



JIT MURAD  
PLAYS

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PLAYS



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#### Jit Murad Plays

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*Gold Rain & Hailstones* is copyright (1993, revised 1998) by Jit Murad

*Visits* is copyright (1993, revised 2001) by Jit Murad

*The Storyteller* is copyright (1996) by Jit Murad

*Malam Konsert* is copyright (2003) by Jit Murad

*Split Gravy on Rice* is copyright (2002, revised 2003) by Jit Murad

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## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Jit Murad is widely regarded as one of the most significant Malaysian, if not also Southeast Asian, playwrights for his warmth and quick wit, with an excellent acting reputation. His first play, *Gold Rain & Hailstones*, led him to be described by the late theatre doyen, Dato' Krishen Jit, as Malaysia's 'contemporary penglipur lara, the teller of tales about our social and personal manners here and now, and the soother of our neuroses'. His last play *Spilt Gravy on Rice* won four Boh Cameronian Awards (including Best Original Script) and has been made into a film, also directed by Dato' Zahim Albakri. A co-founder of The Instant Café Theatre Company, Jit helped establish its reputation for wicked, spot-on satire. As a co-director of Dramalab, he also helped nurture Malaysian writing. Jit has a Bachelors degree in Urban Sociology and a Masters in Art History. He dates his love for storytelling from when he was four years old, vividly recalling *The Little Mermaid*, as told by his mother.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This publication was initiated and steered by a group of Jit's friends, including Ann Lee, Jo Kukathas, Datin Saidah Rastam (Saidah Rastam), Dato' Zahim Albakri (Zahim Albakri), Ida Nerina, Bernice Chauly, and Vernon Adrian Emuang.

A debt of thanks is owed: first to Jit for sharing his drafts, and to Dramalab, particularly Zahim Albakri for providing many of the materials for this book; to Datin Marion D'Cruz (Marion D'Cruz) and Five Arts Centre for the editorial support, permission to use reviews by Dato' Krishen Jit (Krishen Jit), and additional photos (*Malam Konsert*); to Ida Nerina for reviews and photos (*Visits*), and Dato' Charon Mokhzani (Charon Mokhzani) for permission to reprint his lyrics from *The Storyteller*.

Many thanks to Amir Muhammad and Matahari for the unfailing support and advice.

We would also like to thank Dr Susan Philip for contributing her essay, insightful not only for those who encounter Jit's work for the first time but also for those familiar with his work.

Many additional people deserve acknowledgement, not the least of which are the casts, crews, sponsors, partners, suppliers, media, and audiences who have all enabled these plays to be fully realised.

Of these, we would like to make special mention of the Actors Studio, Antares, kakiseni.com, *The New Straits Times*, *The Malay Mail*, and *The Star*.

More detailed acknowledgments are also made by Jit himself in the various Playwright's Notes.

Thank you all very much.

## FOREWORD



Several much earlier attempts have been made to publish Jit Murad's work, which makes this a much-anticipated anthology.

Comprising the playwright and actor's own selection of his highly regarded, award-winning work, this anthology includes his first work *Gold Rain & Hailstones* by Dramalab, then a new writing initiative of the once Moët & Chandon Instant Café Theatre Company, co-founded in 1989 by Andrew Leci, Jo Kukathas, Zahim Albakri, Saidah Rastam and Jit himself.

On 28 November, 1993 in the *New Straits Times*, 'Utih' (pseudonym of the late historian, theatre practitioner and critic, Krishen Jit) described Jit Murad as 'our contemporary penglipur lara, the teller of tales about our social and personal manners here and now and the soother of our neuroses.' Krishen's words helped to seal Jit's reputation as a playwright of uncommon sensibility among others who sought to explore the issues of their day. As Krishen also wrote in the same article:

*It is difficult to contain one's enthusiasm when so much indigenous talent and original creativity is radiating in the city's theatres. In drama, it is a time of the baring of individual selves and social sores. It is the age of the confessional among a specific group of mostly young, urban and Western-educated Malaysians.*

Later, others would also extol Jit's virtues, including the reviewer Antares, who in his blog ([platypusflatus.wordpress.com](http://platypusflatus.wordpress.com)), describes Jit as 'a scintillating luminary of the performing arts, commuting between acting, stand-up comedy, and playwriting. Apart from his puckish and ageless charm, Jit is endowed with the mind of a sage and the wit of a court jester extraordinaire.'

Dramalab would go on to become an award-winning and popular production company in its own right with Jit as resident playwright and Zahim Albakri as artistic director, though both also frequently performed. The latest company director is actress and director, Ida Nerina, who first directed Jit's play *Visits*, included in this anthology.

*Malam Konsert*, performed by Zahim Albakri and Melissa Saila, was part of *7Ten*, a series of seven 10-minute dramatic pieces produced by Five Arts Centre in conjunction with the Actors Studio.

*The Storyteller* is an original musical, with book by Jit and composed by Saidah Rastam with lyrics by Jit and Charon Mokhzani. At the time, it was an ambitious production that featured an award-winning set design and a huge Malaysian cast, the size of which had rarely been seen in an original Malaysian work for the stage. (Thanks to the tenacity of Jo Kukathas, this anthology includes a complete script of *The Storyteller* with Day Scenes, Night Scenes, and lyrics.)

The anthology's final work is *Spilt Gravy on Rice*, which swept many of the Boh Cameronian Arts awards in 2002 and was subsequently made into a film. The screenplay was adapted by Jit from his original script (he also stars) and is directed again by Zahim, with many of the original performers.



(A note about language: words from Malaysian languages are not italicised. Where translation is needed for a specific dialect – as for Cantonese, in *Spilt Gravy on Rice* – it is suggested **in bold**.)

Also included in this anthology are Notes by the playwright and/or directors (including composer and musical director), providing more detail about the origins, development and themes of the plays. The reviews also give a sense of how the wit, warmth, and originality of Jit's plays were first and have since been received.

Ann Lee

# INTRODUCTORY ESSAY: MARGINALITY AND OTHERNESS IN JIT MURAD'S PLAYS

BY DR SUSAN PHILIP



It would appear that over the decades, borders and margins have become an ingrained part of the social framework in Malaysia. Many Malaysians accept impositions of racial, religious and linguistic identity, or have learned to negotiate with these impositions in such a way as to create a small space which accommodates a different identity. Jit Murad's plays offer an example of how difference is explored and negotiated at a small, personal level, which nonetheless also resonates at a much broader level. What many of his plays do is to look at people who are marginalised or othered because their identities do not fit the dominant narrative. He does not attempt to offer slick solutions to an entrenched problem – rather, he provides a space for exploration and discussion, something generally missing in the public sphere.

Jit Murad would not at first glance appear to be the most obvious choice of spokesperson for the marginalised. A privileged, upper-class, educated Malay, he would instead appear to be part of the country's racially-defined elite. However, through his plays he uncovers subtleties in the process of othering as it happens in Malaysia, which may not be recognised in a society that is habituated to thinking in broad categories and stereotypes.

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JIT MURAD PLAYS is the much-anticipated anthology of works for the stage by Jit Murad, described by the late theatre doyen, Dato' Krishen Jit, as Malaysia's 'contemporary penglipur lara, the teller of tales about our social and personal manners here and now, and the soother of our neuroses'.

Jit Murad is considered to be one of Southeast Asia's finest – and funniest – playwrights. His plays have a distinctive wit, warmth and originality. This collection includes some of the playwright's favourites: *Gold Rain & Hailstones*, *Visits*, *The Storyteller*, *Malam Konsert* and *Spilt Gravy on Rice*. The latter won four Boh Cameronian arts awards and has been made into a film, directed by Dato' Zahim Albakri.

The anthology also contains notes by the playwright and directors, as well as reviews and photos that illustrate how the writing formed part of an innovative and exciting period of development in Malaysian theatre.

An insightful essay by widely-respected theatre scholar, Dr Susan Philip, also sheds light on the themes and value of Jit's work.

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'Jit is endowed with the mind of a sage and the wit of a court jester extraordinaire.'

– Antares

'The strength of Jit Murad's humour is not only in his wit and insight but also in the sincerity and respect he affords each of his characters.'

– *The Flying Inkpot*

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