

CENTRE 42 presents
THE VAULT

HOW DID YOU MEET TINA?



PROGRAMME HANDOUT

5 DECEMBER 2015, 8PM



(IMAGE CREDIT: 50 YEARS OF THEATRE MEMORIES)

Chong Tze Chien is one of Singapore's most awarded and critically-lauded playwright-directors, best known for his thought-provoking, character-driven works such as *Pan-Island Expressway* (1999), *Spoilt* (2001), *Furthest North, Deepest South* (2004), *Poop!* (2010) and *Charged* (2010). Tze Chien is the Company Director of puppetry theatre company The Finger Players, a position he has held since 2004.

ARTIST'S MESSAGE

TINA was a witness and participant in our evolution as Singapore theatre practitioners and I hope to capture our story through her practice and legacy.

It is imperative to document Singapore theatre history as we need to capture in writing our predecessors' stories and values for posterity. Much has been done and performed in the last five decades of Singapore theatre, but not enough documentation has been done to track the evolution and development of our scene and the practitioners responsible for it.

By documentation, either via verbatim theatre, interviews or other means, the teachings that our predecessors have left us with can be disseminated and shared with the present and future generations, so that hopefully we may take over the baton and run the marathon that they have started for us.

I knew of Tina as a much-lauded theatre practitioner when I was a college student volunteering in TNS workshops and the Young People's Theatre Festival organised by NAC. She was often in the news and I had heard of her work through my peers.

Fast forward 12 years later, I met her officially for *Furthest North, Deepest South*, my first production with The Finger Players in 2004. The thing that struck me about her at our first meeting was how comfortable she made me feel with her from the get-go. Even though we had never met before, she knew more of me than I did of her. In our exchange, I felt like I was talking to an old friend.

Tina directed my script and throughout the collaboration, I could always count on her for her trust and faith in the work and in me. She was open-minded, principled and genuine all at the same time, making her one of my most favorite collaborators in my career.

CHONG TZE CHIEN

17 NOVEMBER 2015

ABOUT TINA

CHRISTINA SERGEANT (1955-2013), or “Tina” to family and friends, was an American theatre practitioner who had called Singapore home since moving here in 1983. Her expertise was movement and mime, having trained at the University of Houston as well as under the instruction of acclaimed French mime artist Marcel Marceau.

In her three decades residing in Singapore, Tina performed in and directed many productions. She also taught drama in many schools and institutions, inspiring and mentoring many of today’s working theatre practitioners.

Tina also co-founded groups which championed her various passions, such as Actors Theatre Circle (for women’s theatre), Mime Unlimited (for mime artistry), and the Singapore Drama Educators Association (for drama education in local schools).

Sergeant was a stalwart of the local theatre scene, and she both grew up with and helped to grow Singapore English-language theatre.



(IMAGE CREDIT: SDEA)

METHODOLOGY

CHONG TZE CHIEN spent about a month tracking down eight people who knew Tina in various capacities. It took him another month to conduct the interviews with them.

In between the interviews, Tze Chien amassed videos of Tina’s performances as well as her personal artefacts from various sources, including her family. Many of Tina’s close friends also shared personal photos and videos of her in performance from their private collections.

While *How Did You Meet Tina?* is a tribute to the life of a remarkable theatre practitioner and human being, it is also an act of documentation. Tonight’s presentation is part performance, part installation – performers will recreate excerpts from Tze Chien’s interviews, and images and video clips of Tina will be projected around the Black Box throughout the presentation.

Tonight’s video projections in the Black Box are footage from the following productions:

CASTING BACK (2012)¹

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF (1984)

Snippets from MIME UNLIMITED productions

Snippets from ASIA-IN-THEATRE RESEARCH CENTRE productions

Snippets from THE MAD HATTERS COMEDY COMPANY productions

¹ *Casting Back* was first commissioned and presented by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay as part of its 10th Anniversary Celebrations in 2012.



(IMAGE CREDIT: BUTTONSINTHEBREAD) Nora Samosir and Christina Sergeant performing in *Casting Back* (2012), one of Sergeant’s last performances.

NORA SAMOSIR is an actress who has appeared in more than 90 stage productions over the last three decades. She most recently performed in a 2015 restaging of *The Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* for the Esplanade's "The Studios: fifty" series, as well as Iranian playwright Nassim Soleimanpour's *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* at the NUS Arts Festival 2014.

Nora's professional theatre career can be traced back to 1984, running parallel with Tina's in Singapore. However, the two never crossed paths until 2012 when they jointly performed in *Casting Back*, a retrospective on Singapore theatre commissioned for the Esplanade's 10th anniversary.

* * *

SERENE CHEN is an actress and a teacher. She first watched Tina as an eager university undergraduate during the Esso Lunchtime Concert Series, when Tina performed with The Mad Hatters.

Serene interviewed Tina many times in her first job as a Producer-Presenter with then arts radio station Passion 99.5FM. She even shared many an affectionate meal with Tina and another local *angmoh* actress, Sandy Phillips, learning about their huge contributions to the theatre scene of Singapore in the 80s and 90s.

Serene and Tina had several near misses over the years, but finally worked together in The Finger Players' *Wong Kar Wai Dreams* in 2007.

* * *

TAN SHOU CHEN is an actor and theatre practitioner. He has acted in several productions under Tina's direction, including *Ashputtel: The Cinderella Story* (2012, I Theatre); *Gingerbread Man* (2011, I Theatre); *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman (2010, COLLAB Theatre Ensemble); *Five Foot Broadway* (2008, MTL); and *The Hypochondriac* (2008, young & WILD by WILD Rice). In the 2011 Singapore Arts Festival, Shou Chen was fortunate to perform alongside Tina in *Conference of the Birds*.

"Suddenly, everything was changing. The straw and reeds of the thatched roof metamorphosed into gold, and gates with elaborate carvings sprang up, as ground gave way to marble paving stones..." - *Metamorphoses*

Thank you, Tina.

* * *

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR/PLAYWRIGHT
CHONG TZE CHIEN

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
LAM DAN FONG

TRANSCRIBER
ELLISON YUYANG TAN

PERFORMERS
NORA SAMOSIR
SERENE CHEN
TAN SHOU CHEN

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ARTS FISSON	MYRA LOKE
BEN ONG	NATALIE HENNEDIGE
CELESTINE WONG	OLIVER CHONG
CHRIS CHEERS	ROGER JENKINS
DARREN NG	SAMANTHA SCOTT-BLACKHALL
DRAMA BOX	SERENA HO
ELLISON YUYANG TAN	SHIRLEY SMITH
ESPLANADE	SUEN KOK KHUEN
GENEVIEVE PECK	TAN SHOU CHEN
HANG QIANCHOU	TAN WEI TING
HUANG XIANGBIN	THE FINGER PLAYERS
JING NG	THE NECESSARY STAGE
JUDY NGO	WILD RICE
LIM CHIN HUAT	WILLIAM ALAN MORTON
LIZ TAN	WONG YOUNG TSENG

Have questions or feedback about tonight's performance-presentation? Here are some ways to get in touch with us:

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THE VAULT

THE VAULT revisits and remembers Singapore works dating back to our early theatre years, refreshes them through the responses of artists and collaborators, and retells them in a contemporary manner.

PRESENTED BY



CENTRE 42