

WILDRICE SINGAPORE
THEATRE FESTIVAL 2016

LET'S GET
BACK
TOGETHER

7 JULY – 10 JULY 2016 / FLEXIBLE PERFORMANCE SPACE, LASALLE

PRESENTED BY



RED PILL PRODUCTIONS



“This
Festival
is about
YOU,
and it’s
about
US.”

DEAR AUDIENCE,

I am thrilled to welcome you to the fifth edition of the Singapore Theatre Festival! At a time when Singapore is poised between its storied past and the uncertain future, the Festival presents eight of the most exciting, ambitious and thought-provoking new plays that have been written in and about today's Singapore.

In this day and age, many issues surrounding race, religion, politics, sex and gender identity have become divisive and polarising. When it comes to thinking and talking about them, we are frequently paralysed by political correctness and fear.

We need new ways of seeing and thinking. Collectively and individually, the plays in the Festival invite and enable conversation and debate about today's hot-button topics. Insightful, funny and moving, they challenge and encourage us to imagine possibilities beyond our own biases and prejudices, giving us clues as to how we can live with one another.

Check in to WILD RICE's *HOTEL*, an electrifying five-hour odyssey through time and history that was unanimously acclaimed as an instant classic following its sold-out premiere at the 2015 Singapore International Festival of Arts. Travel with us through the neon-lit *lorongs* of *Geylang* and the makeshift motorcycle racing lanes near Yishun Dam, where you'll learn why *Riders Know When It's Gonna Rain*. Get swept up in the political manoeuvrings playing out in Chai Chee-Commonwealth *GRC*. Watch as faith and sexuality come into conflict when an unconventional love story comes to a premature end in *Hawa*. And listen to the voices of those who are bravely breaking the silence: young people questioning their sexuality and gender in *Let's Get Back Together*, dialect-speakers cast into linguistic exile in *Grandmother Tongue*, and an older woman discovering buried passions in *My Mother Buys Condoms*.

To enrich your theatre-going experience, we have also planned an exciting range of FESTIVITIES. Engage with prominent public personalities and thought leaders at *The Art & Life Sessions*, a series of lively forums reflecting on the issues of the day. Kick back and relax in the *Festival Club* with *Drag Attack!*, *Songs of Protest* and *Stand Up for Singapore*, a late-night programme that shines a spotlight on emerging and established talents in the respective fields of drag, music and stand-up comedy.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this Festival is about YOU, and it's about US. From the disarmingly intimate to the startlingly epic, these new plays will open your eyes, touch your hearts and blow your minds. They are immediately relevant to anyone who calls Singapore home. But, far from being insular and parochial, they also speak to the universal experience of being human and the world we live in today.

Thank you very much for supporting Singapore theatre. We hope you enjoy the show!

IVAN HENG
Artistic Director

SYNOPSIS



"I do not think Singapore is ready... There are gay groups in Singapore, there are gay people in Singapore and they have a place to stay here and we let them live their own lives. And we do not harass them or discriminate against them. But neither, I think, if you ask most Singaporeans, do we want the LGBT community to set the tone for Singapore society. The society is basically a conservative one."

- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (4 June 2015)

What is it like to grow up different in a country where laws, morality and the media dictate what is normal? Who gets to determine what constitutes harassment and discrimination against minorities? Is Singapore society really as conservative as we're often told it is? Can this country truly be a home for everyone, regardless of race, language, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity?

Based on frank, funny and sometimes fabulous interviews conducted with over 50 brave and inspiring individuals, *Let's Get Back Together* is an original testimonial theatre piece exploring the realities that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people face on a daily basis in Singapore. Even as the rest of the world begins to wake up to the idea that LGBT rights are human rights, *Let's Get Back Together* sheds light on the trials and triumphs of these individuals as they grapple with issues of faith, identity and acceptance.

TAKE FIVE WITH MARK NG!

Mark takes five questions from Festival Director Ivan Heng about directing and co-writing *Let's Get Back Together*

What was the inspiration behind *Let's Get Back Together*?

Let's Get Back Together was created to paint an honest and comprehensive portrait of a community that has long been the subject of intense public scrutiny. Our main purpose is to provide audiences with as compelling a picture as we can of the very real problems faced by these individuals. I identify as gay myself. Having a very personal stake in the issue also motivated me to create a platform for others, one that would allow them to start a dialogue with their families about things they might find difficult to talk about.

How did you go about choosing the subjects you interviewed?

We didn't treat this play as a check-and-balance sheet, ticking as many boxes as possible when it comes to whom to represent, because that would have been impossible. Rather, we chose the stories that had the greatest degree of relatability and honesty, and which immediately jumped off the page.

What challenges did you face in staging a play comprising interviews and testimonials?

The biggest problem I faced was keeping the audiences engaged – to allow the words of the interviewees to get through to the audience, without having them swallowed up by every other element within the theatre. I had to strike a fine balance between theatricalising and stripping back the text.

What did you learn from the first staging?

Our biggest learning point was the need to further personify and ground the characters such that their stories come through, rather than just their political or intellectual beliefs. In this regard, we have worked to bring out the raw honesty and intimacy at the heart of each story. We want the audience to be just as enraptured as we were by the strength and humour of every individual who has contributed to this piece.

As an artist, what do you think are some of the challenges facing Singapore and the world at the moment? What gives you hope?

I think we live in a world in which listening has become a very rare commodity. In our hectic lives, we tend to forget about the people around us, including the marginalised and disenfranchised.

I believe that theatre's function is to help us listen to one another again: to talk with one another, rather than at one another. I have hope because our society is starting to embrace the arts more in such a capacity, and we are all getting better at listening with fresh ears and open minds.

TAKE FIVE WITH KENNETH CHIA!

Kenneth takes five questions from Festival Dramaturg Alfian Sa'at about writing *Let's Get Back Together*

Why did you choose the format of verbatim theatre for *Let's Get Back Together*?

It was very important that we let the community speak for itself. These stories exist in reality – why should we filter them through fiction? The verbatim format possesses immediacy and potency. It captures the distinct vernacular and richly detailed stories of a community that a single playwright cannot hope to accurately represent.

What were some of the challenges you faced while collecting testimonials for the play?

The biggest challenge came in gaining the trust of the LGBT community. Many of our interviewees had been misrepresented in the past by others, so their apprehension was only natural. We worked very hard to engage them at every step of the process, inviting them to previews and feedback sessions before we opened the show to the public. Another challenge was getting those who aren't supportive of the LGBT community to open up too. They aren't faceless people; they're someone's mother, brother, sister, friend. Their stories are also important to understand.

How has the play changed since its first staging back in 2014?

I think time has allowed our perspectives to mature. We've kept abreast of the evolving LGBT debate since 2014, which has fed into how we've tweaked *Let's Get Back Together*. That said, we've also come to realise that these stories still give us goosebumps. They're just as relevant today as when we first staged the play.

There has been a long history of queer-themed plays in Singapore, from Chay Yew's early plays to Eleanor Wong's *Trilogy*. How do the voices in *Let's Get Back Together* differ from the ones in these pioneering plays?

The voices in *Let's Get Back Together* don't exist in a fictionalised world. They have been lived and relived. It may be more productive to think about how our play fits alongside these other works – I think it fills a necessary gap in local LGBT literature.

As an artist, what do you think are some of the challenges facing Singapore and the world at the moment? What gives you hope?

An artist has many roles in society, but serving state-approved narratives is not one of them. We should tell the stories of those who are not as privileged to have their stories told.

The influx of young voices in theatre is incredibly heartening. There's nothing better than knowing you work in a community that's hungry to make an impact. It also gives me hope to see theatre still changing the lives and perspectives of people in the same way it changed 14-year-old me.



BIOGRAPHIES - CREATIVE TEAM

MARK NG - PLAYWRIGHT & DIRECTOR



Mark graduated with a Diploma in Applied Drama & Psychology from Singapore and is currently completing his degree in Drama at London's Queen Mary University on a scholarship. He believes that art and purpose should be neither mutually exclusive nor inextricable from each other. Inclined towards contemporary issues, he is also very interested in the intersection of theatre and technology.

KENNETH CHIA - PLAYWRIGHT



Currently pursuing his BA in Theatre Studies at the National University of Singapore, Kenneth hopes to create bold, accessible and urgent work as a young actor and playwright. His play, *Long Weekend*, was recently staged as part of The Twenty-Something Theatre Festival. Other theatre credits include *TragicForm* (Natalie Henneidge/NUS); *Other/s* (Esplanade RAW Series) and *It Won't Be Too Long: The Lesson* (Singapore International Festival of Arts). He was also a research intern for Loo Zihan's *With/Out* (M1 Fringe Festival 2015).

ELIZABETH KOW - SET DESIGNER



Elizabeth is currently in her second year of the BA (Hons) Drama and Theatre Arts programme at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Through this programme, she explores and trains in various performance styles ranging from Grotowski to Butoh; as well as site-specific and autobiographical performance. Currently, her interests lie in questions of inter-culturalism, as well as exploring socio-cultural hybridisation and taboos.

TK HAY - LIGHTING DESIGNER



TK freelances in theatrical set and lighting design. Recent design credits include *The Good, the Bad and the Sholay* by Checkpoint Theatre, *Cabaret* by LASALLE College of the Arts and *Now Then Again* for NUS Arts Festival 2016. He has also assisted designers for productions by Pandemonium, WILD RICE and the 2015 Singapore International Festival of Arts. *Let's Get Back Together* marks his first collaboration with Red Pill Productions and his first involvement in the Singapore Theatre Festival. He is thankful for this opportunity and looks forward to honing his craft in preparation for future productions.

KIMBERLY ONG - MULTIMEDIA DESIGNER



Kimberly, also known by her online moniker Kim Cherry Bomb, is a motion graphic artist currently studying in ArtCenter College of Design in Los Angeles. She first met director Mark Ng in the school drama club. Although she later pursued Motion Design in Nanyang Polytechnic, theatre still occupies a special place in her heart. After years of dreaming about collaborating on a project together, Kim is ecstatic to be given this chance to work with Mark again.

TAN JIA HUI & AUGUSTINA ONGAH - COSTUME DESIGNERS



Jia Hui and Augustina graduated from Republic Polytechnic with Diplomas in Arts and Theatre Management. *Let's Get Back Together* marks Jia Hui's third time working as a costume designer. Her recent projects include *Balek Kampung* and *Long Weekend*, both part of the inaugural Twenty-Something Theatre Festival. Jia Hui and Augustina are grateful for the opportunity to be part of *Let's Get Back Together* and the Singapore Theatre Festival.



MUHAMMAD SUFIYAN BIN ADAM – PRODUCTION/STAGE MANAGER



Sufiyan has worked with several high-profile theatre companies in Singapore, including WILD RICE and The Necessary Stage, as well as organisations such as Resorts World Sentosa. Sufiyan completed his production management internship with TheatreWorks, an established theatre company in Singapore. He received his Diploma in Arts Management from Republic Polytechnic and is hoping to pursue an Arts Management degree at LASALLE College of the Arts. When not involved in theatre, Sufiyan prefers the company of well-written books and a cup of tea to while away his day.

PAMELA LAI – PRODUCER



Pamela is currently a student at LASALLE College of the Arts, where she is pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Arts Management. Her most recent production credits include young & WILD's *Geylang* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. From 2013 to 2016, she did production management work for the Singapore Night Festival. She is not fond of being in the limelight and is therefore very fond of her job as a shadow ninja who operates from the sanctity of backstage.

PERRY FELIX SHEN – PRODUCER



Perry is an actor, producer, young & WILD survivor and special-needs educator. He got his start in theatre at the age of 17, portraying what can only be described as the love child of a James Bond villain and a peacock. Since then, his passion and appetite for theatre have never stopped growing. In his pursuit of all things theatre, Perry co-founded Red Pill Productions. In time, Perry hopes that Red Pill will become a permanent fixture of the Singapore theatre industry and that he will still be on stage pretending to be a peacock villain.



BIOGRAPHIES - CAST

EZZAT ALKAFF



Ezzat has always had an interest in performing, even when he was young. But it was only in his polytechnic days that he started getting serious about it. He joined Singapore Polytechnic's theatre group, and was a part of Teater Ekamatra's youth wing, merEKA. Since then, he has graduated with a degree in Applied Theatre and started full-time work in a local theatre company. Ezzat is overjoyed to be working with Red Pill Productions once again. He hopes that everyone leaves the show with a bit more – knowledge, feelings or a full bladder, even! – than when they came in.

ANN LEK

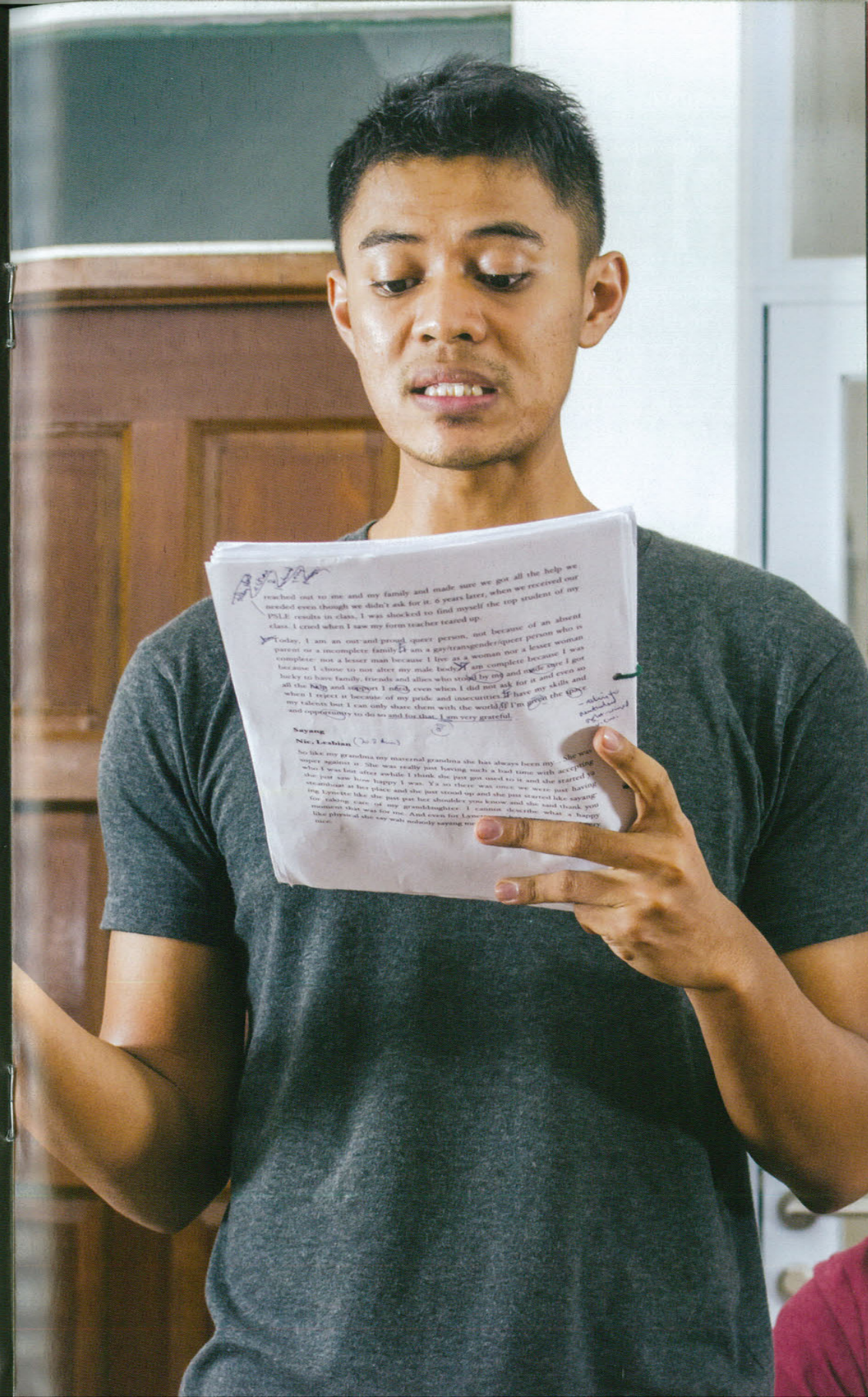


Ann is an actor, singer and voiceover artist. She has had the privilege of being a part of great productions such as *Into The Woods*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *The Nightingale*, *December Rains*, *Treasure Island*, *Billy Goats Gruff* and *Rainbow Fish*. Besides singing her lungs out in musicals, Ann has also been involved in Shakespeare in the Park (2015) as well as SRT's PAGE2STAGE. Off stage, she dabbles in hosting, teaching, writing and pet-sitting. Madly in love with animals, she houses four rescue animals at home and likes to think that her pets are her greatest fans.

RUZAINI MAZANI



Ruzaini graduated with a BA (Hons) in Acting from LASALLE College of the Arts. He also trained under SRT's The Young Company (2008) and WILD RICE's young & WILD (2010). Stage credits include Adam in *Abu* (Teater Ekamatra), Mercutio and Lord Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* (LASALLE), Brack in *Hedda Gabler* (LASALLE), Narrator in *City Lights* (Maya Dance Theatre), Boyet in *Love's Labour's Lost* (SRT's The Young Company), Leonard Irving in *In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)* (LASALLE) and Chen Fei in *Rhinoceros in Love* (LASALLE). Dance/movement credits include *Hot and Cold* (Hatch Theatrics/Dance Nucleus) and *[MOVE]* (Maya Dance Theatre/Noise Singapore).



ELEANOR TAN



Eleanor trained with the Suzuki Company of Toga in Japan and the SITI Company in New York, and was part of the pioneering batch of young & WILD. She has tackled challenging roles in young & WILD's *Mad Forest*, Wessex Theatre's *Top Girls*, WILD RICE's *Homesick* and Teater Ekamatra's *Mata Hati*. Other theatre credits include SRT's *Forbidden City* and *A Twist of Fate*; Toy Factory's *December Rains* and *Glass Anatomy*; Paper Monkey's *Mama Looking For Her Cat*; The Necessary Stage's *Future Perfect* and *Don't Know, Don't Care*; and Dick Lee's recent revivals of *Hot Pants* and *Beauty World*.

JO TAN



Jo is a quadrilingual ex-lawyer who woke up one day and found herself playing a range of multi-national characters on screens of various sizes (small screen, big screen and computer screen). She has also performed in theatre productions in English and Mandarin (and sometimes French and Japanese) that have travelled as far as New York and Korea. As the recipient of a National Arts Council Residency, she spent 2013 in Paris studying under Master Clown Philippe Gaulier, who spent the entire nine months insulting her and giving her Chinese burns. She is also an arts writer for various publications, including *The A List*.

ZACHARY IBRAHIM



Zachary is an actor, presenter, and voiceover artist. Before heading down this path, he took on his last 'real job' as an animal trainer and presenter at the Night Safari's *Creatures of the Night* show in 2013. In 2015, he was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards for his role as Carter in Pandemonium's *Fat Pig*. When not in the theatre, Zachary spends his time bouncing between hosting sports events, being on television and providing voiceovers.



ABOUT RED PILL PRODUCTIONS

Established in 2013, Red Pill Productions is a company of young aspiring theatre-makers driven to continue seeking and making new art. Through its productions and works, Red Pill Productions attempts to question, explore, and provoke dialogue about facets of society and humanity that are often not talked about. The company also hopes to be a home for like-minded, fearless, inquisitive artists who are looking for fresh perspectives and avenues for collaboration.



PRODUCTION CREDITS

CAST

EZZAT ALKAFF
ANN LEK
RUZAINI MAZANI
ELEANOR TAN
JO TAN
ZACHARY IBRAHIM

CREATIVE TEAM

Playwrights: KENNETH CHIA & MARK NG (in collaboration with KIMBERLY ARRIOLA)
Director: MARK NG
Set Designer: ELIZABETH KOW
Lighting Designer: TK HAY
Multimedia Designer: KIMBERLY ONG
Costume Designers: TAN JIA HUI & AUGUSTINA ONGAH

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producers: PAMELA LAI & PERRY FELIX SHEN
Production/Stage Manager: MUHAMMAD SUFIYAN BIN ADAM
Production Assistant: CHANTEL GOH
Technical Manager: TERENCE LAU
Assistant Stage Manager: WEE SHI HUI PEARL
Set Assistant: SANJAY SHIVLAL
Sound Engineer: ALDON CHUA
Multimedia Operator: CHANTEL GOH



ABOUT W!LD RICE

W!LD RICE was founded in 2000 by Ivan Heng, an internationally acclaimed and award-winning theatre practitioner, and is recognised today as one of Singapore's leading professional theatre companies.

Our mission is to provide an open forum for the shared experience of theatre: celebrating our diversity; reflecting on the problems and possibilities of our times; and presenting productions that inspire, challenge and entertain.

A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of W!LD RICE's creative work, which is first and foremost a celebration of Singapore's theatrical talent. By producing and touring productions that are distinctively local in flavour and yet universal in vision and concerns, the company creates memorable experiences for audiences in Singapore and across the world.

The company's exciting and varied programming for the main stage includes:

- New and original works;
- New productions of the Singapore repertoire; and
- New interpretations of world classics.

The company's mission to build a theatre culture also extends to the wider community through the following divisions:

- FIRST STAGE!, a project that nurtures young talents from the ages of 5 to 12; and
- young & W!LD, which identifies and develops Singapore's young theatre professionals.

W!LD RICE is committed to touring its shows internationally to raise the profile of Singapore theatre, to create an international awareness of its unique productions, and to engage its artists and collaborators in creative dialogues with the international arts community. Its distinctively Singaporean productions have won great acclaim in major international arts festivals in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand and Russia.

W!LD RICE is a not-for-profit Singapore Registered Charity (Institution of a Public Character No. 000122).

"Singapore's sexiest theatre company!"

- Lonely Planet, Best of Singapore

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We also wish to thank our new Angels whom, due to printing deadlines, we have not been able to include.

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

"The blockbuster event of the year!"

— TODAY

Presented by WILD RICE, the Singapore Theatre Festival is an event dedicated to celebrating contemporary Singaporean theatre through the development and presentation of new and original local writing. The Festival takes place in the months of July and August, when Singapore celebrates National Day; it is in this context that theatre artists and the public are encouraged to engage in a conversation about theatre, Singapore and the world.

In four editions since 2006, the Festival has collaborated with local theatre companies and artists to present 25 productions, including 17 world premieres, of new local writing. The Festival prides itself on having collaborated with undiscovered, emerging and established playwrights, including Alfian Sa'at, Eleanor Wong, Huzir Sulaiman, Chong Tze Chien, Ovidia Yu and Joel Tan. In 2013, the Festival launched 'In The Spotlight' to present a season dedicated to the works of a single local playwright. It remains the only festival in Singapore that focuses on presenting fully realised productions of new local writing.

FESTIVAL TEAM

Artistic Director: IVAN HENG

Dramaturg: ALFIAN SA'AT

Producer: TONY TRICKETT

Production Manager: XU XIN'EN

Production Co-ordinators: DEENA SHAQINAH & SAI SANDHYA SILVALINGAM

Production Assistant: AUGUSTINA ONGAH

Production Interns: BRYAN LO & NAY LYNN THANT

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