord of The Flies* marked the first production produced and directed by Samantha for her own company Blank Space Theatre Company. Followed by the worldwide theatrical premiere of *Das Experiment: Black Box* in collaboration with The Goethe-Institut (Singapore). In 2012, Samantha produced and directed the Asian premiere of *Freud's Last Session* to a full house audience. *Freud's Last Session* received nominations for Best Director, Best Actor, Best Set Design and Best Sound Design at the Life! Theatre Awards 2013. The production won Best Actor and Best Sound Design. Blank Space's most recent success was *Red* in collaboration with Esplanade's *The Studios*.

At the Life! Theatre Awards 2005 Samantha was awarded Best Director for *The Physicists*, and at the 2006 Life! Theatre Awards Luna-id was awarded Best Production of the Year for *Quills*, which was also directed by Samantha.

biographies

Candice De Rozario | Performer

Candice, a classically-trained mezzo soprano who used to front a death metal band, is a jill-of-all-trades who acts, sings, directs and does puppetry. Notable roles include Sarah in Stephen Sondheim's *Company* (Dream Academy), which won three Life! Theatre Awards; Eldest Sister in her first Mandarin production, *Lao Jiu: The Musical* (The Theatre Practice), winner of two Life! Theatre Awards with one Honorable Mention; Margaret in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Singapore Repertory Theatre); and the titular character in *Puss In Boots* (I-Theatre), which enjoyed successful runs in both Singapore and KL's PJ Live Arts.

Other acting credits include *Furthest North, Deepest South* (The Finger Players), which won Best Ensemble and Best Production at the Life! Theatre Awards 2005; *Mad Forest* (young & WILD), which won Best Ensemble at the Life! Theatre Awards 2008; *If There're Seasons...* (The Theatre Practice); *Jack and the Bean Sprout!* (WILD RICE); *The Frog Prince* (SRT's Little Company); *The Full Monty and Spring Awakening* (Pangdemonium); *Into The Woods* (Dream Academy); *Fried Rice Paradise* (Singapore Repertory Theatre and People's Association); *Forbidden City* (Singapore Repertory Theatre); and numerous non-human roles in I-Theatre's family shows. Directing credits include *Little Mermaid* (I-Theatre) as well as *Moonbird* and *Hey, Little Mousedeer* of which she was assistant director. Candice earns her keep as the Head of Educational Theatre at The Learning Connections.

Dawn Estelle Lee | Performer

Dawn found her passion for theatre after joining a school production at 15 as a stage manager turned understudy. Since then, she has always been pursuing theatre and learning the skill set of a professional actor. Dawn was the top A Level student for Theatre Studies and Drama at Tampines Junior College. Dawn will be graduating from LASALLE in May with a BA(Hons) in Acting. Some of her works at LASALLE include *In The Next Room*, directed by Samantha Scott-Blackhall, *Rhinoceros In Love*, directed by Natalie Hennedige, *Seven Doors*, directed by Stefanos Rassios and *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Adam Marple. Upon graduation, Dawn wants to continue creating work that pushes boundaries as an actor. She hopes that in the future, she will be able to channel her acting experience into directing.

Jean Toh | Performer

Jean Toh graduated from the BA(Hons) Acting Programme at LASALLE College of the Arts.

In 2013, she was selected by Institut Français to attend the Avignon Theatre Festival in France.

She has starred in *An Enemy of the People*; *Tartuffe* (Nine Years Theatre); *The Crucible* (Toy Factory); *Decimal Points 7.7*; *Decimal Points 810* (Cake Theatrical Productions); and *Stand Behind the Yellow Line* (Singapore Repertory Theatre). Her television credits include main roles in HBO Asia's *Grace*, Mediacorp's *Working Class* and hosting OKTO's *The Surprise Party* and *Zoom Zim Zam 2*.

Jean is a founding and core member of Nine Years Theatre Ensemble Project.

Harris Zaidi | Performer

After graduating with Honours from National University of Singapore's Theatre Studies Programme, Harris' first foray into the wonderful world of theatre was as a production manager for Singapore Repertory Theatre where he got his feet wet working on such productions as *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *A Twist of Fate*, *M Butterfly* and *Ah Gong's Birthday Party*.

A guest starring role in TCS' *Under One Roof* led to a leading role in *Money*, Singapore's first film drama sitcom. Following various acting stints in Suria and earning a place in *Ikon*, the channel's first celebrity talent contest show, he went back to his theatrical roots playing the role of Antonio and Caliban in 3.12 Productions' staging of *Wayang Tempest* and *Club Tempest* respectively. The rollercoaster ride continued with a titular role for Theatreworks' *Comrade Mayor*, Wild Rice's *Asian Boys Vol. 2* and lastly Theatreworks's *Shanty: Follow Your Dream*.

After 11 years of following his dream of running his own events agency, he's thrilled to be a part of *Invitation to Treat*.

Isabella Chiam | Performer

Isabella Chiam 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), *Tahan* (Teater Ekamatra), and musicals such as *Jack & the Beansprout* (Wild Rice) and *Sing to the Dawn* (ITheatre). She received an Life! Theatre Award for Best Ensemble for her work in *Mad Forest* and was last seen as Nerissa in *Merchant of Venice* (Singapore Repertory Theatre) and Siti in *Hawa* (Hatch Theatrics). As a director, she has worked mostly with ITheatre and The Theatre Practice, and was most recently the assistant director for The Theatre Practice's production of *Legends of the Southern Arch*.

Lim Yu-Beng | Performer

Yu-Beng read the role of JC in the first private read of *Mergers and Accusations* in 1990. An early member of TheatreWorks, he was involved in much of their pioneering work during the 1990s, and remains a presence on the Singapore stage, winning Best Actor in 2005, Best Supporting Actor in 2004, and working in the Best Acting Ensemble in 2002, all at the Life! Theatre Awards. In 2005 he was nominated for Best Actor in the Asian Television Awards.

He works extensively in film and television, both locally and internationally, notably in *Singapore Dreaming*, *Solos*, *Kung Fu Killers*, *The Great Wall*, *Anna and the King*, *The Lost Empire*, and *Triple Nine*. Theatregoers know him better from shows like *Members Only*, *Doubt*, *The Lover*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *Bent*, *Lear* and *Animal Farm*.

Yu-Beng is also known as a lighting designer. This year he was nominated for his work on *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Last year saw him write and direct his second full-length play, *2 Houses*. He continues to explore new ground, and works extensively as an actor, director, writer, acting coach, lighting designer, fight choreographer and whatever it takes to get the show up.

biographies

Nicole Stinton | Performer

Nicole Stinton has worked in the theatre industry for two decades across Australia and Asia, specialising in musical theatre. She is a professional actor, director and playwright, as well as an artistic director, theatre teacher and vocal coach.

Nicole has published several textbooks on drama which are widely used in the Australian education system. She holds an MBA in Arts and Entertainment Management from Deakin University and a Bachelor in Musical Theatre from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

As an actor she is most known in Singapore for her rendition of the blonde bombshell Norma Cassidy in *Victor/Victoria*, which ran at the Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay.

Serena Ho | Performer

Serena Ho is a freelance theatre practitioner with experience as an actor, director and drama educator, including a one year stint as Resident Artist at The Necessary Stage. She is currently working part-time with the theatre faculty at the School of the Arts (SOTA). She is also one of the programme directors of Young and Wild the youth division of Wild Rice. Serena has directed for school events and coached drama clubs for various institutions as well as held long-term stints in curriculum-based dramatic instruction. She is a committee member of the Singapore Educators Association (SDEA).

Petrina Kow | Performer

Petrina Kow is one of Singapore's leading voice actors and voice directors. She has directed many preschool cartoons on Nickelodeon and Okto. In the last three years, Petrina has also been grooming the LASALLE Musical Theatre students in voice acting and voice-overs. Besides lending her voice to many television and radio commercials, Petrina is also the voice of BBC 88.9FM and Starhub. She was nominated at the Life! Theatre Awards for her role as Amy in *COMPANY* by Stephen Sondheim in 2013.

Serene Chen | Performer

Serene Chen is a graduate of the National University of Singapore's Theatre Studies programme. Her more recent theatre projects include a David Harrower adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *Public Enemy*; Francisco Garcia Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*, produced by Wild Rice; Robert Thomas' *8 Women*, produced by Sing'theatre, Tan Tarn How's *Fear of Writing*; Chong Tze Chien's *Charged*; Robin Loon's *DNR*; and *120*, conceived by Ong Keng Sen. On television, she has played Deputy Public Prosecutor Sally Cheng in three seasons of *Code of Law*. She starred in Woo Yen Yen and Colin Goh's seminal feature film, *Singapore Dreaming* and in Ken Kwek's controversial *Sex Violence Family Values*.

Serene is a two-time winner of the Best Supporting Actress award at the Life! Theatre Awards, for Alfian Saat's *Asian Boys Volume 2* and *8 Women*. She played Grace in Toy Factory's Mandarin version of *Wills & Secession* almost a decade ago and is excited to revisit one of Eleanor Wong's richest characters.

Tan Kheng Hua | Performer

Kheng is an award-winning actor and producer in Singapore, with a career spanning more than 25 years. She's acted in countless theatre productions, including Eleanor Wong's *Invitation to Treat*. In 2004, she started producing for local stage and television. She's best known as Margaret in Singapore's longest running and most successful sitcom, *Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd*. From 2004–2007, she produced Singapore's most successful original musical cabaret act, *The Dim Sum Dollies®*, as well as *Do Not Disturb*, the only local drama to receive a four-star review from *The Straits Times*. Her recent international projects include *The Philanthropist* (NBC, Lead Supporting, Actor), *The Patriarch* (UFA, Lead Supporting, Actor) and *Marco Polo* (Netflix/The Weinstein Company, Lead Supporting). Recent local projects of note include *Sayang Sayang* (TV, Actor), *Mr & Mrs Kok* (TV, Creator/Producer/Actor), *Do Not Disturb* and *The Composer* (Stage, produced in partnership with The Esplanade, Creator/Producer/Actor), *Cooling Off Day* (Stage, Actor), *Fear Of Writing* (Stage, Actor), *No7* (Stage, A Georgetown Festival 2010 Commission, Creator/Producer/Actor) and *The SIN-PEN Colony*, a mini-Singapore festival within The George Town Festival where she brought more than 80 Singaporeans and Malaysians together in celebration of the shared heritage through theatre, retail, food, visual art and the music of George Town, Penang. She is currently one of the 20 Singapore artists featured in *Singapore: Inside Out*, a travelling showcase celebrating Singapore's contemporary creative talents across disciplines, and which will be travelling to Beijing, London and New York City before returning to Singapore. This project is led by STB as part of SG50 celebrations for Singapore's golden jubilee.

Sheri Hogan | Stage Manager

An alumnus of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and University of Huddersfield, Sheri Hogan graduated in 2010 with a B.A. (Hons) in Arts Management. Her theatre credits include stage managing *Red*, *Freud's Last Session*, (Blank Space Theatre), and *A Juggler's Tale* (TETC). She has also been assistant stage manager for productions such as *The Nutcracker* (Singapore Dance Theatre) and *Vision* (Gateway Entertainment).

Though theatre remains her first love, Sheri's versatility has brought her regular work in major Singapore events in various capacities such as: Entertainment Coordinator (F1 Singapore Grand Prix), Festival Coordinator (Play It Back! Festival), Artist Liaison Officer (F1 Singapore Grand Prix, Timbre Rock & Roots Festival), and Transport Coordinator (F1 Singapore Grand Prix, St Jerome's Laneway Festival).

Amidst these various projects, Sheri is also kept busy with her most challenging undertaking to date, being a full-time mother to a boisterous three year old.

Petrina Dawn Tan | Lighting Designer

Petrina Dawn Tan trained in lighting design under 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).

did you know?

Mergers and Accusations

1

When Ong Keng Sen, Artistic Director of TheatreWorks, encouraged Eleanor Wong to join the TheatreWorks' Writers Workshop conducted by David Britten in 1992, Wong had originally intended for the workshop to serve as a platform to rework her earlier play *To Touch the Soul of a God* (1987). However, writer's block and subsequent discussions with Ong Keng Sen led to the writing of *Mergers and Accusations*.

2

The playwright was also one of the singers in the first staging of the play in 1993.

4

Karen Tan was pregnant when she performed the role of Lesley in the Mandarin production of *Mergers and Accusations*, presented by Toy Factory Productions in 2004.

3

Eleanor Wong's *Mergers and Accusations*, Otto Fong's *Cetecea* and Tan Tarn How's *Undercover* tied for the top award in the National Book Development Council of Singapore Award (Drama category) in 1996.

Wills and Secession

1

Claire Wong, who starred in the original 1995 premiere came to direct the entire trilogy of works when it was re-staged by WILD RICE in 2003.

2

"Will" full confusion? In the 2003 production, performer Karen Tan could never be sure exactly what the will of the character Lesley would say. The playwright wrote several alternative versions and would choose a different one to use on different nights.

3

Right after completing the script for *Wills & Secession*, playwright Eleanor Wong knew a third part was in the works, but felt she needed greater personal maturity to pen that – hence, the time gap to form the trilogy.

Jointly and Severably



1

Invitation to Treat, the trilogy's title is actually a legal term. Eleanor Wong explained in an interview with *The Straits Times* in 2003, "It means, 'I'm here, make me an offer, and we'll see if we can come to an agreement'. All three plays are about the gay community initiating a discussion with society."

(Source: The Straits Times, 10 March 2003)



2

Tan Kheng Hua played the role of the lesbian lawyer Ellen Toh in all the three plays of the trilogy. She said in an interview with *The Straits Times* in 2014, "I understood the fears Ellen Toh had, the ways in which she lied to herself, in which she couldn't lie to herself anymore, wanting to conform and yet being different – I think those were all very beautifully expressed."



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

Dramatised Reading

Selected works of Kuo Pao Kun

30 Apr, Thu, 7.30pm

Recital Studio

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

Playwright	Kuo Pao Kun
Director	Claire Wong
Performers	Julius Foo, Anita Kapoor, Frances Lee & Karen Tan
Lighting Designer	Petrina Dawn Tan
Stage Manager	Syafiqah Bte Noor Adzan

Special thanks to: Shah Tahir and Olivia Quek

Credits: Tan Pin Pin and her film, *80KMH*

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

director's

message

In directing this reading, it has been a pleasure and a privilege for me to revisit the works of Kuo Pao Kun. I began by asking myself what these plays mean today, and whether they still ring true to Singapore.

In rehearsals I very quickly established that they still resonated with my cast and crew, who range in age from their early twenties to their forties. These plays speak to the Singapore of today as loudly and incisively as they did to the nation at the time they were written.

There are generational differences in the writing, to be sure, but I feel that Pao Kun's allegorical style is to be celebrated; his gently humorous, delicate parables enfold and support a serious and important critique. Broadly speaking, the three plays presented here offer a commentary on stifling systems of thought and bureaucratic rigidity, but they are leavened with an optimistic sense of the power of human sincerity in overcoming these obstacles and forging a real connection with one another.

In choosing to juxtapose the readings with Tan Pin Pin's film *80KMH*, I wanted to bring an interdisciplinary element to this otherwise austere presentation, enabling us to look at Singapore wordlessly through the eyes of a film-maker, as a visually poetic layer and counterpoint to Pao Kun's text.

Looking at these plays again has been a wonderful opportunity for me as a Singapore theatre practitioner. It is vital for us to celebrate the legacy and works of those early pioneers on whose shoulders we stand, who carved out a place for Singapore stories to be told on the Singapore stage.



Photo by Joel Lim @ Calibre Pictures,
courtesy of Checkpoint Theatre

For making this journey possible and for all their help with this presentation, I would like to thank the Esplanade team, Chong Tze Chien, Lam Danfong, Syafiqah Adzan, Tan Pin Pin, Shah Tahir, and my enormously talented cast.

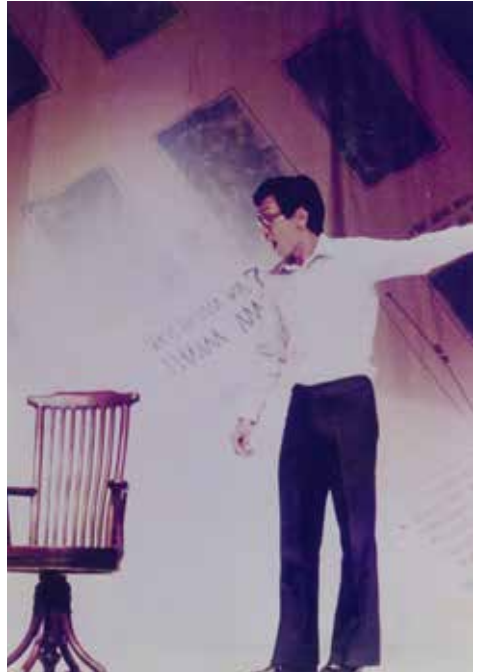
Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and enjoy the show.

Claire Wong

the plays

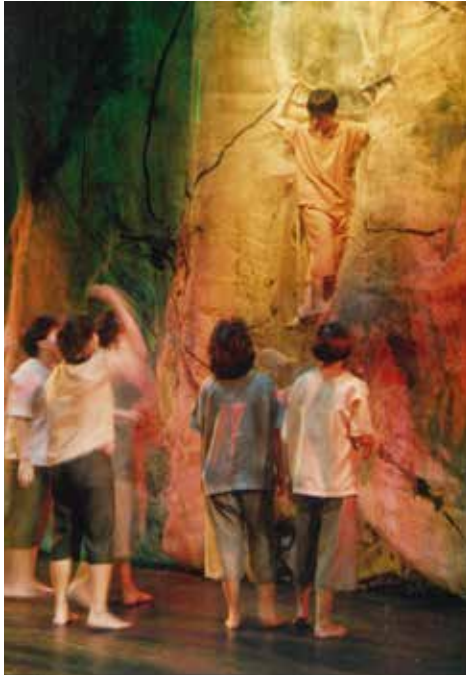
The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole

Undeniably one of the most iconic works of the late dramatist Kuo Pao Kun, *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole* (first staged in 1985) is a monologue that revolves around a young man tasked to oversee the burial of his grandfather, as the eldest grandson of his family. The funeral soon takes a Kafkaesque turn, as the man encounters a problem when his grandfather's large coffin does not fit into the standard-sized plot.



No Parking on Odd Days

No Parking on Odd Days (first staged in 1986) is a satirical monologue about a man as he wrestles with the authorities over his parking summons. In a tragicomic dig at the rigidity of bureaucracy, the play examines the challenges the man encounters as he attempts to reason with the authorities over the matter.



The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree

The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree (first staged in 1987) is a parable about the unlikely but charming friendship between a lonely girl and an old tree. The girl visits the tree every day, and she sings, plays and dances with her friend. When the girl finds out that the tree has to make way for new developments, she tries her best to defend her friend from this imminent destruction.



Interested to find out more about the works?

For background information on these plays, the playwright, past stagings and selected production photos, visit www.thestudios.com.sg.

Photos courtesy of The Theatre Practice

80KMH by Tan Pin Pin

Filmmaker Tan Pin Pin traversed Singapore in one long take. She started the camera rolling at an eastern point (the steeple of Changi Airport) and stopped recording at a western point (Tuas Checkpoint). With no cuts, she documented every inch of the country. She kept the speed consistent at 80km/h.

biographies

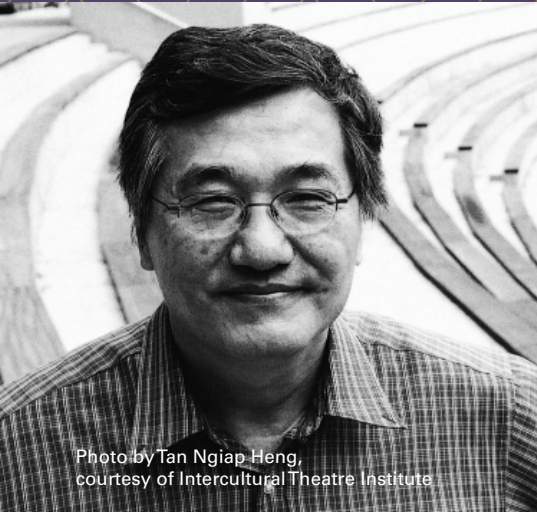


Photo by Tan Ngap Heng,
courtesy of Intercultural Theatre Institute

Kuo Pao Kun | Playwright

Playwright and director Kuo Pao Kun was a pioneer of Singapore theatre and one of the most significant dramatists in Asia. He was awarded the Cultural Medallion in 1989 for his contributions to Singapore theatre. Many of his plays, written in both Chinese and English, have been translated into Malay, Tamil, German, Japanese, and Arabic. His works have been produced and performed by theatre companies locally, as well as internationally in Asia, Australia, USA, Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Kuo was born in the Hebei province of China. He moved to Singapore in 1949. In 1963, he pursued his interest in arts at the National Institute for Dramatic Art in Sydney, where he graduated with a diploma in production. Kuo returned to Singapore in 1965 and married Goh Lay Kuan, a dancer-choreographer. In the same year, they set up the Singapore Performing Arts School, which was later renamed Practice

Performing Arts School. In March 1976, Kuo was detained under the Internal Security Act for alleged communist activities and had his citizenship revoked in 1977. He was later released in 1980, and had his citizenship reinstated in 1992.

In 1986, Kuo co-founded The Practice Theatre Ensemble, a bilingual theatre company, later renamed The Theatre Practice. In 1990, Kuo founded The Substation, a multi-disciplinary and multi-lingual arts centre. In 2000, he initiated the Theatre Training and Research Programme (now known as the Intercultural Theatre Institute), a three-year performer-centred programme for training actors in intercultural theatre.

In his lifetime, Kuo wrote 24 plays; among them were *The Coffin Is Too Big for the Hole* (1984), *The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree* (1987), *Mama Looking for Her Cat* (1988) and *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (1990); many of these are now considered classic Singapore plays, and have been staged by numerous local and overseas theatre companies.

Claire Wong | Director

Claire Wong is the co-founder and Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre. Trained in both Asian and Western performing arts, Claire obtained her Master of Fine Arts (Theatre Arts) from Columbia University. Claire directs, acts and writes for the stage and camera.

Claire's directing credits include Huzir Sulaiman's *The Weight of Silk on Skin* and *Occupation*; Faith Ng's *Normal, For Better or for Worse*, and *wo(men)*; and *The Way We Go* by Joel Tan. She co-directed Marion D'Cruz's *Dream Country: a Lost Monologue*, a dance-theatre production for the Singapore Arts Festival 2012.

As an actress, Claire recently appeared in Checkpoint Theatre's 15th anniversary production of *Atomic Jaya*. Claire's other memorable lead roles include her one-woman performances in *Madame Mao's Memories*, *Atomic Jaya*, and *Occupation*. Claire co-wrote and performed, with Noorlinah Mohamed, the play *Recalling Mother* which was published in *This Is My Family: New Singapore Plays Volume 2*.

Karen Tan | Performer

Karen is very privileged to have worked with practically every theatre company in Singapore. She knows she is really lucky to be a working mum, with possibly the best job in the world.

Karen is still a silly little girl, looking for her funny old tree.

Julius Foo | Performer

Julius started his theatre adventure when he acted in his first production with The Necessary Stage (TNS) in 1990.

After becoming a full-time theatre administrator and actor with The Necessary Stage in 1992, his journey as an actor brought him into the area of education with the TIE (theatre-in-education) production of *The Legend Of Bukit Merah*.

His adventure has also taken him to the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Italy from 2000–2013, where he trained and worked as a full-time actor.

In the last decade since he returned to Singapore, he has been given the opportunity to work with different communities, such as people with special needs, early childhood as well as the seniors, through theatre.

He has been co-facilitating the Speech and Drama program at the Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) since 2003 and was one of the facilitators for the Theatre for Seniors programme with TNS between 2007 and 2009.

He discovered his interest in working with children when he was offered to run their drama camp and direct their year-end graduation concert by Creative O Preschoolers Bay in 2003. It has since, become an annual programme at the childcare.

He looks forward to more adventures in 2015.

biographies

Frances Lee | Performer

Frances graduated from the BA (Hons) Acting course at LASALLE College of the Arts in May 2014. She was most recently in W!ld Rice's production of *Monkey Goes West*, where she played the role of Piggy. Frances' professional debut was in Pangdemonium's production of *Fat Pig*, where she was nominated for a Life! Theatre Award for Best Actress. While at LASALLE, she has worked with notable directors such as Natalie Hennedige, Adam Marple, Stefanos Rassios, and Nelson Chia. Her most notable roles include Paulina in *A Winter's Tale*; Mrs. Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* and Tiresias in *Oedipus the King*. Her stage debut came at the age of 8 in *Chang and Eng the Musical*, directed by Ekachai Uekrongtham.

Petrina Dawn Tan | Lighting Designer

Petrina Dawn Tan trained in lighting design under 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 *dans 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* (W!ld Rice), and *The Art of the Brick* (MBS Art Science Museum).

Anita Kapoor | Performer

International media personality, travel presenter and emcee, Anita Kapoor shot to fame as the winner of a Discovery travel host search and hasn't looked back since.

Insatiably curious and a natural wit, this former magazine editor has explored the world for Discovery TLC, AXN, Lonely Planet, Channel News Asia and OKTO, and Starwood Asia Pacific, forever on a quest to pioneer the stories and locations, and especially to connect with the provocateurs who move their worlds.

Also a professional emcee, Anita is a popular presence on stage, commanding the room with natural ease and charm. Her emcee clients include lifestyle brands, banks, trade commissions, embassies, governments and charities.

A true third culture kid, she was born in Mumbai, raised in Singapore and continues to circle the globe, but fondly calls the Lion City home.

Anita is also a clear voice on issues of equality. Her advocacies include Habitat for Humanity and Willing Hearts which feeds the marginalised. She also participated in the Singapore No to Rape campaign, and Lien Foundation's Life Before Death campaign. She spoke at TEDx Singapore Women 2012 on Female to Female Misogyny in the First World.

did you know?

The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole

1

As part of their preparatory work for the 1985 production, Kuo Pao Kun and actor Lim Kay Tong visited a coffin-maker and talked at length about funerals.

3

In director Li Xie's staging in 2010, the customary Chinese funeral setting was recreated for the audience, who sat at tables where peanuts, watermelon seeds, sweets, packet drinks and coils of red string were laid out—as they would have been at an actual wake.

2

In the 2001 production directed by late Malaysian director Krishen Jit, lead actress Neo Swee Lin recalled a moment when the coffin prop was, literally, too big for the theatre. Eventually, it had to be cut in two, brought into the staging area, and glued back together.

No Parking on Odd Days

1

In the English-language production staged in 2000, director Krishen Ji cast female performer Neo Swee Lin in the lead role that was originally written in a male voice.

2

Jack Neo, a local comedian and film director, performed in the Mandarin production directed by Lim Jen Erh in 2000.

3

No Parking on Odd Days was the first theatre production staged in The Chamber in The Arts House in 2004. It was selected as the inaugural play in The Chamber in honour of the late Kuo Pao Kun.

The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree

1

The 2000 biennial Asian Art Festival in Japan, titled *When Petals Fall Like Snow*—The World of Kuo Pao Kun, Playwright, was devoted entirely to Kuo's works. The festival featured three plays by Kuo, each interpreted by directors from Japan, India and Indonesia.

2

Kuo Pao Kun's directorial role in the 1989 staging was unintended. Dennis Scott, associate professor at Yale Drama School was meant to direct the production, but ill health two months before the show meant that Kuo had step in instead.

3

The 2002 production of *The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree*, directed by Lin Ke Huan, did not have any dialogue as part of the performance. It instead relied entirely on Beijing opera movements and the gestures of its two actors to convey the story.

Dramatised Reading

Selected works of Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan

1 May, Fri, 7.30pm

Rehearsal Studio

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

Playwrights

Paul Rae & Kaylene Tan

Director

Irfan Kasban

Performers

Nabilah Said & Lynn Yang

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

director's

message

Relationships are tricky. As tricky, if not more, than directing (and/or performing) a work that is so intimate, especially when an estranged couple is looking for lost intimacy. Lines are drawn, and the time is set. So let us play a game. You start. You keep score. We will push, and we will pull. We will carry on, even when there will never be a winner. So listen carefully, or all will be lost again.

Irfan Kasban



the plays



Photo courtesy of Theatre Works

Balance

In *Balance* (first staged in 2003), performed by then-married couple Gerald Chew and the late Emma Yong in the 2003 premiere, an estranged couple gives themselves a night to get their relationship back on track. As they relive their domestic routines and live out their violent fantasies, they learn that the only way to save what they have is to strike a balance between pretending and being real.



Duets

Duets (first staged in 2005) is the first of their semi-autobiographical *Duets* series, which includes *Duets 2*, *Tree Duet*, *Sky Duet* and *Family Duet*, all staged between 2005 and 2013. Playwrights Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan, who performed in the 2005 premiere, explore life and love as a couple in the play. Interspersed with the sounds and stories of some of pop music's most enduring duets, vignettes with the play chart the ups and downs of two people making a life together.

Interested to find out more about the works?

For background information on these plays, the playwrights, past stagings and selected production photos, visit www.thestudios.com.sg.

biographies

Paul Rae & Kaylene Tan | Playwrights, Spell#7

Spell#7, founded in 1997, comprises husband-and-wife team, Briton Paul Rae and Singaporean Kaylene Tan, who met as drama students at Bristol University, UK. The company is known for producing avant-garde and site-specific works, including intimate theatre performances and environmental audio works.

Lecturer and theatre-maker, Paul Rae was a former assistant professor of Theatre Studies at the National University of Singapore, and is currently teaching at the University of Melbourne, Australia. His research interests include performance aesthetics, performance theory, and contemporary Southeast Asian theatre and performance.

An actor, designer and writer, Kaylene Tan writes documentaries and taught at NUS and LASALLE College of the Arts. She was awarded the National University of Singapore Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (NUS-FASS) and The Arts House Writing Fellowship in 2007. She was also responsible for penning the script and producing the audio for the National Museum of Singapore's History Gallery.

Together, Spell#7 is, for them, a company which places emphasis on creating intimate theatrical performances and environmental sound-works with new media technology. Spell#7 curated and produced *The Year of Living Digitally*, an inaugural month-long affair touted as "Singapore's first ever new media and digital arts festival" held at Esplanade, The Substation and Zouk, featuring 18 international and 10 local artists who showcased works incorporating web, film, animation, electronic music, installation and performance.



Other interactive video and audio works created by Spell#7 include *Desire Paths*, an audio tour of Little India created with musician Evan Tan in 2004; *Ghostwalking*, a set of audio walks and video tours held at selected stops of the North-East MRT train line created with Ben Slater (text), Evan Tan (sound) and Sherman Ong (video) in 2010; and audio work *And Then There Was One*, staged at the NUS Baba House in 2013 as part of the NUS Arts Festival, in which there were no live performers and the audience listened to a recorded narration using an MP3 player.

The company has also teamed up with other theatre companies such as British theatrical company Bodies in Flight for *Double Happiness* (2000) and *Dream-Work/Dream-Home* (2009), and TheatreWorks for *Meena and Me* (1999).

biographies

Irfan Kasban | Director

Irfan Kasban is a freelance theatre maker who writes, directs, designs, and at times, performs. His unwavering dedication to art is a celebration of space and time we call life. The former Associate Artistic Director of Teater Ekamatra is responsible for mentoring Mereka incubation programme, works like *CLASSIFIED: Projek Congkak* (White Box Festival 2006), *Keep Clear* (Open Studio, Singapore Arts Festival 2010), *Hantaran Buat Mangsa Lupa* (M1 Fringe Festival 2012), *94:05* (Kakiseni Festival 2013) and main season shows *This Placement* (2012), *Tahan* (2013), and *A Beautiful Chance Encounter of a Sewing Machine and an Umbrella on an Operating Table* (2014). Recently he directed *Three Inches of Alive* as part of TheatreWorks' Writing & Community 2015. Irfan is grateful to have learnt everything he knows from the kind souls who were willing to share. He sincerely believes in passing it forward.

Lynn Yang | Performer

Lynn Yang earns a living as an arts manager, and manages to live the arts in her time outside of work. She is a proud graduate of the VJC Theatre Studies and Drama programme, and has trained with the Singapore Repertory Theatre Young Co. More recently, she was a part of Mereka, an incubation platform by Teater Ekamatra. Past projects include *The Wasteland* (Teater Ekamatra), *A Beautiful Chance Encounter of a Sewing Machine and an Umbrella on an Operating Table* (Teater Ekamatra), *I Saw. We Said. You Did* (an inter-disciplinary movement piece by Project Zero, Boston, USA), *Dream Country – A Lost Monologue* (Singapore Arts Festival 2012), and *Re: Almost Left Behind* (Singapore Arts Fest 2011). She is deeply interested in how the arts affect change, and is working to make that her life path. Lynn also sings, illustrates, and loves making beautiful things.

Nabilah Said | Performer

Nabilah Said was part of the pioneer batch of Teater Ekamatra's youth wing, *Mereka*. Since completing the one-year programme in 2011, she has been part of theatre productions by Teater Ekamatra and TheatreWorks. These include ensemble productions, *This Placement* (2012) and *A Beautiful Chance Encounter of a Sewing Machine and an Umbrella on an Operating Table* (2014), both projects helmed by Irfan Kasban. She has been part of Teater Ekamatra's *Mentah*, a platform to help nurture young playwrights, since 2012. Past works include *Stesen Berikut* (Next Station) in 2014 and *Sesat* (Lost) in 2012. An upcoming work, *Tart*, will be staged in May 2015. On occasion, she also writes theatre reviews and short stories as a freelance writer.

did you know?

Balance

1

Balance was written for Gerald Chew and Emma Yong who were married at the point of the production.

2

Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan went for Ayurvedic treatments as part of their research. In Ayurveda, there are different natural elements, which relate to one's physical and personality traits. At that point, in Ayurvedic terms, Rae was identified as a fire type, and Tan as a water element character.

3

Rae was studying in the UK while Tan was in Singapore when they wrote the play. Drafts, rewrites and edits were sent via email.

4

The sensory experience of the production included an optional gourmet three-course dinner experience for the audience.



Duets

1

Two weeks before their first child was born in 2004, Kaylene Tan and Paul Rae performed *Duets* at The Substation. Six months later, after Tan had delivered, *Duets* was restaged in April in 2005.

2

In *Duets*, there was reference in the dialogue to some bacon in the fridge. Although the audience did not see what was in the fridge, Tan and Rae did actually place some bacon in it.

3

The furniture on stage was taken from the couple's living room.

4

In *Family Duet* (2013) which reflects on the original *Duets* performance, Lola, their first daughter, opens the play by saying: "The first time I was on stage, I wasn't even born."



Production image from *Family Duet*, 2013

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

Dramatised Reading

Contemporary & New Wave

2 May, Sat, 6pm

Rehearsal Studio

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

Playwrights

Leow Puay Tin & Natalie Hennedige

Director

Edith Podesta

Performers

**Benedict Hew, Erwin Shah Ismail, Neo Swee Lin,
Stefanos Rassios, Karen Tan & Amanda Tee**

Sound Designer

Teo Wee Boon

Mask Designer

neontights

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

director's

message

It is such a privilege to work with Karen, Swee Lin, Stefanos, Amanda, Erwin, and Benedict on this staged reading of selected texts from Leow Puay Tin's *Family*, and Natalie Hennedige's *Nothing* and *Temple*.

As director, I employed Leow Puay Tin's playwright's note included in the *Family* preface, as a model for selecting and directing the text:

In effect, the director is asked to decide:

- (i) what and how much of the text to use,*
- (ii) in what order to present it, and*
- (iii) the means of presentation*

Where selection of text is concerned, the director can use the entire script or drop material which does not fit into his/her scheme of things. Text from one module can be extracted and spliced into other modules. There is the possibility of making short plays through groupings of certain modules. Other kinds of material, textual and non-textual, can also be introduced to comment on or contextualize the chosen text, or as performative parallels to the text. Examples of supplementary material include media reports, audio-visuels, movement, sounds, conceptual and performance art, etc.

However, there should be no rewriting. Words cannot be changed in any way. This means that text which has been selected should be used as written.

Also, the origins or sources of any supplementary textual material must be clearly credited and made known to the audience and the public in general.



Thank you Chong Tze Chien, Natalie Hennedige, Sharon Tang, Nizam Supardi, A. Syadiq, Lam Dan Fong, and the staff from Esplanade for all your support and guidance.

Edith Podesta

the plays



Photo courtesy of Cake Theatrical Productions

Nothing by Natalie Hennedige

Nothing (first staged in 2007) is a kaleidoscopic play that muses on life, love and death.

The plot revolves around three pairs of characters: introverted daughter and grumpy father Daisy and Fang; couple Linda and Lan whose relationship is on the downhill path; and shy new lovers, Dog Lady and Mosquito Man. The scenes depicting these pairs are interwoven with random vignettes of other relationships—for instance, between World War II soldiers, Ali and Louis, and toilet cleaners CikTipah and Hui Ling.



Photo courtesy of Cake Theatrical Productions

Interested to find out more about the work?

For background information on these plays, the playwrights, past stagings and selected production photos, visit www.thestudios.com.sg.



Photo credit TheatreWorks Archival site

Family by Leow Puay Tin

Family (first staged in 1996) was first staged under the title *The Yang Family* by TheatreWorks in 1996. It is an epic play which traces the history of the fictional Yang family, through the life of Tan Neo (Mrs Yang). It was the first of four plays presented by TheatreWorks in 1996 as part of its festival, The Cutting Edge, which showcased interdisciplinary works. The play features 34 characters spanning four generations, and depicts the struggles and aspirations of a Chinese immigrant family. It is told through the stories of its women, who eventually outlived all the men in the family.

Temple by Natalie Hennedige

Temple (first staged in 2008) sees the invention of a mythological universe where all the quarters of the world are at odds. A group of characters lock themselves away and seek refuge in an abandoned sports hall to avoid the evils of the outside world—which they think have taken the form of crocodiles. On some nights, they hear pounding at the doors, so they keep very still and do nothing. One day, they awake to find the doors of the hall wide open, upon which, a troop of crocodiles in cheerleading suits enter and slowly infect the population.

biographies



Leow Puay Tin | Playwright, Family

Leow Puay Tin is a playwright whose major works *Three Children*, *Ang Tau Mui* and *Family* have been produced in Malaysia, Singapore, Tokyo, Berlin, Cairo, Adelaide, Melbourne, and New York. A performer as well as a writer, her works experiment with improvisations during performance, non-linearity and modular writing, incorporating naturalistic and non-realistic dialogues and monologues, as well as songs and chants.

In addition to creating texts for performance, Puay Tin also devises performances through collaborations with other arts practitioners and non-practitioners, on projects such as *Tikam-Tikam: Merdeka* in 2008 and *The Baling Talks* for the 2011 Singapore Arts Festival. She has also worked as a journalist and taught vocal work at Akademi Seni Budaya & Warisan Kebangsaan (National Academy of Arts, Culture & Heritage), Malaysia.

A recipient of the UK Chevening and US East-West Center scholarships, Puay Tin holds an MFA in Theatre from the University of Hawaii, and currently heads the Department of Performance and Media at Sunway University, Malaysia.



Natalie Hennedige | Playwright, Nothing & Temple

Natalie Hennedige is the Artistic Director of Cake Theatrical Productions. A recipient of the National Arts Council Young Artist Award in 2007 and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Singapore Foundation Culture Award in 2010, Natalie conceptualises, writes and directs, creating works in theatre and other media. She composes projects that defy classification, intersecting disciplines to push at artistic possibilities within the performance experience. Constantly in collaboration with artists from across disciplines such as visual arts, film and video, performance art and dance, Natalie engineers works that are contemporary and artistically adventurous, playing at conventional performance venues, unusual spaces of creative experimentation and in public spaces to create performance-based experiences and theatrical spectacles.

biographies

Edith Podesta | Director

Edith studied Acting and Movement Studies at the National Institute of Dramatic Art's (NIDA), and holds a Master of Arts Fine Arts from LASALLE College of the Arts. In 2014 she was awarded Best Actress at the Life! Theatre Awards for her role in Cake Theatrical Productions *Illogic*, directed by Natalie Hennedige.

As a theatre maker, Edith has written, directed and helmed the devising process of many original theatre productions including: *Con\$umed* for NUS Arts Festival; *Memorabilia*, and *List* for LASALLE; *Icarus On The Floor Of Heaven*, *Seventyeightsixty*, and *Underbelly* for NIDA. *A Cage Goes In Search Of A Bird* by A Group Of People was awarded Production of the Year (2010), and *Dark Room X8* for Esplanade's *The Studios* which recently won Best Ensemble, at the 15th The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards in 2015.

As a presenter, she has interviewed Juliette Binoche for the Singapore International Film Festival, and Ushio Amagatsu for *ConversAsians*; she hosted the panel discussion *All Art is Quite Useless* for the Singapore Writers Festival; and was second speaker for *The Great Debate: You Have To Be Miserable To Be An Artist* for The Arts House.

More information can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/edithpodesta.page> or at @Edith_Podesta on Twitter.

Amanda Tee | Performer

Amanda Tee has been involved in the Singapore Repertory 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 in 2011, the Suzuki Company of Toga in Japan in 2014, and graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts in 2009 with a bachelor's in acting.

Benedict Hew | Performer

Hailing from Kuala Lumpur, Benedict Hew graduated from the BA(Hons) in Acting Programme at LASALLE College of the Arts in May 2104. While at LASALLE he was featured in Natalie Hennedige's production of *The Visit* and Chong Tze Chien's *Starring Hitler as Jekyll & Hyde*, among other plays. He has appeared in *Women of Asia* by Asa Gim Palomera, *Human+* in the Drama Center Black Box, *Fat Kids are Harder to Kidnap* at the Singapore Night Festival and in Singapore Repertory Theatre's The Little Company's *Junior Claus*, and their next show, *Three Billy Goats Gruff* by Anthony Drewe and George Stiles.

Slated to work with Dramabox in September, his other credits include parts in upcoming films *1965* and *In The Room*, and various school assembly shows to date. He plans to keep gunning for more parts in plays, films, television series and occasional singing gigs, and is brimmingly hopeful for the arts scene in Singapore.

Erwin Shah Ismail | Performer

Erwin is the first male Singaporean to graduate from LASALLE College of the Arts' BA(Hons) Acting. Previously a computer network engineer, he has now established himself as a trilingual actor, singer and musician.

Stage credits include Mercutio in *Romeo & Juliet* (W!LD RICE), Montano in *Othello* (SRT), Najip Ali in *National Broadway Company* (TheatreWorks), Georg in *Spring Awakening* (Pangdemonium!), Jeremiah in *Boom* (Sight Lines), Woman Police Constable in *Square Moon* (Function 8), Xiao Song in 天冷就回来 (*If There're Seasons*) (The Theatre Practice), an unnamed inmate in Edith Podesta's *Dark Room x8* and more recently, Hanis in *Mosaic* (Take Off) for M1 Singapore Fringe Festival. To date, he has been nominated twice for Best Supporting Actor at the Life! Theatre Awards. He also enjoys performing for children and has done several with SRT's The Little Company, Players Theatre and ITheatre. Grateful to have received opportunities abroad, he has performed in countries like Malaysia, Philippines, Scotland and Peru.

Television credits include Hilmi on *Interns* (MediaCorp Suria), voice of Shuhaimi on *Heartland Hubby* (MediaCorp Ch5), narrator on *Every Singaporean Son* (Nat Geo) and Rico on *The Kitchen Musical* (AXN) which was nominated Best Drama Series at the 2012 International Emmy Awards.

Karen Tan | Performer

Karen is very privileged to have worked with practically every theatre company in Singapore. She knows she is really lucky to be a working mum, with possibly the best job in the world.

Karen is constantly thrilled by how words can change the way we feel the world, until she has to memorise them.

biographies

Neo Swee Lin | Performer

An accomplished theatre, television and film actor, Neo Swee Lin is probably most recognisable to audiences as the beloved batty Ahma in the TV series *Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd*.

However, the theatre has always been her first love. Swee Lin was awarded Best Supporting Actress at the 2010 Life! Theatre Awards for her role in Teater Ekamatra's production of *Nadirah*. The same role won her Best Actor at the BOH Cameronian Awards in KL last year.

She has worked previously with Checkpoint Theatre on *wo(men)* and *Cogito*. Her other stage credits include *Cooling Off Day* (Wild Rice), *8 Women* (Sing'Theatre), *Cheek* (Cake Theatrical), *Poop* (The Finger Players), *Those Who Can't, Teach* (The Necessary Stage), *Hamlet* (SRT), and *Half Lives* (TheatreWorks).

Swee Lin has appeared in films such as *The Blue Mansion*, *Kallang Roar*, *Anna and the King*, *12 Storeys*, *Where Got Problem*, *Katong Fugue*, and *Cut*. Her TV work includes *Really Something*, *Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd*, *My Grandson the Doctor*, *The Celebration*, *Drive*, and most recently *Common Space*.

Stefanos Rassios | Performer

Stefanos Rassios is a graduate of The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) acting and directing courses. His theatre credits include: *No Exit* by Jean Paul Satre; *Wild Honey* by Michael Frayn; *Ring Round The Moon* by Jean Anouilh; and *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker. His film and television credits include: *Danny Deckchair* directed by Jeff Balmeyer; *Comedy Inc* directed by Ted Emery; *The Mormon Conquest* directed by Jackie Schulz; *All Saints* for the Seven Network (Australia); and *The Man On The Boat* directed by Boyd Britton, for which he won Best Actor at the Festival Du Cinema De Paris.

Stefanos has directed over 40 productions in Singapore and Australia, including *The Taming of the Shrew*; *The Trojan Women: An Elegy*; *Seven Doors*; *The Tempest*; *Orpheus Descending*; *Attempts on Her Life*; *Woyzeck*; *The Maids*; *Peer Gynt*; *Oresteia*; *Blood Wedding*; *The Life of Galileo*; *Clark in Sarajevo*; *Twelfth Night*; *Mother Courage and Her Children*; *Love & Money* and *The Visit*. Stefanos will be directing Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* in July at the Victoria Theatre.

More information can be found at <http://cargocollective.com/stefanosrassios/>

did you know?

Family

1

It all started with a phone call from Ong Keng Sen to Leow Puay Tin, expressing his interest in contemporising the classic of Yang women warriors to explore the role of women in Singapore. He asked if Leow Puay Tin could write it.

(Source: Playwright's note by Leow Puay Tin in *Playful Phoenix: Women write for The Singapore Stage*, 1996)

2

The play was first performed in a 167-year-old shophouse (number 38) at Amoy Street, which had been a rice warehouse, a rooming house and a home to an abbot.

3

The 1996 production was a sensory performance with not more than 60 audience members per night. The evening began by drawing lots to determine the sequence of the scenes, and audience members were handed a Walkman with Mrs Yang's narration of her early life.

Nothing

1

Written in English, *Nothing* was performed in English, Mandarin, Teochew, Malay and Bahasa Indonesia. There are 19 characters in the play including soldiers, a dengue inspection officer, toilet cleaners, international aid workers, teacher and student, maid, hospice caregiver and a grieving mother.

2

Nothing was created in a room in a shophouse along Tanjong Katong Road. The rehearsal room was about the size of two ping pong tables.

3

One of the initial titles of the play was *Everything*.

Temple

1

In preparation for the play, the cast rehearsed four times a week for four months in the former Singapore Badminton Hall—a decidedly stuffy and uncomfortable indoor space that was without air-conditioners and fans. Nevertheless, director Natalie Hennedige felt that it was an appropriate venue to rehearse a play that takes place in a sports hall. (Source: *Today*, 17 June 2008)

2

One of the climatic moments in the original production saw the backstage doors fly open to reveal a whole military band, comprising 20 Victoria School boys as tattered and bloodied marching soldiers, and 20 CHIJ St Nicholas girls as cheerleaders wearing crocodile heads. Lights flooded the space, transforming it into a sports stadium, and the seven actors were joined by the spectacular ensemble.

3

In the production, the sporting theme prevailed with characters in different types of sports gear performing wushu, taiji and boxing moves.

Forums *free*

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.



Photo credit: Tan Ngliap Heng

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 website: Get to know the plays and playwrights



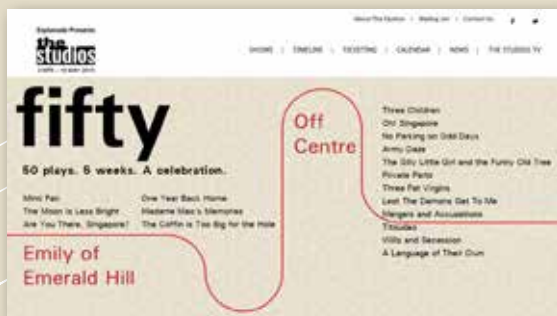
The playwrights featured in this photo were dressed in the outfits they wear when they write.

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



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**

Production manager
(dramatised readings & forums)

Isis Koh, Lynn Liu & Cindy Yeong
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 & Siti Nuraisha Safri

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
WILD 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	<div>Off Centre</div> <div>23 – 26 Apr</div> <div>v Thu – Sat, 8pm Sat & Sun, 3pm</div> <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	<div>Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral</div> <div>30 Apr – 3 May</div> <div>v Thu – Sat, 8pm Sat & Sun, 3pm</div> <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	<div>The Lady of Soul and Her Ultimate “S” Machine</div> <div>7 – 10 May</div> <div>v Thu – Sat, 8pm Sat & Sun, 3pm</div> <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 fourth drink of the season:

The Admiral



The Studios Bar by ORGO

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.

With its Ceylon infused rum, cinnamon, clove, Guinness syrup, orgeat and chai foam flowing gently together, this cocktail will take you on a voyage of intricate flavours and sensations.

Cocktails: \$15 - \$20

(Cash payment for drinks sold at Theatre Studio foyer)

Cocktails* available from 2 Apr – 10 May

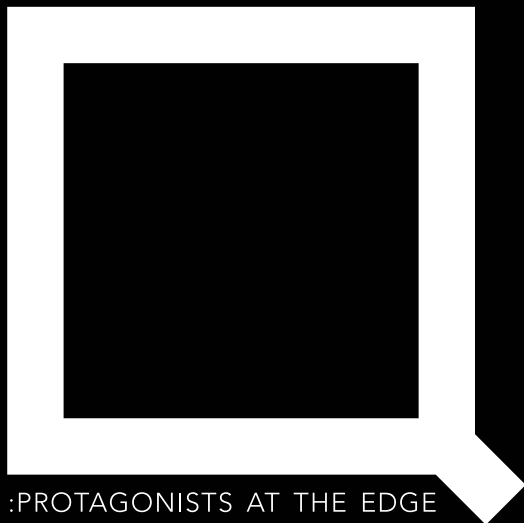
Theatre Studio Foyer bar open from 7pm till 30 mins after each performance.

(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

3 ACTORS. 1 SINGAPORE RIVER. 50 YEARS OF THEATRE PAST AND PRESENT.



:PROTAGONISTS AT THE EDGE

A NEW WORK DIRECTED BY ANG GEY PIN

Devised with ITI 2015 graduating cohort

AL-MATIN YATIM | CHANG TING WEI | YAZID JALIL

27 – 30 May 2015, 7.30pm
Esplanade Rehearsal Studio

In *Q: Protagonists at the Edge*, veteran director Ang Gey Pin examines, together with the graduating cohort of Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), renowned Singapore works and the responses they engender today.

Taking off from plays of Kuo Pao Kun (*The Silly Little Girl And The Funny Old Tree; The Eagle And The Cat*) and Lim Jen Erh (*Three Families Blessings* - originally a traditional Hokkien Opera), the ensemble questions, confronts and investigates their own responses, finally presenting it to the audience – who witness it as a stripped back, bare bones and truthful theatre experience.

BOOK NOW AT SISTIC.COM.SG

Tickets: \$25 | \$20 for Students, NSFs & Senior Citizens
(Excludes SISTIC booking fee)

SISTIC hotline: 6348 5555
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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.

**the
studios**

