



THEATREWORKS presents

# MADAME MAO'S MEMORIES

by HENRY ONG

With Claire Wong as Madame Mao  
Directed by Ong Keng Sen

August 18 - September 5, 1992  
Traverse Theatre  
Edinburgh

October 21 - 31, 1992  
The Black Box



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# MADAME MAO'S MEMORIES

BY HENRY ONG  
WITH CLAIRE WONG AS MADAME MAO  
DIRECTED BY ONG KENG SEN  
SET DESIGN BY TANG DA WU & ONG KENG SEN  
MUSIC BY MARK CHAN

PRODUCTION/STAGE MANAGER LOK MENG CHUE  
TECHNICAL MANAGER ALEXANDER KENNARD  
LIGHTING DESIGN MICHELE LIM  
POSTER & PROGRAMME COVER GOH ECK KHENG  
PROGRAMME DESIGN NEO KIM SENG  
LAID OUT ON APPLE MACINTOSH

## A GIFT OF MUSIC.



Lee Hwei Min is 9 and the winner of the coveted Best Performer Award in the 8th National Music Competition. She also has the honour of being the youngest winner since the first competition 12 years ago.

The National Music Competition, organised by the National Arts Council, encourages excellence among outstanding young musicians like Hwei Min and provides them an opportunity to perform competitively.

Esso Singapore sponsors the National Music Competition in celebration of the talent and energy of young musicians in Singapore.

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

My first memory of the Traverse Theatre was in July 1985. I was yet to direct my first play. Being on vacation from the National University of Singapore, I wandered around the Grassmarket area leisurely. I stumbled onto a corridor in a row of shops and restaurants. This led into a tiny courtyard and to my surprise, a little theatre. My experience of British theatre had been the West End thus far. Imagine my surprise and excitement when I climbed up a small flight of stairs,

walked through a narrow corridor which was bound by a black wall and a black curtain and finally into the theatre. It was essentially a little room with black curtains as the four sides. The audience was seated on backless bleaches on three sides of the room. None seemed to mind sitting on bleaches which someone else had stepped on and soiled slightly. In the centre of this intimate little room was the set of the play, *Elizabeth Gordon Quinn* by Chris Hannan. I have never encountered a set at such close proximity; everything seemed makeshift and yet it was as if I was right there in the same setting as the characters. I watched my first play in a black box space with the theatre lights spilling and encroaching into my space; and the actors performing at less than a feet away. I was thrown right into the maelstrom of their emotions and even had to dodge a falling actor in a violent scene. I loved it.

The Traverse was permanently lodged in my mind as an exciting theatre experience. In the years that followed, I became very involved with theatre. When the offer came from the National Parks Board to move into Fort Canning, a group of us proposed a small theatre. My role model was the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The second time I visited the Traverse was during the 1990 Edinburgh Festival. At that time, I was based in Glasgow on a British Council Fellowship. During the weekends of the three week long festival, I watched all the plays at the Traverse which someone had recommended as the best bet for the fringe if I had limited time. I was also pleasantly surprised to be asked by the Traverse to be a guest speaker on Singaporean theatre in an informal conference on Asian-Pacific theatre.

It was hence gratifying to receive an invitation to the Traverse for the International Edinburgh Festival this year. It came totally out of the blue. It is especially important when the reputation of the Traverse is considered. The Traverse has carved for itself a niche between the fringe and the main festival. It is well known for innovative productions which take risks. Apparently, the Artistic Director of Traverse, Ian Brown had seen a video of our production and liked it. We traced Ian's video back to Scottish writer, Tom Mcgrath. Tom had watched the performance of *Madame Mao's Memories* in our first run last March during his visit to Singapore under the Springboard programme. He requested for a copy of the video which we gave him, thinking nothing of it.

Our first performance on British soil was greeted with much excitement and warmth. I would never forget the feeling when Claire came out to receive her curtain call. This was a major outing for Singaporean theatre into the Western world and she did us proud. It was only in retrospect that I realised how tense I had been about the reception of the production. After years of directing plays for the Singaporean audience, I could roughly gauge their reaction to a piece. I had no clue with the Western audiences (on the average, we had only one Asian per show - in total, we performed 18 shows). I knew that the reviews would mean everything in a festival where there were 500 plus productions. In such a competitive environment if we were panned by the critics, it would mean the end of the production.

Every morning, one of us would make a pilgrimage to the newspaper stand to scan all the papers. The day the first review arrived, I was on duty. I remember being slightly depressed as the audiences had been small though appreciative. When I saw *Madame Mao* in glorious technicolour on the back page of the local paper, the Scotsman - I bought it and took the hundred metre dash back. All the depression had disappeared. I burst into the dorm which we were all crammed into due to a lack of funds and woke everyone up. All charged up, I announced that if we made it into the critics' hitlist in *The List* magazine, it would make our stay. Everyone went about our chores in high spirits. The next day as I was showering in our little mobile shower cubicle, Claire came back with the new issue of *The List*. It was a particularly moody day as we had a bad performance the day before. Suddenly from behind the shower curtain I heard her scream, "We made it to the top of the Hitlist!"

All in all, it was a great tour. I left feeling slightly apprehensive for the Traverse. The theatre has since moved into a beautiful new building which looked extremely expensive, fashionable, intimidating and mainstream from the outside. This was a far cry from the origins of the old comfortable Traverse which was much more alternative, frequented by a casual crowd, in jeans and T-shirts. In the move, the theatre seemed to have lost some of its audiences. But I am sure that the Traverse would weather this change, it has survived 25 years and thrived. Slowly the audiences would discover that despite the external trappings, the heart and the soul of the Traverse has not changed. Just as the Traverse inspired me in 1985, it taught me a few lessons again in 1992. A theatre is ultimately linked to the people.

I would like to thank the British Council, particularly Lena St George Sweet, who has supported us from day one of this project and the National Arts Council.

**ONG KENG SEN**

**1914** Born in Zhucheng as Li Shumeng.

**Mid 1920's** Moves to Jinan, changed her name to Li Yunhe.

**1928** Joins an underground theatre troupe based in Licheng.

**1929** Accepted into the Shandong Experimental Arts Academy. Learnt traditional as well as western forms of the performing arts.

**1930** The Shandong Experimental Arts Academy closed down. Marries Fei, son of a Jinan merchant. The marriage lasted several months, in which she then moved to Qingdao.

**1931** Lives together with Yu Qiwei, a political activist.

**1933** Leaves for Shanghai. Became a member of the Communists Youth League. Goes to Peking in fall, becomes pregnant by Yu Qiwei and had an abortion.

**1934** Returns to Shanghai. She was later put in prison under suspicion for diverse association which was considered subversive. She was released several months later and changed her name to Lan Ping (Blue Apple).

**1935** Signed on to act at Dian Tong Studios. Lives together with Tang Na, arts critic with China Evening News. Becomes recognised as a capable actress in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* as Nora.

**1936** Marries Tang Na.

**1937** In May, divorces Tang Na. In July, the Japanese invades Shanghai. Left Shanghai to Yen'an. Meets Mao Zedong for the first time at Xian and soon began to have an affair with him.

**1938** Lan Ping becomes Mao's mistress. In summer Lan Ping is pregnant with Mao's child. It takes Mao quite an effort to divorce his wife, He Zizhen to marry Lan Ping. Lan Ping marries Mao and he changes her name to Jiang Qing (Green River).

**1939** Jiang Qing gives birth to a girl, Li Na.

**1947** Mounting pressure forces Mao and his family to abandon their communist base and home in Yen'an. For the next two years they would travel from place to place without a permanent home. Jiang Qing is also appointed political assistant to the 3rd Detachment of the Communist forces.

JIANQING

QINGJIAN

# JIANG QING

# QING

**1950s** This was a period of depression for Jiang Qing as she battled physical illnesses such as cervical cancer and liver disease. She also suffered bouts of neurosis behaviour. She was sent by the communist party many times to Yalta, Russia for "treatment".

**1960** Mao has Parkinson's Disease.

**1962** A new era begins for Jiang Qing. She keeps an eye on the arts scene. She tries to revive Peking opera as a political vehicle. She meets Tong Xiangling and directs him in an opera.

**1965** She "reforms" ballet to give the art form a hard edge.

**1966** Jiang Qing is appointed chief adviser to opera, music and publishing of novels of the military. This puts her in the mainstream of politics. Later that year she became deputy head of the Cultural Revolution Group. The Cultural Revolution is in full swing. In December Fan Jin, editor of the Peking Evening News is persecuted for her crimes of publishing satirical essays that portrayed Mao as a megalomaniac. Her revenge on the people that treated her "wrongly" was at the height. Deaths and suicides escalated.

**1967** She begins to trace the love letters written by Jiang Na to her. This caused another wave of terror amongst the people who knew Jiang Na and her. This was also the period that Wang Guang-mei wife of Liu Xiaom is persecuted for making a spectacle of herself in a trip to Indonesia. She is humiliated in public and thrown in jail where she died.

**1970s** Jiang Qing is attracted to women of power in China. She studies the life of empress Wu Zetian, the only female ruler in China.

**1976** In September Mao dies, Jiang Qing is ready to ascend the throne. She's beginning to be known as the White-Boned Demon.

**1977** Jiang Qing is taken to jail. This begins a series of trials for her crimes.

**1981** She is given a suspended death sentence.

**1983** Her sentence is reduced to a life sentence.

**1991** Jiang Qing commits suicide by hanging herself on May 14. Her death was made public only in June.

Source: Madame Mao: The White-Boned Demon by Ross Terrill. Extracted by Lim Hwa Ngeon



# THE EDINBURGH FRINGE EXPERIENCE

Madame Mao's *Memories* was staged at the recent Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Claire Wong, who played Madame Mao for all 18 performances with heroic dedication, won unanimous praise from the cast of international press at the Festival. Dana Lam reports.

**FIVE HUNDRED** and forty companies from around the world scaled the Scottish highlands recently to strut their stuff at the 46th Edinburgh Festival Fringe. TheatreWorks, there on the invitation of the prestigious Traverse Theatre, was Singapore's lone representative in this largest arts festival in the world.

Over 100 venues spread across the length and breadth of the city offered a daily menu of more than 400 performances. From the convivial grounds of Holyrood Park in the foreground of the fabled Arthur's Seat (Salisbury Crag) to the majestic, if draughty Corn Exchange in its far-flung post 45 minutes' drive Eastward, came the unmistakable, undeniable beat of a city alive with a multi-facet international festival.

Information abounded in every street corner, shop and cafe. Daily news reports and reviews kept visitors and residents abreast with festival news. Two large newspapers, the Independent and the Scotsman both published daily, hour-by-hour, guides.

On an afternoon, a visitor might find herself tarrying, against her better judgement, along the festive High Street where assorted colourful persons touted their shows. Or, she might amble along numerous cobble-stone alleyways to hideaway spaces offering daring new works. One favourite is the artsy and overbooked Richard Demarco Gallery where, on a day, an actress' glory might be cut short by the forceful arrival of the cast that came after her.

Then, again, an intrepid scout might clamber across The Mound, against a 14 degrees north-westerly wind, to the lofty Assembly Hall (the real thing) where the act is 'establishment', or, travel East to a grassroots project at the Carlton Studio, actually an isolated warehouse with close circuit television surveillance. A visitor from warmer climes might even find herself diverted by the 30 or 40 sheep awaiting their time in front of the newly resurrected Corn Exchange.

TheatreWorks' production of Henry Ong's *Madame Mao's Memories* was on from August 18 to September 5, at the brand new premises of the Traverse Theatre, a company with 30 year's history and a reputation for showing good and vigorous new works.

And Claire Wong, who played Madame Mao with heroic dedication received unanimous praise from the cast of international press that gathered.



# THE EDINBURGH DIARY

## AUGUST 13 THURSDAY

**9AM SINGAPORE** Five of us from TheatreWorks meet at the Singapore Airlines check-in counter at Changi International Airport. Among the personal baggage are two two-metre flag-poles and a heavy-duty suitcase holding most of the company's assets for the production: a Mao suit, face towels, cotton socks, a doll, luminous tapes, curling tongs, hair gel, sewing kit and a 31 ft wide floor cloth. The Stage Manager's book - arguable the most crucial item - and lighting plans are being hand-carried. Sent ahead are: 42 tin tubs (main props, 126 kg), canvas sheet (backdrop, 10.5 kg), 2000 posters (6 kg), stage lamps and spot lights (70 kg), wooden stools (4 kg) and cable (10 kg). We are not over-weight; the flagpoles are "no problem" and two of us are getting seats with extra leg room.

**3 PM** Claire Wong, who will be making her debut in Edinburgh as Madam Mao, now passes time munching slices of cucumber from a well-worn plastic tub—an item which is going to become nearly inseparable from her in the weeks to come. Along with the large bag of dried chrysanthemums, ginseng root and a bottle of dark syrupy mixture (with pipa and honey), the cucumber, sprinkled with coarse sugar, will form an integral part of Claire's diet as she fights her flaring tonsils and strained vocal cords throughout our stay in Edinburgh.

**8 PM HEATHROW, LONDON** Here, at last! An unimpressed immigration officer put us through the grill: "Who are you? Why are you here, where are you going, whose flat is it, how do you know them, how are you related, why aren't you leaving together?"

Beyond immigration, Lok Meng Chue who is to meet us is no where to be seen. Meng Chue is in London on the last leg of a British Council theatre fellowship. She will stage-manage *Madame Mao's Memories* (MMM) in Edinburgh, making up the crew that includes Business/PR Manager, Michele Lim, and for a initial couple of days, Technical Manager, Lim Yu-Beng.

**9.30 PM PORCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON** Arrive in a drizzle. From the cab window, London looks cold, drab and dismal. But the real damper is the over 30 pound sterling cab fare. Most of us are on 15 pound sterling per day and hoping to stretch it.

## AUGUST 14 FRIDAY

Today is a 'free' day except for Meng Chue, Yu-Beng and Michele who are staying in to coordinate each other's work before the latter two leave for Edinburgh tonight. In the evening, we go to see *Porcelain*, a new work by Singaporean, Chay Yew, that is reprising in a London theatre.

## AUGUST 15 SATURDAY

**7 AM** Claire gets up early for tai chi and I go off scouting for the cheapest breakfast available, giving the other two the opportunity of a lie-in.

**8 AM PANIC!!!** The morning's calm is shattered by a shrill phone call from Tay Tong in Singapore, announcing that our freight have been turned away from the Traverse. Keng Sen's brows begins to knit and furrow. Meng Chue takes over the telephone and hoards it for the next couple of hours, grimly attempting to track anyone at all who may be of help. The rest of us just held our breath. The thought of the entire MMM set sitting in Manchester until Monday, the one day scheduled for a technical run and dress rehearsal was not a comforting one.

**3 PM** The entire morning's doing is a false alarm. Tay Tong confirms sets are waiting at the Traverse. Faces are smiling again. We go and watch *The Master and Margarita* at the Almeida Theatre in the night. Costs 9 pounds sterling each. Ouch!



## AUGUST 16 SUNDAY

The morning is spent doing a full run of the production, hair, warm up - everything. Claire's first preoccupation every morning now is to check if her voice is still there. After the run through, we have to forbid her to speak. We clean up the flat and, in the afternoon, go on a shopping spree to Camden. But, a weight has already begun its descend on some of us.

## AUGUST 17 MONDAY

**7 AM EDINBURGH** Arrives at Kingsview, our first B&B in Gilmore Place. It's drizzling again. At breakfast, Keng Sen and Yu-Beng doesn't stop talking. Yes, we managed to work yesterday and moved things in last night...we're doing the other things after breakfast. Our T-shirts, by the way, did wonders...you should come in about 1 o'clock...we should be about ready for a tech then, and a dress at 3... The rest of us eats in quiet, not wanting to interrupt. Claire, for reasons of her own, is the quietest of us all.

**2 PM** The List, a weekly publication on what's on, what's good and bad, has us on their recommended list this week. But the good cheer is shortlived. At the Traverse II, our venue in the basement of a new office block near Edinburgh's famous castle, the atmosphere is tense; the mood, unforbearing.



Yu-Beng is rigging lights with the help of one Traverse technician. Meng Chue is trying to fill 34 tubs to one-third full in 12 minutes - without spilling. Michelle is grappling with the Traverse's sound equipment. The locker in Claire's dressing room costs 50p to open each time and the thought that she is sharing room with Susannah York's cast does not elevate the shock. Keng Sen is hawk-like

on the studio' inclined seats, growing perceptibly grey at the jowls as the minutes tick heavily by.

**3 PM** Things are not getting any brighter. Yu-Beng's jean-clad legs are still visible from the top rungs of a ladder, centrestage. Claire is in the sound box with Michele, rehearsing parts of the script that require coordination with a recording. Someone passes me a computerised ticketing report - we sold a grand total of three tickets for the opening show, tomorrow.

Theresa Tan, of 8 Days, who has come to watch us is helping me fold MMM posters which are meant to be sold as programmes, at 50p a copy to supplement production costs. There was a small debate the night before as to whether we should, in fact, double the price. Now it seems far wiser to just give the posters away at large to make sure people know where to find us.

**5 PM** The Traverse' staff are going home. Yu-Beng is left wrestling with a new and sophisticated lighting computer. Michele is maintaining a brave front. Keng Sen is yelling cues. Meng Chue, who is standing in for Claire for the tech, looks strangely comic under a light with a palm extended on top of her head. But no-one cares to laugh. Claire has changed out of her costume and is writing a letter to take her mind off what's happening. It's apparent, she isn't going to rehearse today.

**7 PM** Keng Sen's face has begun to lighten. A sigh is felt, rather than heard, around the theatre. The last cue has been tested and noted. In another half hour, we are ready to call it a day.

## AUGUST 18 TUESDAY

We open with a heady 12 critics in the house. At 1.15 p.m., 15 minutes before curtains, Theresa and I sit on the uppermost level of the Traverse II counting and recounting the people decorously filing in. The theatre is suddenly suffused with a sense of purpose. Greying gentlemen and gentle women took their seats without



a murmur, often in the front rows. Others, speak in hushed tones to one another, or quietly peruse the programme handed to them at the door. The studio fills up, surely and steadily. We chalked 70 people in the 100 seat space.

As the houselights came down and Claire makes her slow, arthritic entrance as Madame Mao, an irrepressible euphoria wells up in my Singaporean heart. I let my eyes roam, savouring the magic Claire has begun to wield on the audience. But, some thirty or forty minutes into the play, a man in the front row takes advantage of a pause in the script and leaves. Ten seats from me, I feel Keng Sen panics. From the crew in the sound box to Keng Sen and I and, perhaps, Claire too, arise a silent chorus: "Oh no, they don't like it, after all!"

But the applause that comes after is genuine.

Backstage, the emotion is so delicate I feel like an intruder. Claire who has doused her head under a tap is experiencing a moment of catharsis. Her face quivers and she looks ready to weep - the audience were extremely attentive but she couldn't feel she got through to them, she says. Meng Chue rushes in all apologies for a hitch in the lighting. This time, Keng Sen is magnanimous - "Don't worry about it. We'll fix it before the next show." The worst is over.



#### **AUGUST 19 WEDNESDAY**

**11 A.M.** Claire was interviewed by the BBC yesterday and Morag Ballantyne, the Traverse's PR has let it slipped that the Independent, whose reviewer was here yesterday, is sending another today for a second opinion on MMM as it is considering us for a critics' award. So the semblance of calm that has just been restored to us is diffusing all too quickly into another phase of excitement and anxiety. Two photographers, from The Herald and the Scotsman, are taking snaps of Claire on the set. The man from Herald, an old-timer, keeps referring to Claire as Suzi, which is diverting.

#### **AUGUST 20 THURSDAY**

Great excitement this morning as we find Claire dominating the back page, in colour too, of the Scotsman. The Artistic Director of the Hongkong Arts Festival who is scouting for talents at the Festival expresses interest in MMM. The review: "On a most economic and elegant set in the Studio Theatre of the Traverse... Claire Wong gives a deeply committed performance, alone for an hour-and-a-half in this tight arena, switching from hurt girl, to manipulative young woman, to megalomaniac wife of Mao with extraordinary expressiveness.". Catherine Lockerbie, The Scotsman.

This is the first of a series of reviews to come. And Claire is unanimously acclaimed in all of them. This evening Playwright, Henry Ong, arrives right on time for the play.

#### **AUGUST 21 FRIDAY**

MMM heads the Hit List on the List.

#### **AUGUST 22 SATURDAY**

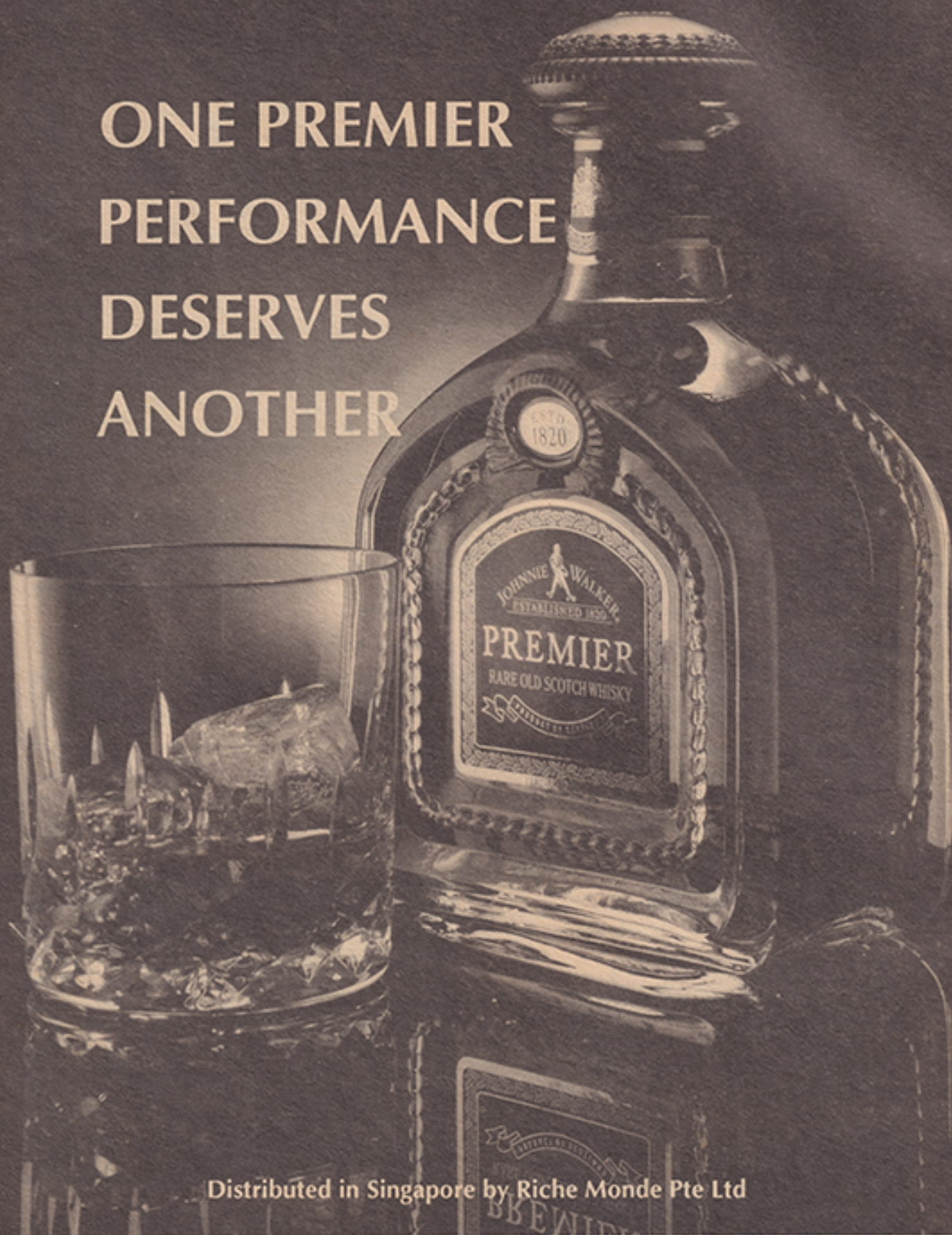
We are crestfallen. The Independent published its first shortlist for their Critic's Award today. We are NOT on it. That Claire's performance continues to win commendation from every publication that cares to print a review makes our miss all the more painful. Not wanting to make it worse for one another, we mostly swallowed our disappointment, keeping it well within our private selves. And the show went on.

#### **AUGUST 25 TUESDAY**

Today, we open in the 4.30 p.m. slot. Afterwards, we go to see Fuente Ovejuna (the Spanish National Theatre) at the Assembly Hall. Coming out of the theatre, a middle-aged woman who has seen the afternoon's performance, catches up with us and compliments Claire.



ONE PREMIER  
PERFORMANCE  
DESERVES  
ANOTHER



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throat. In the audience today are three Mainland Chinese-looking gentlemen in sober Western suits. The men watched the performance grimly, without once looking directly at Claire. They left in hurry at the end of the performance.

#### **AUGUST 31 MONDAY**

Another free day. Claire wakes up finding her throat has taken a turn for the worst. Michelle rings the GP referred by the Traverse and discovers that Dr Drogel has retired five years ago. So Claire starts on the antibiotic her doctor prescribed for emergencies. She is also ordered not to talk and not to laugh. The Evening News' theatre critic picks MMM as the best six shows in the Fringe. Keng Sen leaves to return to Singapore.

#### **SEPTEMBER 1 TUESDAY**

Today's show is at 6.30 p.m. Claire's throat seems to have subsided sufficiently for her to go on. Anyway, there's no question of cancelling now. The house is moderately full. Claire is on. The gun shots are fired. Madame Mao remembers, the audience is enraptured. Suddenly, it happens - Claire's voice breaks. The lines, *Father, Father come see the lanterns* come out in a squeak. We hold our breath. Claire heroically presses on, and fortunately for all, she regains control. Afterwards, she says to us: "I was so shocked when I heard the squeak. I didn't know what would come out when I open my mouth next!"

#### **SEPTEMBER 2 WEDNESDAY**

Our group is down to three - Meng Chue, Michele and Claire. It's beginning to feel lonesome in the B&B.

#### **SEPTEMBER 3 THURSDAY**

A standing ovation. The crew is embullient - sound cues are all perfectly executed. Linda Lewis of the Regional Arts Board of Kent, Surrey and Sussex is interested in taking MMM on a tour of the counties in 1993.

#### **SEPTEMBER 5 SATURDAY**

This is it, then. A last shot at the international event. A last chance to make our presence felt. The remaining crew and Claire are feeling a little saddened. For the crew, there'll be boxes to pack, lists to make. For Claire, there's a driving holiday to look forward to.

*TheatreWorks' trip to Edinburgh was made possible with the support from the British Council and the National Arts Council under the Singapore-Scotland Cultural Co-operation Programme.*

#### **AUGUST 28 FRIDAY**

We see *UBU* (an imaginative comedy with a large number of show-quality leaks, potatoes and an unfortunate bunch of grapes in the cast) at the TheatreWorkshop in Hamilton Place. Distributing flyers in the foyer, Claire runs into a young man who has seen MMM and is astounded to find that Madame Mao is really played by a young woman.

#### **AUGUST 30 SUNDAY**

Our one full-house. But Claire over-compensates with her voice; afterwards, she can hardly speak for the pain in her



# REVIEWS FROM EDINBURGH



The List, a publication on what's hot and what's not at the Edinburgh Festival, put *Madame Mao's Memories* on its Top Five Must-Sees.

In the same vein, the play was the critics' choice for THE INDEPENDENT, SCOTLAND on SUNDAY, and the EVENING NEWS.

"...an impressive and memorable piece of theatre...  
The spirit of Jiang Qing is brilliantly and terrifyingly evoked. The set, symbolic red buckets filled with water, is superb..."  
Miranda France, The List

"...Claire Wong gives a rich performance...there is a twisted logic in her [Jiang Qing's] decline, and Wong's performance shows us what is sad about it as well as what is shocking..."  
Benedict Nightingale, The Times

"Metamorphosing from poisonous crone to star struck ingenue, Claire Wong vividly embodies...Jiang Qing....Henry Ong's script is...well-constructed and Wong serves it beautifully..."  
Nick Curtis, The Independent

"...a praiseworthy piece of theatre ... Claire Wong gives a deeply committed performance, ... with extraordinary expressiveness..."  
Catherine Lockerbie, The Scotsman

"...Claire Wong gives a remarkable performance... a compelling portrayal, astutely directed and paced by Keng Sen Ong..."  
Carole Woddis, The Herald

"...Claire Wong is a splendid actress...She brings all her skill to bear in *Madame Mao's Memories*."  
Julie Morrice, Scotland on Sunday

"...Claire Wong is superb in an emotionally draining role...It's one of those rare examples of acting techniques actually being stimulating in itself. But Wong brings so much more to the role also...an emotional depth which draws one into, but never quite makes one sympathise with, the character of Jiang...as fine an example of a one-person play that one is likely to see--grabbing the attention from the outset and never releasing until the last, poignant phrase is uttered."  
Philip Parr, The Stage and Television Today

" A fascinating one-woman show... Gripping stuff....well worth seeing."  
Critics' Choice, Evening News

## HENRY ONG

Henry Ong is a journalist by training. He worked on several newspapers and magazines as editor, before he embarked on *Madame Mao's Memories*. He has a Master's degree in journalism from Iowa State University and studied playwriting at UCLA and scripting at the Hollywood Scriptwriting Institute. He has a Certificate in Film Production from Los Angeles City College where he completed a short film *First Date*. His debut play *Madame Mao's Memories*, opened at Theatre/Theatre in Hollywood, California in September 1989 and subsequently played at the Asian-American Theatre in San Francisco; the Los Angeles Arts Festival; the Bailiwick Theatre in Chicago; TheatreWorks in Singapore; and the Latchmere in London. Henry is a recipient of a City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department grant (1991-92). *Madame Mao's Memories* was produced at the Keck Theatre, Occidental College in Los Angeles in April this year, funded by the City grant, for underserved schools and groups in Los Angeles. The TheatreWorks' production was presented at the Traverse Theatre for the Edinburgh Festival this August/September. Henry is a member of the Dramatist Guild, Inc.

In 1990, Ong Keng Sen was a British Council Fellow on attachment to theatre companies in the UK and was also on a United States Information Service Fellowship. On his return, he established the TheatreWorks' Writers' Laboratory, the Springboard training programme and the Alternative Repertoire that showcased experimental works. Keng Sen was also the Artistic Director of *The Retrospective: Festival of Singapore Plays (1960-1990)* which established the existence of a Singaporean English drama heritage and *Theatre Carnival on the Hill*. This year, he has led TheatreWorks on three successful international tours with the plays: *3 Children*, this production of *Madame Mao's Memories* and *Beauty World*. He is presently lecturing in the new Theatre Studies Department in the National University of Singapore.

## ONG KENG SEN

## CLAIRE WONG

Claire Wong has been an active participant in theatre since Law School at the National University of Singapore. Claire works as an Advocate and Solicitor in a law firm in Singapore. Since 1988, Claire has become one of the most respected and powerful actresses on Singaporean stage and has continued to command the stage in diverse roles in TheatreWorks' productions. The Straits Times has described her as a chameleon actress who has ignited the drama scene in Singapore made plays. In the Malaysian Star newspaper she was said to have given a "flawless display of animated vigorous playing" in her last production, *3 Children*. In Japan the Asahi Graph described her acting in the same production "...Claire Wong's portrayal of Girl #1 who plays the wife in the play-within-a-play was outstanding." Her acting as Madame Mao was unanimously acclaimed by all reviews at the Edinburgh Festival. Adjectives used to describe her performance have ranged from "remarkable" to "splendid" to "extraordinary".

Tang Da Wu went to London in 1969 to study art, specialising in sculpture. Unable to keep away from family and friends, he returned to Singapore in 1988 and started the Artists' Village in rural Sembawang in 1989. Da Wu has put up many pieces of performance art on social and environmental issues in auditoria and in the open air. His works include *June 4 Incidence (Tien An Men Square)*, *The Death of A Filipino Maid*, *Some Trees Take 30 Years to Grow to This height* and *The Tiger's Whip*. He has performed in Paris, Portugal, England and Japan. He has also been invited to the South East Asian Festival in Japan this year. He will be putting up a piece of installation on crocodiles entitled *Under the Table, All Going One Direction*, which is part of his endangered species series. He has been invited by the Museum of Modern Art in Hiroshima to perform a piece on the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in October this year.

## TANG DA WU

## MARK CHAN

Mark is a singer-songwriter, composer and recording artiste. He is also TheatreWorks' resident composer. For the last few years, Mark ethereal and haunting music played important roles in many TheatreWorks' productions including *3 Children*, *Sound of A Voice & The Dance* and *The Railroad*, *Ozone* and most recently *Private Parts*. Mark has released three albums, and the latest, *China Blue*, was voted one of the top albums of the year by BigO magazine.

TheatreWorks is an independent Singaporean theatre company which develops and nurtures professional theatre skills. It is dedicated to reaching a broad section of the community and to taking Singapore theatre abroad. The company recognises its responsibility in encouraging awareness on human and social issues. Ultimately, TheatreWorks is inspired by, and dedicated to, sharing the Magic of Theatre.

TheatreWorks (S) Ltd, a registered charity, was incorporated in February 1985 as the first English language adult professional theatre company in Singapore.

TheatreWorks has over its seven years of existence produced critically acclaimed and successful productions. The company is recognised for its refreshing interpretations of plays and its experimental approach. The successful fusion of Western and Eastern dramatic traditions in its productions has earned its reputation of being an innovative theatre company.

As a pioneer theatre company, TheatreWorks realises its responsibility to provide opportunities for, and impart skills to, practitioners. It was in this spirit which generated *Theatre Carnival On The Hill* in April 1992. The company also seeks to build up a broader and more discerning theatre audience. In this respect, TheatreWorks has commissioned numerous Singaporean plays which has contributed greatly to attracting capacity audience.

The company has forged closer ties with Singaporean playwrights by establishing the Writers' Laboratory. TheatreWorks has just completed the first year of the Writers' Lab project. The Laboratory serves to nurture and encourage new writing and works on the basis of public readings by actors to test new plays. It focuses on 'process' rather than 'product' with the writers working closely with actors and directors. The fruits from the Lab can be seen in the plays staged in the *Theatre Carnival On The Hill* and the SPH Young Playwrights Series. The best plays are presently being published by Times Editions sponsored by Singapore Press Holdings.

In ensuring a continuing training programme for theatre practitioners, TheatreWorks has also organised its first year of the Springboard programme. Springboard is a comprehensive training programme for theatre skills conducted by theatre professionals from the UK. This programme is sponsored by the British Council and the National Arts Council. In August this year, TheatreWorks and the French Embassy organised a character and mask workshop with George Bigot from the acclaimed Theatre du Soleil.

Besides working with the Singapore creative community, the company has developed exchange programmes with foreign theatre companies like the Malaysian Five Arts Centre, the American South Coast Repertory, Indonesia's Teater Ketjil, Philippines' Tanghalang Filipino, the Japanese company Jiyu Gekijo and individuals such as David Hwang, Maria Irene Fornes from the United States, David Britton from Australia, Francis Reid and Simon McBurney from the United Kingdom. In its Asean season, there were exchanges with top Asean artists like Malaysia's Krishen Jit, Marion d'Cruz and Wong Hoy Cheong, Indonesia's Arifin C. Noer and Philippines' Tony Perez and Nonon Padilla.

The company ensures a balanced repertoire and a varied programme for its audiences. This can be seen from its popular and entertaining plays like *Fried Rice Paradise* (attracting an audience of 20,000) and its alternative theatrical productions of *Madame Mao's Memories* and *3 Children*. In 1990, the company presented the landmark *Retrospective of Singapore Plays 1960-1990*, articulating the national heritage of English language drama. In February this year, TheatreWorks' toured Japan and Kuala Lumpur with its production of *3 Children*. The company presented *Madame Mao's Memories* at the invitation of the Traverse Theatre for the Edinburgh Festival. *Beauty World* was performed in 4 Japanese cities including the Tokyo International Theatre Festival in September/October this year.

TheatreWorks receives support from corporate patronage, special project sponsors, the British Council, the USIS, the National Parks Board and the National Arts Council. The company's pioneer corporate sponsors are Tangs Studio and Glaxo and corporate sponsor is Esso Singapore. Hotel accommodation for foreign visitors is sponsored by the Westin Plaza and the Writers' Laboratory is sponsored by Singapore Press Holdings. These companies are distinguished by their enlightened leadership and sound corporate philosophies. They are the first to publicly recognise the necessity of a professional theatre company in the context of developing a culturally vibrant environment in Singapore.

## THEATREWORKS (SINGAPORE) LTD.



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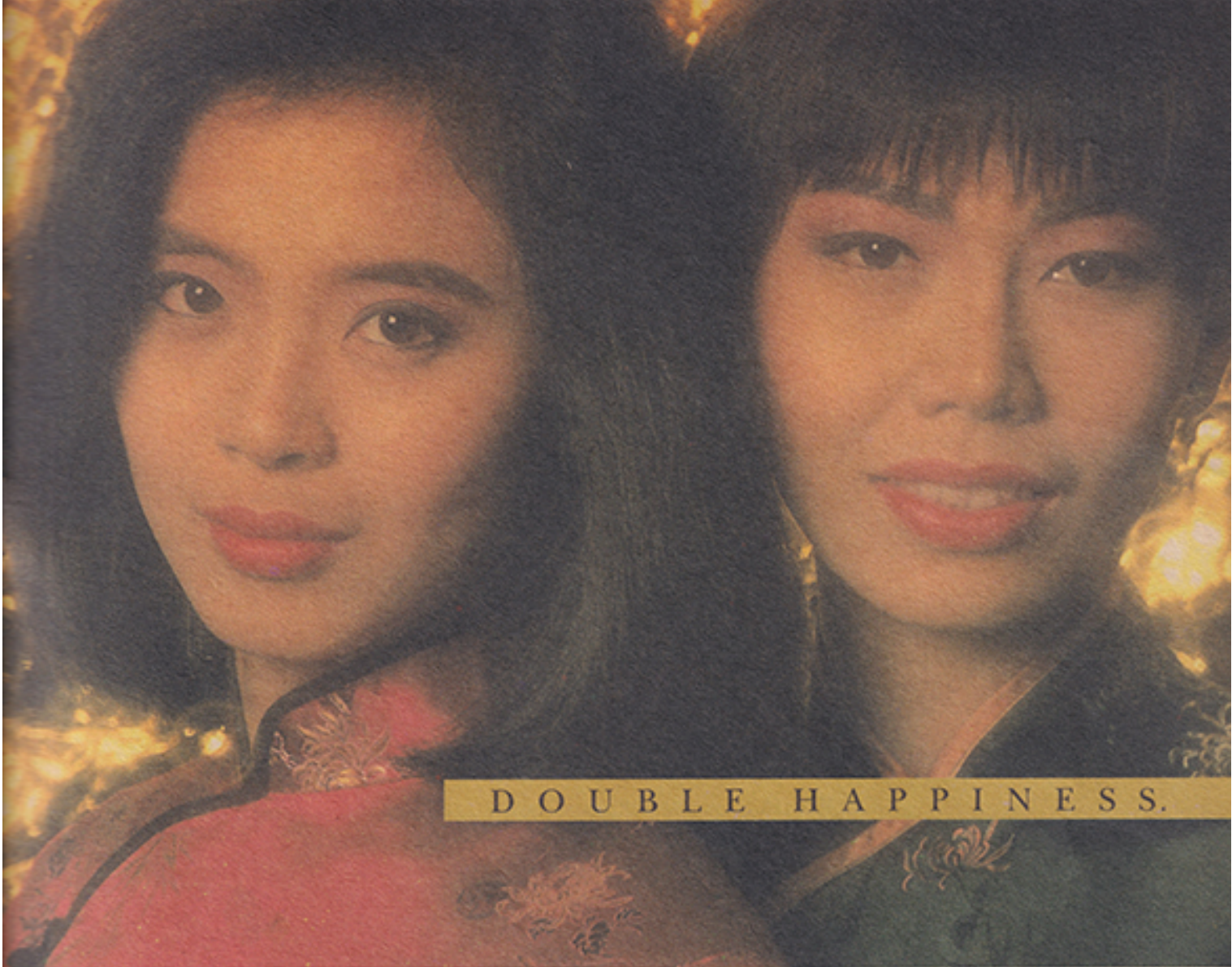
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