

checkpoint theatre

presents

Recalling Mother

by Claire Wong and Noorlinah Mohamed

26 – 30 August 2009

Valentine Willie Fine Art

ARTSPACE@Helutrans

Welcome to Recalling Mother

It has been both incredibly easy and incredibly difficult making this work. That both Noorlinah and I instinctively shared a vision made the artistic collaboration easy. That we wanted to 'perform ourselves' made it incredibly difficult. We wanted to create work that was thoughtfully crafted and carefully honed, yet unstintingly honest and unfiltered, and as unguarded and open as the conversations which gave birth to it. I was inspired and empowered by our collaboration because there was so much generosity, humility and trust. This work is 'Theatre of the Heart' and it is a privilege to share it with you. ♪ This production could not have happened without the generous support, hard work and enthusiasm of everyone in the team. My heartfelt thanks: to Valentine and Dionne for this wonderful opportunity to create living art in the gallery; to Grace for being a kindred artistic soul; to Huzir for loving this piece and me so much; to Noorlinah for the invaluable gift of your friendship, the journey thus far and the journey ahead; and to my Mum, Wong Yoot Ho, for being my inspiration, for sometimes driving me nuts but mostly making me feel whole and loved. Let the conversations continue.

— Claire Wong

What is Recalling Mother to me? Well...

It is a process of collaboration between 2 artists. They share a space, work together to create something from almost nothing. Each day a new discovery, each day a new creation, and each day a different process. They share a generous collaborative spirit that empowers both to find a place for their own artistic voice while enjoying the presence of the other. ♪ *Recalling Mother* is nostalgia. It returns to a time and a way of working in the theatre that is less practiced today. Everything is shared from content, design, management and welfare. A true *gotong-royong* spirit. Each artist sharing the weight of one vision. ♪ It is old-fashioned storytelling. Finding inspiration from old tales and making new tales resonate with the old. Giving life to personal stories and opening spaces for the emotions to manifest simply, honestly and naturally. ♪ It is inspiration. I thank Checkpoint Theatre and Claire for giving me this chance, before I leave Singapore for the next 3 years, to recall and recapture everything that is wonderful, painful, difficult, tiring, frustrating and joyful about theatre making. And most importantly to Cik Bee Bee Mohd Salam, my Mak, for generously sharing her life and stories with me. ♪ Enjoy and thank you for being here tonight.

— Noorlinah Mohamed

Claire Wong

Claire is a co-founder and Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre, Singapore. She graduated with a Master of Fine Arts (Theatre Arts) from Columbia University, New York. ¶ As an actress, Claire was most recently seen on stage in Checkpoint Theatre's *Cogito*, written and directed by Huzir Sulaiman, and a commission of the Singapore Arts Festival 2007. Last year, Claire acted in the Singapore feature film by Glen Goei, *The Blue Mansion* (opening in cinemas in October). Claire has performed in major international arts festivals and in cities such as Edinburgh, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Cologne, Copenhagen, New York City, Paris, Adelaide, Tokyo, Yokohama, Fukuoka, and Kuala Lumpur. Her stage credits include: *Cogito*, *Atomic Jaya*, *Opiume* (Checkpoint Theatre); *Atomic Jaya* (Five Arts Centre); *Occupation* (Straits Theatre Company); *The Woman In A Tree On the Hill* (Wild Rice); *Lear*, *Desdemona*, *Madame Mao's Memories*, *Beauty World*, *Three Children*, *Mad Forest* (Theatreworks). ¶ As a director, she was nominated for Best Director in the Singapore's Life! Theatre Awards for the landmark production of the trilogy of plays by Eleanor Wong, *Invitation To Treat* (*Mergers & Accusation*, *Wills & Secession*, *Jointly & Severably*). She wrote and directed a television film, *Project Peter*, for Singapore's Arts Central channel. She recently co-wrote the screenplay *The Unforgettable Rose Chan* and is currently working on the screenplay of a historical film of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment of the Indian National Army.

Noorlinah Mohamed

Noorlinah is an actor, educator and advocate of the arts. As an actor, she has performed and toured extensively since 1988 with companies like TheatreWorks, Action Theatre, The Theatre Practice, The Necessary Stage, Wild Rice, Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble and Cake Theatre. *Recalling Mother* is her second project with Checkpoint Theatre after *Cogito* for the Singapore Arts Festival in 2007. ¶ Noorlinah is also an arts educator who has developed numerous aesthetic education programmes in schools under the auspices of the NAC Artist-in-School scheme. She lectures part-time at the National Institute of Education. She is also an advocate of the professional development and needs of actors and drama educators in Singapore. Noorlinah co-founded two professional bodies – the Association of Singapore Actors and Singapore Drama Educators Association. With the latter she served as its President from 2005 - 2009. During that time, she developed the youth and community arts festival, *Celebrate Drama!*, and led numerous arts-related community projects under the banner of SDEA Outreach Project, as well as professional development initiatives in collaboration with the Singapore Workforce Development Agency. ¶ Noorlinah is the recipient of several awards – Singapore Women's Weekly's Great Women of the Year Award (2005) and the JCCI Culture Award (2008) for her contributions to the arts. She was recently awarded the 9th Life! Theatre Award for Best Actress for her performance in *Temple* staged by Cake Theatre in 2008.

Huzir Sulaiman

A critically acclaimed dramatist and a 2007 Yale World Fellow, Huzir writes for theatre, film, television and newspapers. He directs for the stage and screen, and is a consultant for the arts and heritage sectors. He is currently working with design firm GSM as the Creative Director of the observation deck on Level 124 of the Burj Dubai, the tallest building in the world. ¶ A co-founder and Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre, Huzir also teaches playwriting at the National University of Singapore and mentors NUS Stage. ¶ His collection *Eight Plays* is published by Silverfish Books. He will be seen later this year on screen as Detective Superintendent Suresh in the film *The Blue Mansion*. Forthcoming publications include the chapter on the arts in *Readings on Development: Malaysia at 50, Malaysia 2057*, published by Khazanah.

Grace Low

Recalling Mother is Grace's third production with Checkpoint Theatre after *A Language Of Their Own* (2006) and *Cogito* (2007). Grace's stage management credits include Theatreworks' *The Flying Circus Project* (2004); *Boxing Day: A Tsunami Project* (2005) by The Necessary Stage; *The Admiral's Odyssey* (2005) by Action Theatre; *Animal Vegetable Mineral* (2005) by CAKE Theatrical Productions; *A Twist of Fate* (2005), *Man Of Letters* (2006) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (2009) by Singapore Repertory Theatre; and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (2006) and *Hey Figaro! The Barber of Seville* (2007) by Singapore Lyric Opera. Her production management credits include *Boom* (2008), *Avenue Q* (2008) and *The Crucible* (2009) by Singapore Repertory Theatre.

Written, directed, and performed by
Claire Wong and Noorlinah Mohamed

Produced by
Claire Wong, Noorlinah Mohamed, Huzir Sulaiman and Grace Low

Technical assistance by
Teo Kuang Han and Kailash
Programme design by
Mark De Winne
Performance archival photography by
Faith Ng

Recalling Mother was first presented as a work in progress at the National Museum of Singapore as part of the 2006 International Festival of Women in Contemporary Theatre (The Magdalena Project).

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With the support of



“Singapore’s multi-disciplinary
Checkpoint Theatre, already a repository of
much of the territory’s best stage talent...”

Financial Times (UK)

Checkpoint Theatre was founded in 2002. Huzir Sulaiman and Claire Wong serve as its Joint Artistic Directors.

Checkpoint’s past productions include: *Occupation* (a commission of the 2002 Singapore Arts Festival); *Atomic Jaya* (2003); *Election Day* (2004); *Opium* (a co-commission of the 2004 Singapore Arts Festival and the Hong Kong New Visions Festival); *A Language Of Their Own* (2006); and *Cogito* (a commission of the 2007 Singapore Arts Festival).

Recalling Mother is the first in a series of chamber theatre performances by Checkpoint Theatre called the Home Theatre System. Based on personal stories about people, their relationships and their lives, the series celebrates the very best traditions of theatre-making. For audiences numbering no more than 80 or so, the performance venues themselves are intimate and personal - an art gallery, someone’s living room, over a dinner table.

Our next production in this series, *Footage*, will be written by Huzir Sulaiman and will be staged in December, continuing our collaboration with Valentine Willie Fine Art.

Checkpoint Theatre is also pleased to be mentoring NUS Stage, a student theatre group under the auspices of the National University of Singapore’s Centre For the Arts. In October, Huzir Sulaiman will direct an evening of short student plays. In March next year, Claire Wong will direct Faith Ng’s *wo(men)*, which will open the 2010 NUS Arts Festival and will star Neo Swee Lin, Lok Meng Chue and Patricia Toh.

Checkpoint is dedicated to furthering the renaissance in Singapore playwrighting, and will continue to identify, nurture, and stage the works of the next wave of playwrights.