

theATREWORKs
presents

SAFE SEX

*A Double Bill
Directed by Ong Keng Sen*



*Jackson On A Jaunt by Eleanor Wong
As If He Hears by Chay Yew*

Die Devisen-
brieftasche
The Currency Binder
Le Portefeuille
Il Portafoglio
PORSCHE DESIGN



The Fountain Pen Arc 1
Die Füllfeder Arc 1
Le stylo plume Arc 1
PORSCHE DESIGN



Der Gürtel
The Belt
La Ceinture
La Cintura
PORSCHE DESIGN



Der Aktenkoffer
The Attaché Case
L'Attaché Case
La Valigetta
Portadocumenti
PORSCHE DESIGN



Die Faltbrille
The Folding Glasses
Les Lunettes
Pliantes
PORSCHE DESIGN



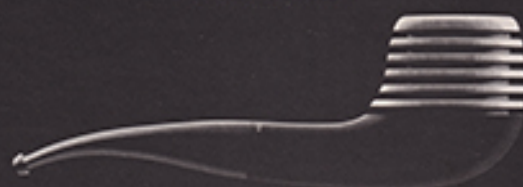
Die Exklusivbrille
The Exclusive
Sunglasses
Les Lunettes
de Soleil Exclusives
PORSCHE DESIGN



Der Titanchronograph
The Titanium
Chronograph
Le Chronograph
en Titane
PORSCHE DESIGN



Die Pfeife
The Pipe
La Pipe
La Pipo
PORSCHE DESIGN



Die Collegetasche
The Envelope
Briefcase
La Serviette
PORSCHE DESIGN



THEATREWORKS

presents

SAFE SEX



Director: ONG KENG SEN

Production Manager: TAY TONG Assistant Production Manager: LUCILLA TEOH

Stage Managers: SANDRA PEARCE (Jackson on a Jaunt), RAMA PRASAD (As If He Hears)

Set Designers: CHEONG YEW KUAN (Jackson on a Jaunt), JUSTIN HILL (As If He Hears)

Lighting Designer: KALYANI KAUSIKAN Sound Designer: ALLAN MORTIMER

Costumes: VIK LIM (Jackson on a Jaunt), TANGS STUDIO (As If He Hears) Masks: ASHLEY LIM

Hair: HENRI LEONG of "ENSEMBLE-COMPOSITE" Make-up: ROSE BEAUTY CENTRE

Front-of-House Manager: KOH JOO KIM Gala and Exhibition: JASON TING, JEREMIAH CHOY

Publicity Manager: NG SOY CHENG Publicity Assistant: LAWRENCE TAN

Poster and Programme Design: GOH ECK KHENG

Playwrights' Notes

After my last rewrite of *As If He Hears*, I still feel removed from the AIDS epidemic; it was as if AIDS was a part of the world that would never affect me. Then I think of Jim.

Just a few months ago, I visited friends in New York. One of them was Jim who had AIDS in the advanced stages. Jim was a far cry from the person I knew in 1985. He was easily irritated, easily angered; his raspy voice tinged with bitterness, impatience and defeat. However, Jim managed to conceal his pain well; occasionally he would laugh, reminisce and reveal the plans he had when got better. I could tell he was envious of me, of virtually anyone who was leading a healthy life without AIDS.

Lesions covered most of his scrawny body, his hair had greyed and was uncut and unkempt, his right eye, blinded by a secondary infection, twitched, and he walked painfully, with a cumbersome drip in tow. But he was glad to see me; anyone at all. So it became a habit for me to drop in in the afternoons, to keep Jim entertained and to distract him from his failing health.

When I returned to Boston, I called Jim only to leave messages on his phone machine. Months later, a recording came on saying that the number had been disconnected. I took it as a sign that he is finally at rest.

As If He Hears is essentially a play about AIDS; just as importantly, it is a play about a special relationship between two different people in an atmosphere of life and death, love and friendship, personal identity and the fight against incredible odds.

I urge you to fight AIDS in every possible avenue: education and information, volunteer services, monetary donations, and vitally, prevention. Join hands with Dr. Roy Chan in his worthwhile organisation, Action For AIDS, and in his admirable efforts in combatting this crippling disease in Singapore.

This play is for H.P Kaufmann for all the support and encouragement given to me all these years. All other appropriate thanks go to people instrumental for this play's reality, from rewrite to title changes: Ong Keng Sen for infinite devotion and talent, my second family at TheatreWorks, friends Eleanor Wong, Jacintha, Sylvia and Kay Tong, David Joseph, Winston Tam, Jeanette Ejlersen, Matina Teo, Dorothy Tan, Mohan Ismail and Young Kong Shin; Roy Chan for his fierce dedication to the plight of AIDS in Singapore; most of all, my father and my mother who have given me the world and more.

This play is also dedicated to all the Jims of the world, the people who have fought and are still fighting the battle against AIDS.

Chay (Boston, October '89)



Jackson's 'birth' has been a long drawn-out process.

Conceived in late 1987, scheduled for delivery in April 1988, *Jackson* was aborted when complications (of which some of you may be aware) arose. *Jackson* was abandoned — partially formed, embryonic (we were still in the process of rewriting then). That he will finally have his jaunt in the sun is due to the persistent midwifery of Keng Sen who called me in December last year and persuaded me to look at the play again.

I did; and the result — force-fed to early term during an intensive period just before I left for New York — is what you will see tonight.

This *Jackson* is somewhat different from his prematurely terminated brother/father(?). In making changes, I was always guided by the internal truth of the play. I hope I kept the faith, but one more likely to be "acceptable" than the other could not have been completely free.

So, are you going to meet the real *Jackson* tonight? The most interesting funny, thought-provoking meaningful *Jackson*? I have tried my best to ensure that. But we can't be sure, can we? And that's the price we pay for "protection".

Good health, happiness, and enjoy!

Eleanor (New York, October '89)

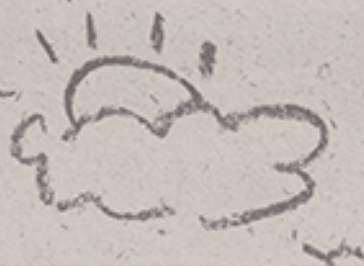




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Director's Message



What makes an AIDS play? Why do we not term a play about cancer a Cancer play? What do people expect from an AIDS play? These were some of the questions that ran through my head when I started rehearsing *As If He Hears* and *Jackson on a Jaunt*.

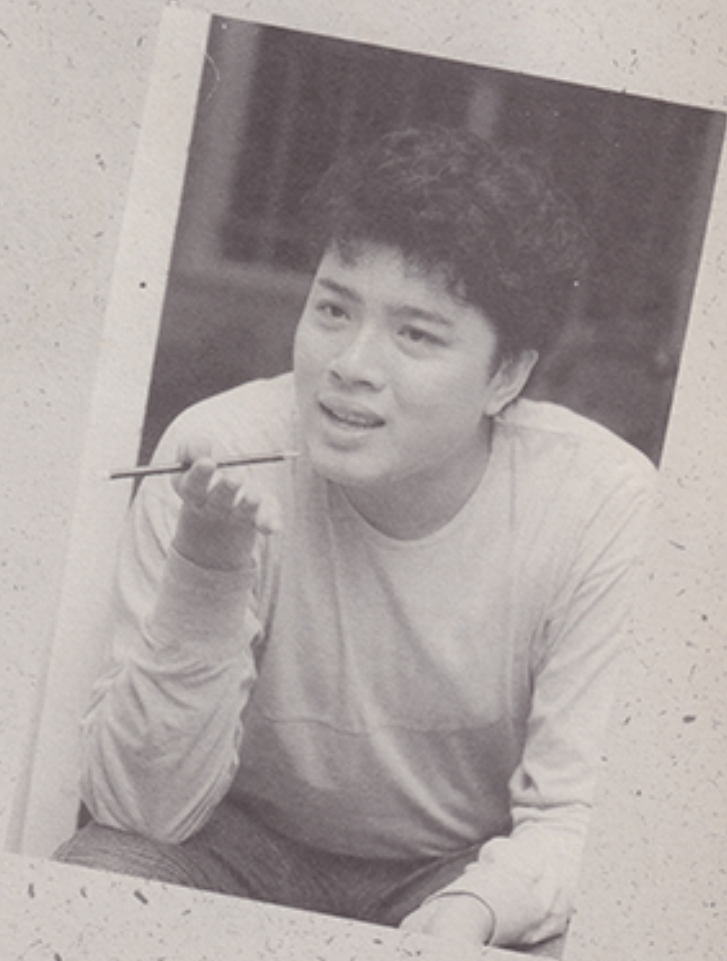
As If He Hears undoubtedly qualified as an AIDS play. It deals with a dying Person With AIDS (PWA) and it chronicles some of his angst as he becomes ostracised by society. But a common response to *Jackson on a Jaunt* was that it was not an AIDS play even though it examines certain self-realisations and discoveries of Jackson upon being told he has AIDS.

What exactly is this elusive AIDS play?

I still do not have a satisfactory answer. Perhaps, in the final analysis, the questions are unimportant. What I do know is that AIDS is one disease where society can choose to be unsympathetic, where it can be 'justified' to be harsh and moralistic, where funds and aid is less forthcoming because the disease involves the issues of sex and promiscuity. It is one disease where humanity shows its inhumanity.

These two plays have taken 18 months to be realised as productions. Whether or not they are AIDS plays, they have brought all of us who are involved one step towards understanding the trauma that PWAs, their families and close friends go through. It has made me realise that there is much to be done after my initial moralising.

Ong Keng Sen



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As If He Hears



LIM YU-BENG

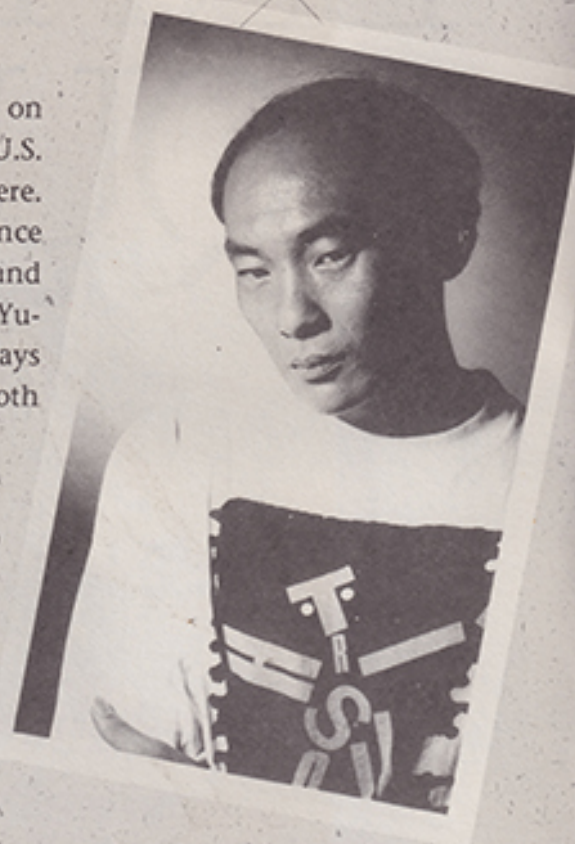
CHARACTER: PETER

Yu-Beng has worked on several productions in the U.S. while attending college there. Amongst his stage experience are *Fantasticks*, *Camelot* and *The Vietnam Experience*. Yu-Beng has also directed plays like *Actors* and *Macbett*, both in the U.S.

NORA SAMOSIR

CHARACTER: RUTH

Nora is a member of the TheatreWorks' Actors Ensemble and has appeared in many TheatreWorks productions such as *Miss Julie*, *To My Heart With Smiles*, and recently, *Mixed Signals*.



LIM KAY SIU

CHARACTER: HANS

Kay Siu's debut as an actor was in *Be My Sushi Tonight* (1985). Since then, he has appeared in virtually all of TheatreWorks' productions. His most recent portrayal was in the title role of TheatreWorks' *To My Heart With Smiles*. A versatile talent, Kay Siu has written songs and playscripts, and has had speaking parts in several films.

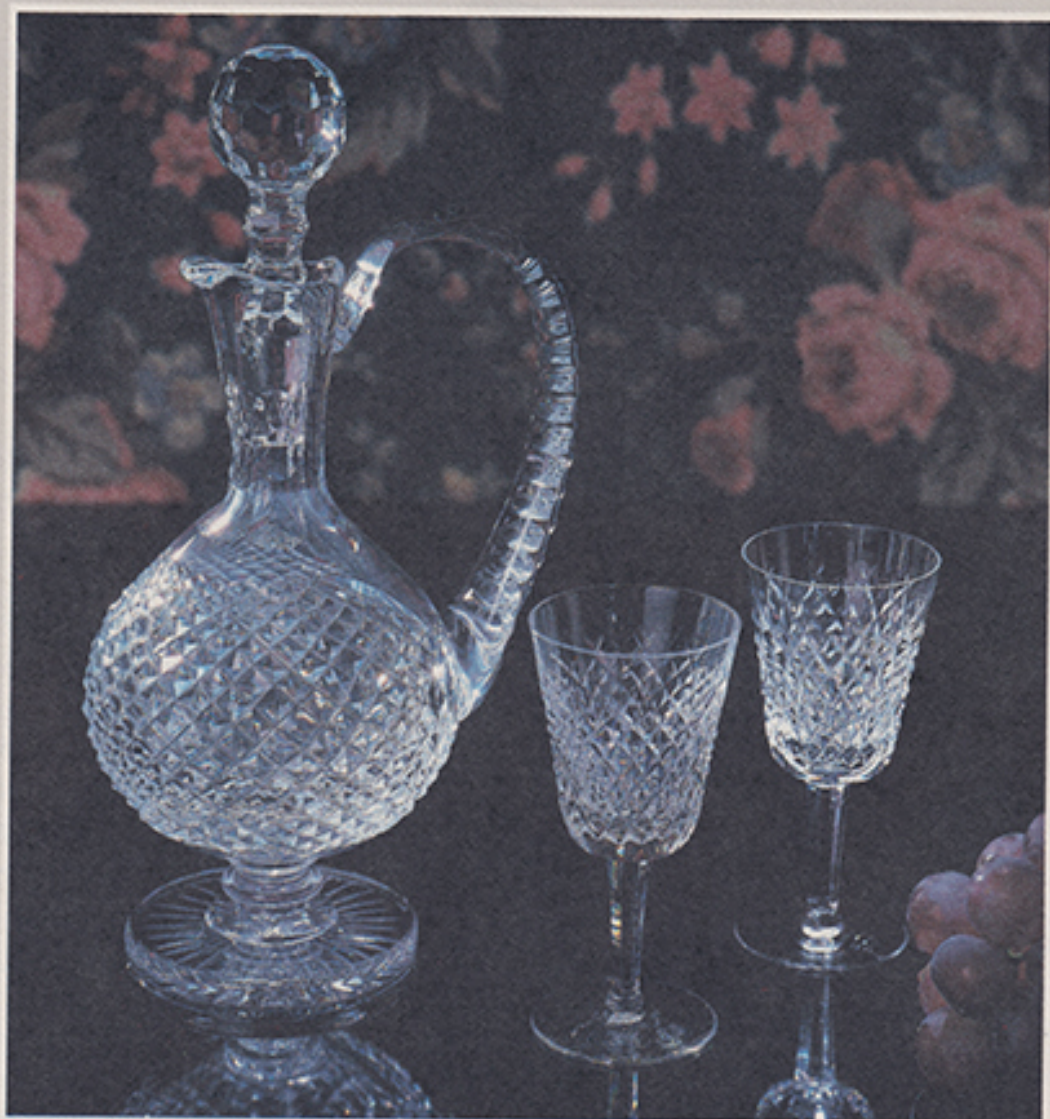
**JAMIE LO &
DAPHNE NG**

(alternates)


CHARACTER: GIRL



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Jackson on a Jaunt



WILLIAM GROSSE

CHARACTER: JACKSON

A teacher by profession, William is interested in promoting drama in schools and he conducts drama workshops for his students. He has been actively involved in theatre in Singapore. Among his acting credits are *Be My Sushi Tonight*, *Army Daze*, *Piaf* and *Elephant Man*.

JACINTHA

ABISHEGANADEN

CHARACTER: CELENE

Jacintha graduated from the National University of Singapore with an Honours Degree in English. A singer, recording artiste, writer, stage actress and more, Jacintha won the Best Actress Award in the Singapore Drama Festival 1981. Since winning the 1976 National Talentime with the trio "Vintage", she has performed all over the world, and received the Best Performance Award at the 4th ASEAN Pop Song Festival 1987. She has also cut two solo albums "Silence" and "Tropicana". As an actress, Jacintha has appeared in principal roles in productions such as *Nurse Angamuthu's Romance*, *Susan's Party*, *Beauty World*, *Piaf* and *Mixed Signals*.

RANI MOORTHY

CHARACTER:

JACKSON'S MOTHER

Rani's interest in drama began in school. While training as a teacher in the Institute of Education, she appeared in *The Real Inspector Hound* for the 1987 Drama Festival. This was followed by TheatreWorks' *Piaf*, *Miss Julie*, *Mixed Signals*, and the Necessary Stage's *Over the Wall* and *Round and Round the Dining Table*. Her efforts in writing and directing *Mr Chan Wants To Marry* for the Young People's Theatre 1989 won her accolades from the press. Rani was recently featured on the SBC documentary on young dramatists.



LEE WENG KEE

CHARACTER:

JACKSON'S FATHER

Weng Kee's last involvement with TheatreWorks was *To My Heart With Smiles* in which he took the part of a formidable father. He was the incorrigible nose-picking Ah Beng whom he played to comic heights in *Army Daze*. His many talents have brought him onto the stage with numerous other theatre groups. He is a trained hair-stylist and make-up artist.

JANET NG

CHARACTER: MIMI

Janet is a teacher by profession. She has acted in several musicals including Michael Chiang's *Beauty World* by TheatreWorks, Roger and Hammerstein's *Sound of Music* by Stars and Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat* by The Institute of Education.

CHRISTINE CHAN

CHARACTER: SUSAN

Theatre goers will remember seeing Christine in productions such as *Boeing, Boeing, Dangerous Corners*, and more recently, *A Month In The Country*.

KAREN LIM

CHARACTER: DR MEI

A music teacher/therapist by profession, Karen has appeared in a number of plays such as *Children's Hour, Night Mother* and *Old Times*.



Programme

Jackson on a Jaunt

by Eleanor Wong

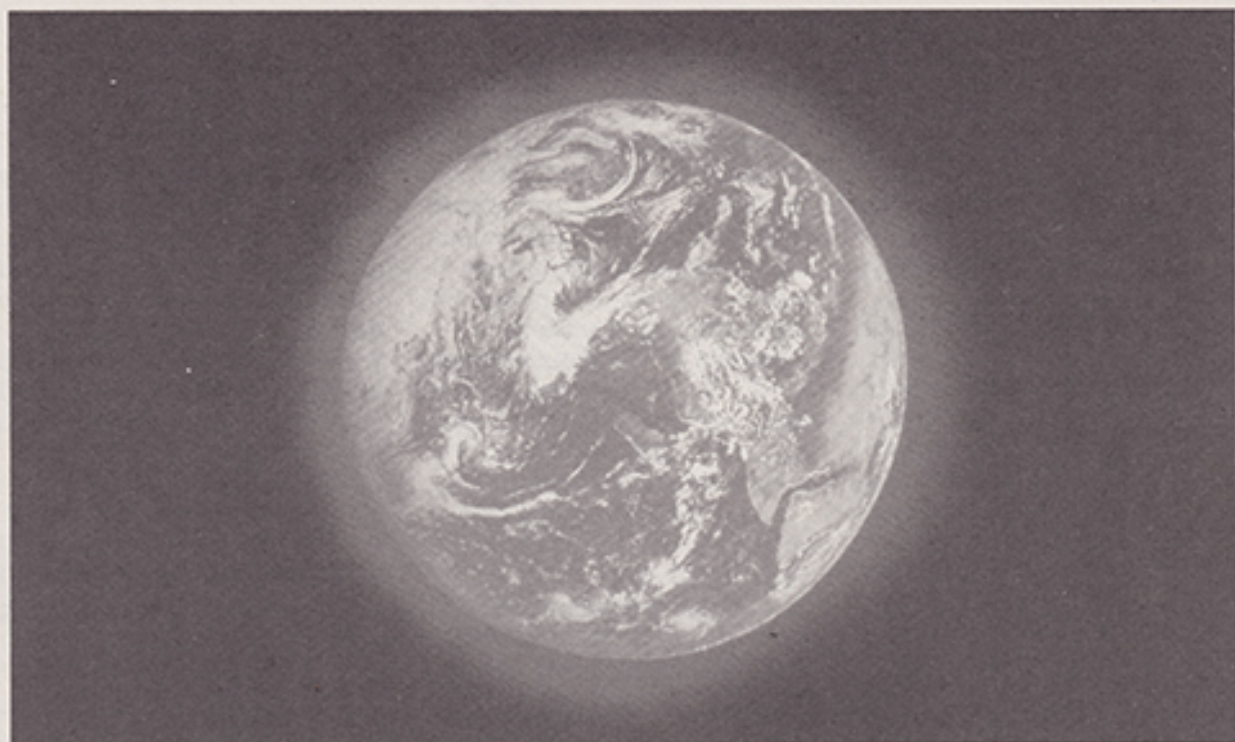
Jackson is an egocentric insurance executive who is told he has contracted AIDS. But he was one of two patients who were given the number 633 in the hospital that day. Which of them really has AIDS? With AIDS as a catalyst, Jackson undergoes a series of discoveries about himself and the society he lives in.

Interval

As If He Hears

by Chay Yew

As If He Hears, focuses on the friendship between an AIDS volunteer worker and a man stricken with AIDS. Through each other, they discover life in death, and death in life. The play is a study about the lives of AIDS patients and the relationships they form.



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AIDS: A PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

(The writer was a Singaporean who has since passed away.)

I am rather happy to have reached my thirtieth birthday last January. You see, I come from a family which is endowed with the comforts of life — a nice house, caring parents, food on the table at all times, I was afforded the opportunity to attend fine universities in Canada and Cambridge.

I am also gay and damn proud to be one too. I also have the deadly disease AIDS. You can call me a PWA (People or Person with AIDS). I was initially diagnosed HIV positive while at Cambridge. It was a time when there was no public information regarding the disease. There was no media information of any form whatsoever other than the negative reports we read in the newspapers. There were no public advertisements or posters advocating safe sex. No medical authorities in the world had the absolute confidence in identifying this disease, how it could be curbed to prevent further spread among populations and least of all, finding a cure. Had I known the fact that by using a condom one reduces the risk of infection, I would have used a condom and perhaps I would not have developed the disease.

Three-and-a-half years have since passed by. Within this period my health began to deteriorate from general fatigue and malaise, to developing the condition known as ARC (or Aids Related Complex), and finally "full-blown" AIDS, which is the final phase of the disease. Yes, I have endured periods of much pain and discomfort, aside from emotional stress and depression. There were even days when I contemplated taking my own life and I have accepted the fact that my days on this beautiful planet are numbered.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the public is still

misinformed about AIDS. Ignorance of true medical facts about how AIDS is transmitted from an infected person to a sexual partner creates an atmosphere of fear and hysteria. We live in a civilised society; we are advanced in our various technologies yet it seems we cannot cope and confront the AIDS issue with forthright compassion and integrity.

Failure to deal with the AIDS issue will aggravate the current situation.

At the moment, aside from monitored medical attention, the best medicine for the

long or short, have a purpose and role while on this Earth. There must be an affirmation to living. In this case of an individual stricken with AIDS, the individual should try and formulate a healing routine. Never harbour guilt feelings because someone gave you the virus. Blame is a very destructive factor and it can hamper a patient's recovery and affect recuperation. Try to adopt self-healing methods such as consuming food with good nutrition, regulating your sleeping and resting schedule so that one's body has sufficient rest.



PWA is faith and achieving inner peace with oneself. Faith in medical research and discovery of new drugs; faith in Divine intervention; and last but not least, faith in oneself. A PWA should try to relinquish all sense of guilt, self-pity and worries. The PWA should dissipate all anger and fear which causes unnecessary stress thus leading to greater pressure on one's immune system.

We are all here on this planet for a span of time. PWAs will have a considerably shorter time and lifespan on this planet. But all lives, whether

There are counsellors who may provide invaluable advice and guidance, and there are books written on the subject. I would recommend PWAs to read Louise L. Hay's book titled *The AIDS Book: Creating a Positive Approach* which I found to be immensely helpful. PWAs should understand that their body's immune system is highly vulnerable and susceptible to infections, especially developing PCP or Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia, a rare condition which is the prime cause in the deaths of most AIDS patients.

We did not have support groups' care places in Singapore until recently when Actions for AIDS (AFA) was registered. This is a good start for the efforts of people involved in this project.

Sex is a natural human act between consenting adults. One should not die as a result of having sex. That would be the mentality of an ultra self-righteous moralist. While the AIDS virus is easy to contract by having intercourse with an infected person without the use of a condom, it is also easily controlled when individuals are well informed about AIDS

roulette. The U. S. Surgeon-General has already declared that barring abstinence (from sex), the use of a condom is the most effective protection from the disease.

Speaking to one's physician about how to practise safe sex could mean a difference between life and death.

I am not a religious person, but I have faith in Providence, Fate and Destiny. AIDS has changed my life considerably, allowing me to examine and re-structure my priorities while I am still alive. I feel peaceful holding no blame,



through education programmes for the public.

To advocate celibacy as a prevention against the spread of the disease smacks of self-denial, hypocrisy and avoiding reality. We are all human beings, and as such, have feelings and sexual urges at one time or another. While gay people, bisexuals and IV drug users continue to be in the high risk category, the AIDS virus itself has no discrimination against sex, race, age, class, religion or other human barriers.

Sex should not be a deadly dalliance like Russian

guilt, bitterness or resentment against anyone or anything. Each day is a special day for me as I take things one at a time. I am fortunate to have the love, care and support from my family and friends. But there are many PWAs who are shunned as social outcasts by their family and friends. These are people who need our support.

What we need now is more government support and funding towards providing better medical care for AIDS patients. We have some of the best hospitals in the region, yet

ironically no hospital in the country holds possession of a small device that dispenses aerosol pentamidine for AIDS patients who develop PCP.

Severe lack of government funding and support towards AIDS programmes and projects often reflects upon senior budget officials adopting a "holier-than-thou" attitude. AIDS is regarded as not a major medical funding in their priority list. I had PCP once, but I was in Canada then and the hospitals and clinics have aerosol pentamidine facilities and it saved my life. Am I worried that my life would be in dire jeopardy the next time I encountered PCP? Personally, no.

If someone whom one knows has AIDS, avoiding the PWA completely induces greater fear in one's mind. If one still has reservations and apprehensions about talking with a PWA, the use of a telephone would be a comfortable alternative. Discriminating against someone with AIDS only reinforces one's own prejudices and ignorance.

Being near to a PWA poses greater risk to the PWA's health than oneself. Do understand that the PWA (who already has a weakened immune system) has a greater risk of catching a common flu or minor infection which may not be harmful to the healthy individual but could prove fatal to the PWA. Many people do not realize that, and often feel that they (the healthy ones) are at risk by being near a PWA.

Treat AIDS as a medical problem first rather than a moral problem and there will be a likelihood that treatment or cure will be foreseeable in the future. Remember — no one should die because of sex. That would be against the scheme of Nature.

Facts about AIDS

1. What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is caused by infection by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

The diagnosis of AIDS requires the presence of HIV (as indicated by a positive blood test) and the presence of some other opportunistic disease, either an infection by another organism or a malignancy.

2. Through what ways can HIV be spread?

There are three main ways by which HIV can be spread, viz.:

- Through sexual intercourse with an infected person.

- Through sharing contaminated needles and syringes, and the transfusion of infected blood and blood-products.

- From infected mother to foetus/newborn.

3. What are the symptoms of AIDS?

AIDS represents the end or terminal stage of infection by HIV. A person with AIDS can have chronic loss of weight, chronic fever, cough, breathlessness, severe diarrhoea and unusual skin tumours, amongst other symptoms.

4. Is the patient infectious during the symptomatic period?

Yes. The infected person is able to spread the virus at all stages of the illness, whether he or she manifests any sign and symptoms or not.

5. What precautions should be taken to avoid AIDS?

You can avoid contracting AIDS by:

- not injecting drugs, and not sharing needles and syringes if you do.

- maintaining a mutually monogamous relationship with one uninfected partner.

- if you are not monogamous,

you should not have sex with persons who have many other sexual partners (eg. prostitutes, social escorts), you should reduce the number of sexual partners and not have sex with casual pick-ups and one night stands.

- when having sex with someone outside your stable relationship or with someone whose HIV status you cannot be sure about, always practise "safer sex".

6. What is "safer sex"?

Safer sex refers to sexual activity which does not involve the contact or exchange of body fluids like semen, vaginal and cervical fluids and blood, these are:

- Safe activities: body rubbing, mutual masturbation, dry kissing.

- Moderately safe: Vaginal intercourse with a condom, anal intercourse with a condom, oral sex with a condom, deep kissing.

Unsafe sex involves vaginal intercourse without a condom, anal intercourse without a condom or oral sex without a condom.

7. What happens when one is infected with HIV?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus enters and attacks certain cells of the body's immune system, these are the CD4 lymphocytes and the macrophages. HIV destroys these cells and therefore compromises the body's defence system against other infections and malignancies. As HIV infection progresses the infected person succumbs to life-threatening infections and malignancies.

In addition to destroying the immune system, HIV also infects the cells of the nervous system and this leads to the development of neurological problems.

8. How long is the incubation period of AIDS?

The incubation period is the duration of time between the point of infection and the development of signs and symptoms of AIDS. This period can vary between 2 years up to 15 years or even more. The average period however is about 9 years. During this time the patient is initially completely well,

but gradually begins to manifest signs and symptoms of infection. It is only when certain definite diseases are diagnosed that the patient can be designated as suffering from AIDS.

9. Who falls in the "high-risk" groups?

The high-risk groups vary from country to country. In the west, the high-risk groups are homosexual and bisexual men and intravenous drug abusers. In Africa, the high-risk groups are young heterosexuals with multiple partners. In Singapore so far most of our infections have been found in homosexual and bisexual men. High-risk groups can also change with time as the epidemic begins to affect different sectors of the population. It is probably more accurate to say "high-risk activity" rather than "high-risk" groups.

10. Where can one be tested for HIV?

The HIV antibody test is available at government polyclinics, the Kelantan Road clinic, the Communicable Disease Centre at Moulmein Road, the National Skin Centre and at some private clinics.

You can seek more information about AIDS at the above medical centres. An AIDS helpline is also in operation, the numbers are:

24-hour recorded message:

2541611 (English)

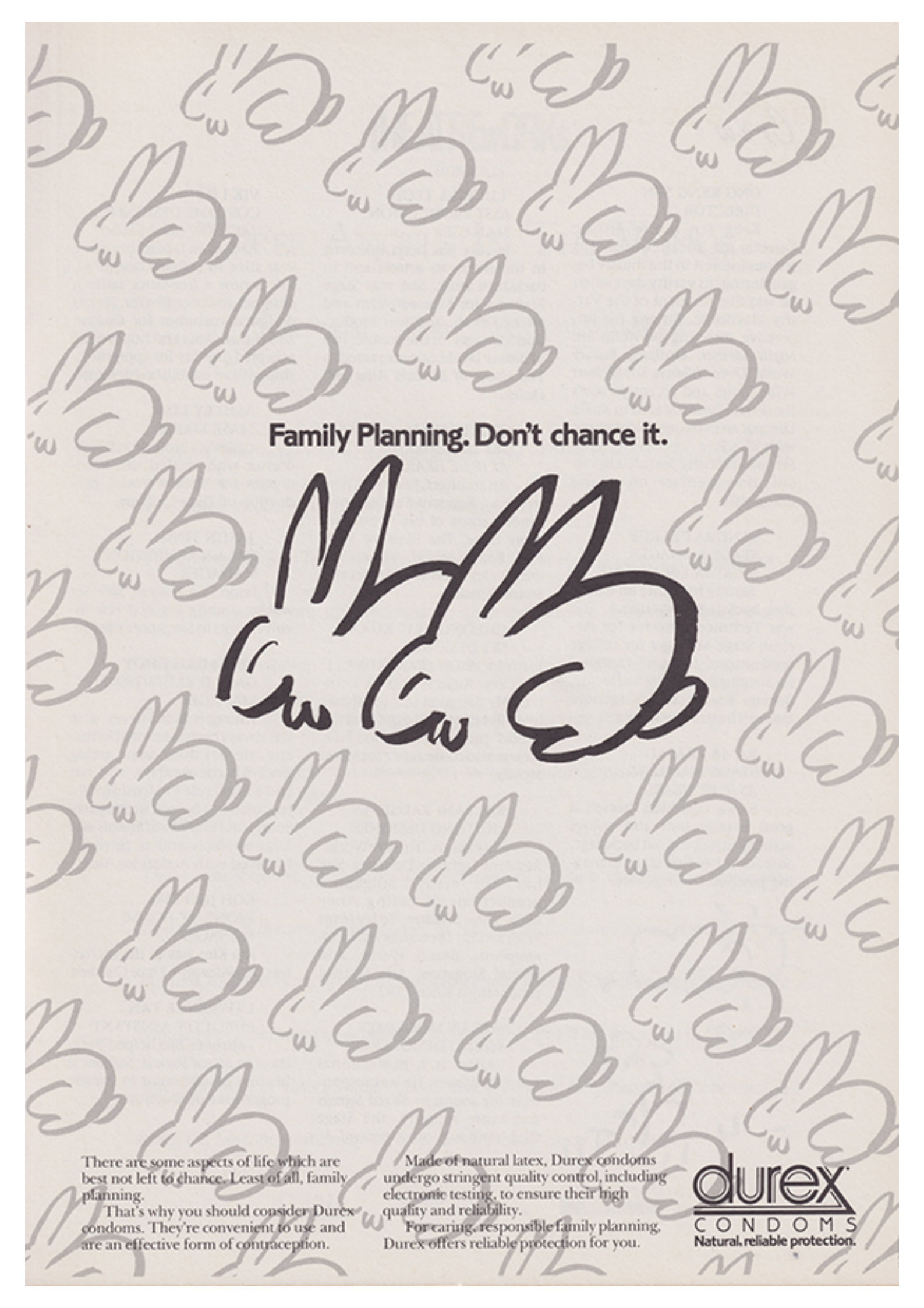
2541612 (Mandarin)

Person-to-person telephone counselling:

2541613 (office hours)

If you are interested in finding out more, write to:

The Hon Secretary
Action for AIDS Singapore
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Crew

ONG KENG SEN DIRECTOR

Keng Sen is the Artistic Director of Theatreworks. His serious interest in the theatre began during his varsity days when he was the President of the Varsity Playhouse. Among his impressive directing portfolio are *Night Mother*, *Oedipus*, *Beauty World*, *Three Children*, *To My Heart With Smiles* and recently *Peter's Passionate Pursuit* staged in Kuala Lumpur an exchange programme with KL's Five Arts Centre. Keng Sen was recently featured in the SBC documentary on young dramatists.

SANDRA PEARCE STAGE MANAGER JACKSON ON A JAUNT

Sandra has quite an extensive backstage experience. She was Technical Director for *Percival*; Stage Manager for college productions; Lighting Designer for *Sleeping Beauty*, *Big Bad Mouse*, *Boeing*, *Boeing* and *Singapore Dance Theatre* productions.

RAMA PRASAD STAGE MANAGER AS IF HE HEARS

Rama considers herself a great theatre buff and enjoys acting and helping out backstage. *Safe Sex* is her first stage managing position in Singapore.



LUCILLA TEOH ASST PRODUCTION MANAGER

Lucilla has been involved in theatre as an actress and in backstage work. She was Stage Manager for *Metamorphosis* and *Mixed Signals*, and was Production Manager for the premier run of *Beauty World*. She also acted in *The House of Bernada Alba* and *Oedipus*.

JUSTIN HILL SET DESIGNER AS IF HE HEARS

An architect, Justin is Theatreworks' Resident Set Designer. Among some of his works are *Army Daze*, *The Elephant Man*, *Piaf*, *Beauty World*, *Three Children*, *To My Heart With Smiles* and *Mixed Signals*.

CHEONG YEW KUAN SET DESIGNER JACKSON ON A JAUNT

Yew Kuan is also an architect. He designed sets for shows in university and for TheatreWorks' production of *Miss Julie*. He was also co-designer for *Mixed Signals*.

KALYANI KAUSIKAN LIGHTING DESIGNER

Kalyani is TheatreWorks' Resident Lighting Designer. She has lit many Singapore productions including *Army Daze*, *Three Children*, *To My Heart With Smiles*, *Dreamkeepers*, *Metamorphosis*, *Beauty World* and several Singapore Arts Festival productions since 1982.

ALLAN MORTIMER SOUND DESIGNER

Allan is a professional sound engineer. He was responsible for sound in *Mixed Signals* and more recently, the Stage Club's production of *Percival*.

VIK LIM COSTUME DESIGNER JACKSON ON A JAUNT

Back from Japan after a one year stint in fashion designing, Vik is now a free-lance fashion designer and coordinator. He has designed costumes for *Oedipus* and *Hayavadana* and hopes to be accepted one day for apprenticeship with an established designer.

ASHLEY LIM MASK MAKER

Ashley is a professional hairdresser who created the head-dresses for TheatreWork's production of *Three Children*.

JASON TING GALA & EXHIBITION MANAGER

Jason is a lawyer. *Safe Sex* will be among his first few involvements in Singapore theatre.

JEREMIAH CHOY GALA & EXHIBITION MANAGER

Jeremiah is a lawyer who has always been interested in theatre. He has done some acting since his college days, and has had a small role in *Mixed Signals*. Jeremiah has helped in the party committees for *Mixed Signals* and *Metamorphosis* and is currently involved with Action for Aids.

KOH JOO KIM FRONT-OF-HOUSE MANAGER

Joo Kim was in the orchestras of *Medea* and *Three Children*.

LAWRENCE TAN PUBLICITY ASSISTANT

Lawrence has helped backstage in *Mixed Signals*. *Safe Sex* is his first involvement in theatre programme production.

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These companies are distinguished by their enlightened leaderships and sound corporate philosophies. TheatreWorks is very proud to be singled out and put under their wings in their support of Singapore's fledgling theatre profession. Together, we hope to give to Singapore a meaningful, vibrant and progressive theatre repertoire in 1989/90.

Their contributions to TheatreWorks represent a new direction in corporate sponsorship of the arts in Singapore, in particular, the dramatic theatre. They are the first to publicly recognise the relevance and necessity of a professional theatre company in the context of developing a culturally vibrant environment in Singapore. The generosity of Tangs Studio, Glaxo and Waterford Wedgwood will, eventually, bring the Singaporean dream of a cultured society closer to reality.

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Acknowledgments

Special thanks to our corporate sponsors — Tangs Studio, Glaxo and Waterford Wedgwood — for their support and sharing our faith.

The Ministry of Community Development for theatre space under the Theatre-in-Residence Scheme.

Action For Aids for their contribution in the foyer exhibition.

Dr Roy Chan for his time and effort in giving us a better understanding of the issue and for providing basic facts on AIDS for publication in this programme.

The family of the late author of "Aids: A Patient's Perspective" for allowing us to publish an edited version of the article in this programme.

Tangs Studio for providing the costumes for *As If He Hears*.

Porsche Designs, TGIF, Fraser & Neave and Standard Chartered for their support.

Henri Leong of "Ensemble-Composite" for his hair creations.

Kose Beauty Centre for creating the make-up.

The Straits Times for the photograph of our Artistic Director

All advertisers for their support

The Party Committee and their assistants for their work and effort on the Gala and foyer exhibition.

The ushers and Front-of-House assistants for their time.

The Press and Media.

All those who assisted us in one way or another in this production.

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THEATREWORKS news

Vol. 1 No. 1

Avoid
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Book now for the
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David Hwang to direct for TheatreWorks

by Lim Kay Tong

David Henry Hwang, who has joined the "first string of American playwrights" (*Hollywood Reporter*), will be here in Singapore early next year to work with TheatreWorks.

Hwang will be directing two of his plays—*The Dance and the Railroad* and *The Sound of a Voice*—together with our Artistic Director, Ong Keng Sen.

The 32-year-old playwright and director who has won international attention and acclaim with his recent award winning Broadway and West End runaway hit *M. Butterfly*, is an old friend of Singapore's theatre scene.

Last here in 1982

He was here to co-direct a Festival of Arts production of his play *FOB* in 1982, when he was one of America's hottest young playwrights. Even though that was 8 years ago, Hwang's spirit of internationalism was already evident.

Instead of insisting on an all-American production, *FOB* was allowed to evolve as an US/Singapore effort, with Dr Max Le Blond and TheatreWorks' founder director Lim Kay Tong involved as director and actor respectively.

Even then, there was Hwang's magic. *The Straits Times* said of *FOB*: "there are people plays. Something special happens in the theatre. Rapt attention during the performance...everybody pouring out jabbering at the end. Anxious to explain, argue and, most of all to come to terms—because these are plays which spill off the stage and follow you home."

Obie Award Winner

Incredibly, *FOB* was Hwang's first play. It had won an Obie award (accorded to the best shows Off Broadway) and had been presented at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1980.

FOB wasn't a flash-in-the-pan success.

Hwang's second play, *The Dance and the Railroad*, premiered in New York the following year at the Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theatre and won greater praise. One critic said: "At 23, Hwang already knows how to take a bare stage and an hour and make something theatrical happen," using "fantasy and poetry without coyness or inhibition."

The Dance and the Railroad is still one of his best plays. It is the story of two Chinese laborers and is set in



David Hwang: in Singapore in February 1990.

1867 in California, during the construction of the transcontinental railroad.

Blend of East and West

In a tightly packed dramatic blending of Eastern and Western theatrical styles, Hwang creates a stand-off between one worker who wishes to continue his life as an actor rather than serve the white man and another who, although drawn to the promises of riches through labor,

is attracted by the mysterious wonders that the pursuit of art can offer.

What follow are five very visual, humorous and telling sequences about being an immigrant with all the attendant dreams, aspirations and disappointments. *The Dance and the Railroad* also embodies specifically the struggles of the early Chinese settlers in America. Lastly, the play is also about

cont'd on page four




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FULL-TIME THEATRE WORK

by Lucilla Teoh

Two people caught up in the exhilarating whirl of theatre productions are Tay Tong, Theatreworks' Production Manager and Ng Soy Cheng, the company's Public Relations and Business Manager.

There is never time to rest. When a successful run has been completed, the next one is just round the corner. There are rehearsals to schedule, costumes to organise, photoshoots to conceptualise, advertisement space to sell, meetings to coordinate...

Work is never boring and tasks vary with each production.

"You look forward to each new project because the final product is different," explained Soy Cheng, whose main responsibilities are fundraising and promoting the company and its productions.

She joined TheatreWorks without any theatre experience and was immediately plunged into a different world. However, she handled, and continues to face, each new experience with verve.

Responsible for the smooth running of each production is Tay Tong's job. This entails everything and anything, and he has had to source scaffolding for *Metamorphosis*; hunt for jute sacks for a photoshoot; and rummage for a steering wheel for *Safe Sex*.

Both Soy Cheng and Tay Tong agree that all the headaches, late nights and keep-

ing strange working hours are worth it.

As Tay Tong puts it, "Something magical happens. All the different areas such as sets, costumes, lights, props, and the months of rehearsals finally come together in a creative whole in theatre."

Tay Tong's interest in theatre began in school. From just watching plays, he went on to help out backstage in some memorable productions such as *Oedipus* and *Beauty World* before taking-up theatre as his full-time profession.

Soy Cheng and Tay Tong find it challenging to be part of a growing company, to be constantly involved in its daily planning.

"Although you have so many productions, and you think that you have encountered all there is to encounter, each new production has its unique problems and stress. The success of each play depends on the work of so many different people and you have to deal with a wide variety of tasks and manage them so that they finally hang together," said Tay Tong, summing up life in TheatreWorks.

Tay Tong and Soy Cheng are among the pioneers of theatre professionals in Singapore and they represent the beginning of the fulfillment of TheatreWorks' dream of a viable and fully-professional theatre company in Singapore.



Artistic Barter: TheatreWorks and Five Arts Centre, KL

In October, Eleanor Wong's prize-winning play, *Peter's Passionate Pursuit*, was staged in Kuala Lumpur under an exchange programme between TheatreWorks and Five Arts Centre, Malaysia. The play was directed by Ong Keng Sen, TheatreWorks' Artistic Director, and was as unlike the two previous productions of the play as night is from day. *The New Straits Times* drama critic, Tan Gim Ean, described the production as "bold", "bizarre" and "surreal" with a "futuristic ambience". The all-woman cast comprised Sabrea Shaik (Gabriel), Anne James (Beel) and Ann George (Dee).

Peter's Passionate Pursuit was the second play under the exchange programme. The inaugural project was, Malaysian playwright Leow Puay Tin's *Three Children*, directed by Krishen Jit for TheatreWorks in Singapore last year.

Krishen's message for the *Peter's Passionate Pursuit*

programme gives much insight into the mood and benefits of the exchange programme. We reproduce an excerpt:

"We have not signed a contract or a document of intent to formalize and legitimize the creative exchange between our two theatre groups. We have not come together as would governments and businesses. We do not have any binding laws, codicils, and caveats that rule and seal our relations. Neither party in the exchange asked for such formal guarantees, nor were any offered.

Yet, the artistic barter is somehow happening...

What kept us going was the will to negotiate an artistic encounter. Some of the terrain we crossed was bumpy, and continues to be so. We were fooled by the appearance of sameness between our theatre cultures. We have yet to build a firm enough bridge that might narrow the gap of foreignness facing each other. The best

that we can say about ourselves is that we are learning to live with the imperfections and the embarrassments that naturally arise from human and artistic communication.

One would be suspicious

of an artistic encounter that was perfect and smooth-sailing. No art is possible without questions and problems...

But some things have been common to us both. Apprehension was acute and vivid among both sets of actors as they encountered their alien directors and their alien methodologies of doing a play. In this respect, they came face to face with the pain and purpose of doing art. They met the unknown and attempted a relationship with it.

We touched something deep in ourselves as we strove to touch each other. There is little in art that is more valuable and more enjoyable than the onset of self-apprehension as individuals and as a people. The true aim of the creative exchange could only be our wish to evoke similar stances of self-apprehension among our audiences in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur."

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the conflict between striving for material gain and a search for artistic fulfilment.

But Hwang is first and foremost a man of the theatre. What that means in *The Dance and the Railroad* is a immediate and vivid drama.

Roots

The son of a Shanghai-born banker and a Chinese pianist raised in the Philippines, Hwang appears an unlikely voice for Asian Americans. Born in 1957, he grew up in an upper middle-class family in San Gabriel, a suburb of Los Angeles.

Yet he quickly identified with the history of the Chinese in both the US and China. His grandparents would tell him stories of the homeland. By the time he got to Stanford University in 1975, Hwang had begun to write plays.

Reowned theatre producer Joseph Papp who spotted his talent and produced *FOB* has said: "He was trying to maintain his connection with his roots... David was looking for his past. That was very refreshing to me, because usually it's lost in the American culture or nobody can articulate it properly."

Cultural Identity

The desire to write plays and his search for a cultural identity meshed. He had a desire to create more opportunities for Asian-Americans in the US theatre: "I write about Asian-Americans to claim our legitimate, but often neglected, place in the American experience."

But as an artist he was still searching. After *Family Devotions*, a sassy comedy about an American-Chinese family, came *The Sound of a Voice* and its sister play

House of Sleeping Beauties. Both are set in Japan. Hwang said: "These are the first plays I've written which don't deal with the idea of being a minority in America. They're still, I think, similar to the previous works in that they deal with Asian culture and are for Asian actors. But the themes are different. I'm starting to deal more with the idea of relationships."

The Christian Science Monitor hailed the plays as "A major theatrical event... *The Sound of a Voice* unfolds with a compelling combination of strength and delicate nuance." The redoubtable scribe for *New York* magazine, John Simon, had this to say about the mystical encounter of a medieval wandering Samurai with an enticing, solitary witch: "With *The Sound of a Voice*, the young playwright comes significantly closer to perfect pitch."

M Butterfly

For Hwang: "I've gotten a lot of mileage out of writing about Chinese-Americans. Whether that's good for my career in the long run is debatable."

Who would have guessed that he would cover enough mileage to encompass the world: *M Butterfly* exploded rather than flitted onto the international theatre scene. Hwang's search and strivings will continue. Where, is anybody's guess.

As it is, we believe *The Dance and the Railroad* and *The Sound of a Voice* represent crucial signposts in David Henry Hwang's work.

TheatreWorks' David Hwang Festival, presenting *The Dance and the Railroad* and *The Sound of a Voice* will be staged between Feb 1 to 10, 1990, at the Drama Centre.

We hope you will join us.

Dramatic Effects off Stage

TheatreWorks believes in the concept of 'total theatre'. The company not only strives to deliver good theatre on stage but is also concerned with the peripherals which would prepare the audience for the play. Before even entering the theatre, the audience is treated to an exhibition/display which fits the mood of the play.

The Gala Night Party Committee is responsible for mounting exhibitions and displays in the theatre foyer.

In *Miss Julie*, the Drama Centre foyer was bedecked with bundles of fresh flowers and ribbons to create an impression of Midsummer while for *To My Heart with Smiles*, a nostalgic atmosphere was created from the use of bamboo, stringed light bulbs and big earthen urns.

Apart from the foyer exhibitions, the committee prepares a reception as part

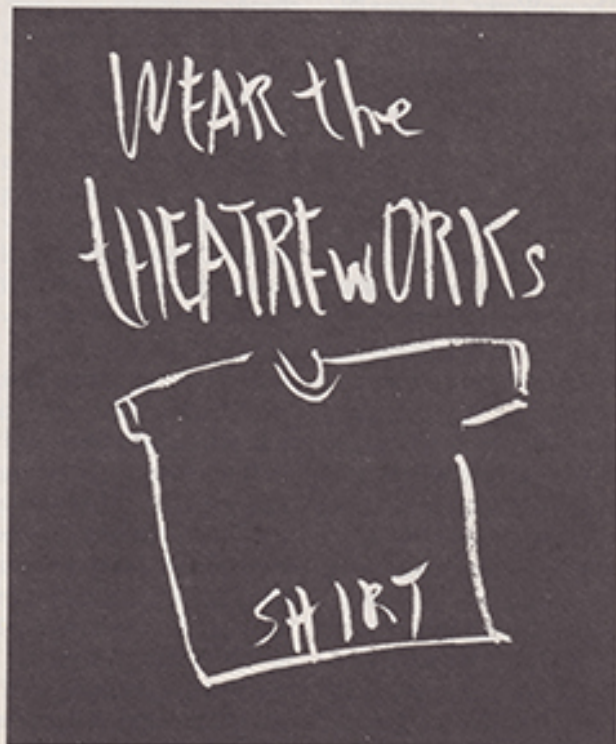
of the Gala Night. The decor of the reception area is an extension of the theme set in the foyer. Thus, the rehearsal room of the Drama Centre has become, in turn, a garden filled with Maypoles and the cosy bedroom of a Chinese couple.

Even the food served at the Gala reception is coordinated with the play.

The planning of the Gala Reception cum foyer exhibition usually takes four to six weeks. Discussions are held with the director to determine the mood which he wishes to project in the play.

Work sessions begin about two weeks prior to opening night, although the decorations and exhibition are only installed when the cast and crew 'bumps-in' a day or two before opening night.

— Jeremiah Choy



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