

1994 *festival* of Perth



LAO JIU

(The Ninth Child)

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1994 **festival** of Perth

presents

ALCOA INTERNATIONAL THEATRE

THEATREWORKS SINGAPORE

in

LAO JIU
(The Ninth Child)

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

Written and translated by Kuo Pao Kun

Playhouse Theatre

19, 21-26 February 8pm

Duration: Approx. 2 hours 45 minutes with interval

Sponsored by



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FESTIVAL FORUM APPEARANCE

In association with the Perth Theatre Trust

Members of TheatreWorks Singapore will give a free public forum in the Terrace Level Foyer, Perth Concert Hall
on Tuesday 22 February at 1pm.

Forum recorded in association with Radio National and supported by The Lotteries Commission



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. is a non-profit organisation. It was incorporated in February 1985 as the first English language adult professional theatre company in Singapore. TheatreWorks has over its nine 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 also earned its reputation as being an innovative theatre company.

The company continually ensures a balanced repertoire and a varied programme for its audiences. This can be seen from its popular and entertaining plays like *Army Daze*, *Beauty World*, *Fried Rice Paradise*, *Private Parts* and *Lao Jiu* and its alternative theatrical productions of *Madame Mao's Memories*, *Mad Forest*, 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 1992, TheatreWorks toured Japan and Kuala Lumpur with its production of *3 Children*. The company also presented *Madame Mao's Memories* at the

invitation of the Traverse Theatre for the Edinburgh Festival. *Beauty World* was performed in four Japanese cities at the South East Asian Festival and the Tokyo International Theatre Festival in September/October 1992.

As a pioneer theatre company, TheatreWorks realises its responsibility to provide opportunities for, and impart skills to practitioners. In providing a continuous training programme for theatre practitioners, TheatreWorks initiated and organised in 1990 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. TheatreWorks also organises workshops and lectures by both local and foreign theatre practitioners. In 1992, George Bigot, an actor from the acclaimed Theatre du Soleil conducted an acting workshop and Italian theatre practitioner Dr. Luigi Lunari gave a series of lectures on Italian Theatre. In 1993, Kelantanese Wayang Kulit master, Tok Dalang Hamzah Awang Amat conducted a month-long workshop on wayang kulit music, puppet making and puppet manipulation.

The company has also forged closer ties with Singaporean playwrights by establishing the Writers' Laboratory. This project is sponsored by Singapore Press Holdings. The Writers' Lab is now in its third year. The laboratory serves to nurture and encourage new writing and works on the basis of public dramatised readings by actors to test new plays. It focuses on 'process' rather than 'product' with the writers working closely with actors and directors.

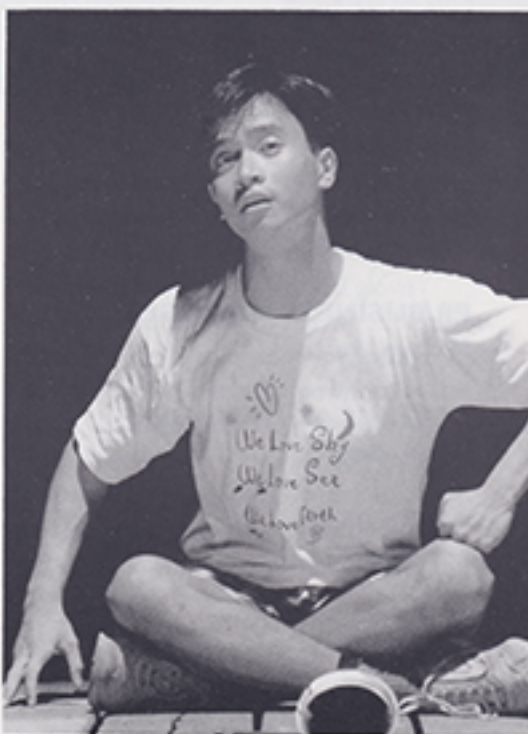
The fruits from the Lab can be seen in the plays staged in the Theatre-Carnival-On-The-Hill and the SPH Young Playwrights Series I and II. The best plays have been published in a compendium entitled *Fat Virgins, Fast Cars and Asian Values* by Times Editions, sponsored by Singapore Press Holdings.

In February 1993, TheatreWorks launched another new and exciting training programme, this time for young directors. This year-long training programme is called the Directors' Laboratory. Its main aim is to nurture and develop new and upcoming directors by providing a conducive environment for them to learn their craft. The programme consists of on-the-job training where each director will work on their proposed project with the assistance of the Laboratory's Artistic Directors, Ong Keng Sen and Krishen Jit from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Directors' Laboratory was sponsored by Rothmans of Pall Mall (S) Pty Ltd.

Besides working with the Singapore creative community, the company has developed exchange programmes with foreign theatre companies like the Malaysian Five Arts Centre, 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, and Blake Brooker and Denise Clarke from Canada. 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.

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 sponsors are Tangs Studio and Glaxo who have been with the company since 1988. Hotel accommodation in 1993/94 for foreign visitors is sponsored by The Westin Stamford and The Westin Plaza. All corporations who have and are sponsoring the theatre company's productions and projects 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

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WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS (Doing Lao Jiu)



*Thousands of years told by one mouth;
A myriad of soldiers fought by two hands
(P'i Ying)*

The set reminds one of a Chinese Wayang stage, complete with accompanying orchestra tuning up on traditional Chinese musical instruments. The wooden floorboards rattle when walked upon, and one awaits with bated breath the clash of cymbals and the high, male falsetto. But this is no Hokkien puppet show, nor a Chinese Opera troupe in action. This is LAO JIU by TheatreWorks.

The production employs various types of Asian puppetry, many of which are improvisations of original concepts. It commences with a traditional glove puppet performance by Master Chen. What follows is a "shadow puppetry" using OHP for effect! Somewhere in the action we encounter human shadows, as well as *Lao Jiu's* raw, homemade glove puppets. String puppets feature in some scenes, while strings are attached to, and used to constrict a helpless boy.

There is also a variation on the traditional two-dimensional puppets in the brother-and-sister scenes, where the puppets are up-front without a screen to separate them from the audience. This experimentation gives rise to a dual expression, not unlike the Chinese puppeteers of old, who interact actor to actor, actor to puppet as well as puppet to puppet.

We see puppets used at two different levels. On the one hand, they are part of the action of the *LAO JIU* story. They pervade the scene and the atmosphere and become part of the medium of the story, lending entertainment and awe, as the action demands. On the other hand, through this rejuvenation of an old artform, in modern and sometimes unlikely terms, we receive the sense of different levels of existence, from which the major theme emerges. The oppression which the puppets/siblings enforce on Lao Jiu drives him to the conclusion that there is nothing so clever or intelligent about him - he is "like the puppets that Chen Shifu has been playing. Everybody says how bright and clever (he is) . . . but in actual fact it is (the family's) hands that are bright and clever." The Warhorse Foundation's opportunity is just a step to put him on "a larger stage, together with similar other puppets, to be played by more sophisticated hands behind (them)."

Furthermore, even as each brother and sister exists, he or she is at the same time dancing to the tune of a "higher directive", that of the actor who is breathing life into it. This reflects the dilemma of being caught between being somebody else's puppet and carving one's own path, no matter if it leads to obscurity. And how painfully these puppet scenes are a metaphor for the human condition: we are each of us controlled and controlling.

DIMINISHING WORLDS

Sadly, the play also touches another aspect of reality today: that of diminishing worlds. With modernisation has come the inevitable breakdown of the clan world - that larger "family" with its strong cultural and ethnic ties.

More apparently, Master Chen's lament of his art being a dying one is all too true. Hokkien glove puppetry evolved from a long and rich tradition of Chinese puppetry and encompasses two broad styles: the civic, where puppets handle props and perform everyday functions, and the martial, involving special effects and the handling of weapons. In Singapore, the artform enjoyed its heyday in the fifties, where as many as 600 people might pack the streets to watch a performance. Silent and attentive listening was the order of the day, as glove puppets moved subtly across the stage to the accompanying strains of a professional Chinese orchestra.

Now, however, the art has suffered a gradual alienation from the masses in the face of competition from more direct and fast-paced media. Not many people can appreciate the timeless moments of these performances, or follow the "deep" Hokkien used. There is, moreover, a dearth of people willing to take up the art, considering the gruelling discipline it requires – more than ten years of rigorous training to gain a passable grasp. Committed musicians are also hard to find. Hence it is becoming a performance that only the gods enjoy.



Perhaps the answer lies in collaboration with other artforms, and in innovation. For instance, the late Lee Chye Ee, puppet master on whom the character of Master Chen is based, had hopes of performing in Mandarin, while Lee Poon Kay, leader of Teck Ghee CC Cultural Group, feels that "we cannot afford to be stubborn like die-hard traditionalists who would sneer at the thought of . . . merger."

CHOICES

Lao Jiu also deals with worlds in conflict. Not only is present day society and its artforms at odds with a more traditional past; the norms and expectations of the older generation are also being challenged by the younger. Most importantly, there is the scenario very painfully relevant to Singaporeans today – the assumption that material success and academic prowess are to be preferred over art. This, of course, brings up the whole question of choice once again of which world to choose from? And this choice has a universal dimension in that it is not so much which choice is the better as the pain of deciding to live one's life, be one's own person at the cost of older loyalties; risking alienation and censure from family and society to explore that "little world behind one's own shadow". In the final analysis it is the ability to choose and the action of doing so that is crucial.

MADAM LEE GEOK ENG ... TRADITIONAL GLOVE PUPPETRY

**Interview with Madam Lee
conducted and written by
Tan Choon Ping**

Madam Lee Geok Eng was born in China over 40 years ago. As a young girl, she attended school there for two years, until her family moved to Singapore. She began learning the art of Chinese puppetry at the age of ten from her father, Lee Chye Ee, a puppet master. In those days, puppetry troupes were generally family affairs, and the Lees were no exception.

It was to be a life lived largely on the road, with engagements in Singapore and across the Causeway, "especially during the Seventh Lunar Month (also known as the Hungry Ghosts Festival) where there would be back-to-back offers, so much so that we spent the first half performing in Singapore, and latter half touring Malaysia", says Madam Lee.

Times have certainly changed. With entertainment becoming more sophisticated and people forsaking traditional artforms for its Western counterparts, audiences gradually dwindled. Now, apart from the occasional elderly patron and curious children, there is hardly anyone at the puppet shows. "You couldn't even find the towkay who engaged our services present at the show," she muses.

I imagine that the puppeteers today are leftovers from Madam Lee's generation, but she corrects me: "There are a few young adults in this line, but the skill and commitment is not there."

Skill. To the untrained eye, who could tell the difference between a good and a bad puppeteer? Madam Lee points out, "the characters don't even walk properly. They appear to drift across the stage. Anyone can do that. But some of the puppeteers don't seem to care, as puppetry is to them, just a means to an end. Neither, it seems, does the hirer. As long as there's some noise, it'll suit them."

And I suppose this is where commitment comes in?

"It isn't a question of whether there is an audience or not, a puppeteer must live up to the expectation of the gods. The gods have eyes, too, even if audiences do not. Who will answer to them?"

So what does the future hold for the local Chinese puppetry scene?

"Deterioration and eventually, demise," Madam Lee replies, seemingly resigned to its fate. "Although a project such as this (Lao Jiu) may help to raise awareness and generate interest, it is virtually impossible to find anyone who is willing to make a lifelong commitment to master the artform. It takes more than ten years just to produce a reasonably skilled puppeteer."

Madam Lee reckons that the artform's only chance for longevity remains in its land of origin, China, where it is still appreciated and taken as seriously now as it has always been. As for Singapore, Madam Lee believes that her mission is to pass on her knowledge and skill to as many persons as she can.



LAO JIU

Glossary of some colloquial expressions used in the play

Gan-Ni-Nia'ng-E

an expletive in Hokkien dialect akin to "F... you"

Wa-lan-eh

an expletive associated with the male genitalia

Zabogia'ng

daughter

Dabogia'ng

son

Gao Gia'ng

Ninth born

Lailo Lailo

"I'm coming!"

Beh Tahan

an expression said when someone is agitated or irritated with a situation. It means "intolerable!" or literally "I can't stand it!".

Matamata

police

Ta' Che'

study

LAO JIU

STORY OF HOKKIEN GLOVE PUPPET PERFORMANCE

Prologue

Lam Tian Geok (Lan Tian Yu)

Lan Tian Yu, a scholar, while on his way to the Imperial Capital for the Imperial Examinations, saves Han Ke Yun from a ferocious tiger and the two of them subsequently become sworn brothers.

Ke Yun: This tiger is really ferocious! To avoid this tiger, I must take the next route round the mountain. Excuse me, Sir, you better run for your life, for there is a tiger coming this way!

Tian Yu: Calm down – there is no need to panic.

Fights and succumbs Tiger.

You impetuous tiger! How dare you leave the forest and inflict harm on others! I, Lan Tian Yu, in view of the auspicious event of going to the Imperial Capital for the Imperial Examinations, shall release and spare you from harm. Go back to the deep forest now. If you should leave your rightful place and terrorise the villagers again, I shall have no mercy for you.

The tiger, thankfully leaves . . .

Ke Yun: Thank you, kind sire, for saving my life.

Tian Yu: There is really no need for words of gratitude.

Ke Yun: May I have the honour of knowing your name and where you are going?

Tian Yu: My name is Lan Tian Yu and I happen to pass this way enroute to the Imperial Capital for the Imperial Examinations.

Ke Yun: I see. My name is Ke Yun and I was just wondering whether you could grant me the privilege of becoming your sworn brother.

Tian Yu: You are much too kind. The pleasure is all mine.

Ke Yun: Let us now take our vow here, amidst the mountains, in the presence of the gods in the heavens.

Song sung by Tian Yu and Ke Yun :

Taking blades of grass as joss-sticks, we pray to the gods.
We now pledge to become sworn brothers and that we will not only share our riches but also brave dangers together. I pray for divine favours in doing well in the forthcoming examinations, and peace and prosperity for everyone.

STORY OF HOKKIEN GLOVE PUPPET
PERFORMANCE AT HOSPITAL SCENE

Act I Scene 3B

**Tiger God Threatens To Eat
Pregnant Woman**

Monkey God: Who do you think you are?

Tiger God: I am the Tiger God.

Monkey God: You mean the Tiger God can actually talk?

Tiger God: Of course! If I am not the Tiger God, how can I talk in the first place?

Monkey God: What are you doing here?

Tiger God: Since I am hungry, I came here to look for food.

Monkey God: What do you want to eat?

Tiger God: Look at that pregnant woman with the big big stomach. She looks delicious and is just marvellous for a good lunch.

Monkey God: You know her?

Tiger God: No, I don't.

Monkey God: You cannot eat her.

Tiger God: Why can't I eat her?

Monkey God: You cannot eat a righteous person.

Tiger God: Oh, what righteous person?

Monkey God: The baby in this woman will in the future become a righteous man. You can eat anyone else, but you just cannot eat her.

Tiger God: I don't care! I just want to eat her!

Monkey God: I, Monkey God, forbid you to eat her.

Tiger God: I want to eat her!

Monkey God: You stupid slave, you cannot eat her!

Fighting begins.

Tiger God loses.

Tiger God: All right, all right. I cannot eat her. Looks like I have to go somewhere and eat someone else.

WASHING SCENE BETWEEN MOTHER
AND DAUGHTER

Act I Scene 4C

1st sis: Mother.

Mother: Daughter.

1st sis: Gao Gia'ng has gone off to the examinations?

Mother: Yes, he has left already.

1st sis: Come, mother, sit down. I'll help you wash these clothes. Hey, where's Father?

Mother: Gone to the temple to pray to Lord Buddha.

1st sis: Gone to the temple so early in the morning? What for?

Mother: Father says he wants to pray to Lord Buddha. He wants to pray every day and every night. He believes that if he does good, Gao Gia'ng will pass his exams and it will be good for our family. We will not be poor and our ancestors will definitely be happy.

1st sis: That is good. Going to the temple is good. Pray to Lord Buddha and make our ancestors happy. Make Gao Gia'ng have good luck.

Mother: (Laughs) Father says he wants to eat only vegetables for the next 100 days.

1st sis: Father, don't eat meat for 100 days ??? Cannot, lah! !

Mother: He told me (*mimics Father*): "Ah Lian, don't cook meat for me, I want to eat only vegetables for the next 100 days."

Huh! He eats vegetables! If I don't cook for him his favourite Kongbak (stewed pork), he will start kicking up a fuss, screaming and yelling at me!

Father says he is no use, because he is not educated, so he wants very much for all of you to study hard and have a better life.

1st sis: Don't worry Mother, Gao Gia'ng will study hard. He always studies hard. He will succeed and give you and father a better life.

Note: In traditional Chinese families, the wife, when speaking to her children, refers to her husband as "Ah Pa" or "Father".

STORY NARRATED BY MOTHER
DURING THE MATCHMAKING SCENE

Act 1 Scene 6B

The Story of Zhong Kui

A long time ago, there lived a scholar named Zhong Kui. Zhong Kui was very ugly. They said he was so ugly, just looking at him could frighten people to death. But Zhong Kui had a very kind heart. Zhong Kui was also very good in his studies and was a top student in his Imperial Exams. But the Emperor saw Zhong Kui's ugly face and loathed him and refused to give him the honour of First Scholar. Zhong Kui was heartbroken and committed suicide. The Heavenly Jade Emperor took pity on Zhong Kui and made him a divine exorcist. The Heavenly Jade Emperor said humans have eyes but cannot see good or bad. We must look at the heart and not the face.

STORY OF HOKKIEN GLOVE PUPPET

Act 2 Scene 11

Encounter Between Piggy and Monkey God

Piggy forces a fair lady to marry him. The Monkey God, in order to punish Piggy, sets up a trap. He transforms into a fair lady and waits for Piggy.

Piggy: (to himself) Thinking of my beautiful wife makes me salivate! Wife, wife!

Wife: Great Master, you're back.

Piggy: Yes, I'm back. Wife, why did you turn the lights down so low tonight?

Wife: Great Master, a powerful monkey came into our house and said he's going to capture you. If you are caught by him, what am I going to do?

Piggy: Don't worry, I am very powerful. If the monkey dares to come, I'll tie him up, force him to somersault and pluck out all his hair. So don't worry, don't worry. It's getting late, let's go to bed.

Wife: Yes, great Master.

Piggy: Hey, why are your hands so hairy?

Wife: I was born like that.

Piggy: Turn on the lights. I want to see for myself.

Wife: No, no need to see.

Piggy: Yes, yes, I want to see!

Wife: As you wish...

Wife turns into Monkey God.

Piggy runs away in shock.

Monkey God gives chase and captures Piggy.

Monkey God: You evil Pig! I am going to take you to see the Master.

LAO JIU CAST/CREW

Playwright	Kuo Pao Kun	Warhorse Effects Team	Ho Kah Wai Tan In In Pang Ming Mei
Director	Ong Keng Sen	Musicians	Teck Ghee CC Chinese Orchestra Members: Mr Lee Poon Kay Mdm Tee Choon Lian Miss Lee Phui Cheng Miss Lee Phui Yin Miss Linda Teo Siew Lay Mr Loh Chiang How
Co-Director	Lok Meng Chue	Chinese Opera/ Martial Arts Performers	Mr Choy Yien Chow Mr Peck Teck Boon Mr Choong Seng Cheong Mr Koh Yong Chye
Production Director/ Tour Manager	Tay Tong	Production/ Stage Manager	Noorlinah Mohd
Publicity/Business Manager	Michele Lim	Assistant Stage Managers	Christine "Porky" Har Jacinta Loo
Technical Director	Lim Yu-Beng	Technical Assistant	Dahlia Binte Osman
Set Designer	Jimmy Ong	Craftsman (Set)	Goh Beng Koon
Lighting Designers	Lim Yu-Beng Tracie Howitt	War Horse Effects Creators/Naive Puppets Creators	Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble
Music Composers & Arrangers	Mark Chan Lee Poon Kay	Brothers & Sisters	Tok Dalang
Sound Designer	Tan Choon Ping	Shadow Puppets Craftsmen	Hamzah Awang Amat Geraldine Lau Dahlia Binte Osman
Chinese Opera and Martial Arts Trainer/ Choreographer	Choy Yien Chow		
Music Director & Soloist Actors	Mark Chan Lim Kay Siu Margaret Chan Lee Wen Loong Seng Onn Tan Kheng Hua Johnson Choo Han Shese Ching Casey Lim Kong Chai Verena Tay Nora Samosir		
Hokkien Glove Puppeteer/ Traditional Glove Puppetry Trainer	Mdm Lee Geok Mdm Lee Geok Eng		

LAO JIU

KUO PAO KUN

Playwright

Kuo Pao Kun is a prolific dramatist with an extensive portfolio which includes playwriting, directing and teaching in both English and Chinese. He was the co-founder of the Practice Performing Arts School in 1965, the Artistic Director of the Practice Performing Arts Centre Limited and the Practice Theatre Ensemble which he pioneered in 1986. He was also the founder and has been Artistic Director of the Substation, Singapore's first arts centre, since 1990.

A 1989 Cultural Medallion Award and 1993 ASEAN Award (Performing Arts) winner, Pao Kun was invited by the US Government to go on a four-month study tour of theatre companies and drama schools on a Fulbright Professional Exchange Programme in 1988 and was awarded the 1992 Cultural Award by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce.

His major works include "Caucasian Chalk Circle", "A Raising In The Sun", "The Little White Sailing Boat", "The Coffin Is Too Big For The Hole", "The Silly Little Girl And The Funny Old Tree", "Mama Looking For Her Cat", "Lao Jiu", "Zero001", and "The Evening Climb". His plays have been, or are being, translated into Malay, Tamil, German, Japanese and Arabic.

ONG KENG SEN

Artistic Director and Director

Keng Sen has been the Artistic Director of TheatreWorks since 1989. He is well-known in Singapore for his bold and experimental works and his work with new Singaporean playwrights. His first directorial effort was "Avenue of Dreams" and "Second Chance" by Elyse Nass in 1987, and in 1988 went on to direct the first original Singapore musical, "Beauty World". In that year the Singapore Straits Times singled him out as the "face to watch" in Singapore theatre. Keng Sen has directed numerous successes such as "3 Children" (1988) by Leow Puay Tin which he co-directed with Krishen Jit; "Miss Julie" by August Strindberg (1989); "The Dance and The Railroad" (1990) which he co-directed with David Henry Hwang; "The Moon is Less Bright" (1990) by Goh Poh Seng; "The Coffin Is Too Big for the Hole" (1990) by Kuo Pao Kun; "Mad Forest" (1991) by Caryl Churchill; "Madame Mao's Memories" (1991) by Henry Ong "Trojan Women" (1991) by Euripides; "Three Children" (1992) which toured Singapore-Kuala Lumpur-Tokyo-Yokohama; "Three Fat Virgins Unassembled" (1992) by Ovidia Yu; "Private Parts" (1992) by Michael Chiang; "Madame Mao's Memories" (1992) which toured Singapore and played at the Traverse Theatre during the Edinburgh Festival; "Beauty World" (1992) which toured Osaka-Tokyo-Hiroshima-Fukuoka-Singapore; "The Lady of Soul and Her Ultimate 'S' Machine" (1993), the first-ever Singapore political satire by Tan Tarn How, and the April production of "Lao Jiu" (1993) by Kuo Pao Kun.

As Artistic Director of TheatreWorks, Keng Sen has mooted several firsts both for the company and Singapore theatre. Under his artistic leadership, he also established the SpringBoard series of workshops where trainer-practitioners from U.K. are brought to Singapore to provide intensive training for theatre practitioners in Singapore; the Writers' Laboratory, a breeding ground for new works created by young Singapore writers; and the Directors' Laboratory, a practical training ground for new directors. He initiated and saw to fruition the first theatre carnival held in Singapore. Called the "Theatre Carnival On The Hill", this landmark event, lasting over two weeks, featured 11 new Singapore plays and presented a variety of other theatre performances involving over 80 Singaporean artists.

He is the first recipient of the Singapore Young Artist Award (1993), the Fulbright Scholarship (1993) and the award from the Asian Cultural Council (1993). Keng Sen is presently pursuing a Master of Arts programme at the Tisch School of Arts, New York University.

LOK MENG CHUE

Co-Director

Meng Chue joined TheatreWorks in 1990 as a professional actress. Her involvement in the local theatre scene began in 1982 with the Singapore production of "Samseng and the Chettiar's Daughter", an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's "Threepenny Opera". Plays in which she has appeared include "Mad Forest" (1991) by Caryl Churchill, a play on the Romanian Revolution of 1989; Euripedes' "Trojan Women" (1991); she acted as Comrade Chin and Suzuki in David Henry Hwang's "M. Butterfly" (1990); as Mrs Samsa in

Steven Berkoff's adaptation of Frank Kafka's "Metamorphosis" (1989); as Wan Choo in the highly acclaimed TheatreWorks' musical "Beauty World" (1988 and 1992) and Girl #2 in the two productions of "3 Children" (1988 and 1992).

After her return from a 6-month fellowship programme in the U.K. in 1992, Meng Chue began her directorial work. Her directorial credits include directing "Dirty Laundry" (1993), part of the SPH Young Playwright Series II; co-directing a devised play entitled "Us in Singapore" (1993); "Watching The Clouds Go By" (1993), part of the Directors' Laboratory project; and the launch of TheatreWorks' compact disc "The Other Actor" (1993) – the first compact disc of theatre music by Mark Chan, the Composer-in-Residence of TheatreWorks.

LIM YU-BENG

Technical Director

Lighting Designer

Yu-Beng joined TheatreWorks as its Technical Manager in 1990. Besides supervising and overseeing all technical matters of the company, Yu-Beng also acts and directs. He has acted in many TheatreWork's productions which include "As If He Hears" (1989); "Mad Forest" (1991) "A Trip To The South" (1991); "Beauty World" (1992) and "The Lady Of Soul and Her Ultimate 'S' Machine" (1993).

As Technical Manager for all of TheatreWorks' productions, he has overseen the mounting of numerous challenging projects like "Trojan Women" (1991) which was an outdoor performance staged at the Bukit Timah Quarry; "Theatre-Carnival-On-The-Hill" (1992) where 11 plays a night were

performed at the top of Fort Canning Park ; and "Private Parts" (1992), a play that involved a multimedia set-up.

He co-designed lights for the 1993 production of "Lao Jiu" in Singapore, "Under The Bed" (1993), a TheatreWorks' collaboration with Canadian One Yellow Rabbit Performance Theatre Company; and "Light in the Village" (1994), a play written by John Clifford.

JIMMY ONG **Set Design**

Jimmy Ong, who grew up in Chinatown, was already drawing and winning prizes as a child. Despite the fact that he had no formal art training he decided to pursue a career as an artist in 1983. Since then he has studied at various art schools in the United States, France and Italy. Jimmy has also won numerous art awards and scholarships. His works has been exhibited in Singapore and the United States. Jimmy is currently working on his next solo exhibition to be held soon in Singapore.

MARK CHAN **Music and Sound Design**

Mark Chan began his music career as a lyricist. Failing to find a suitable composer for his lyrics, he sought to do the next best thing – to pen his own music. Mark is now a songwriter, singer, instrumentalist, recording artist, painter and poet. He has released 4 solo albums: *Face to Face* (1985), *Book of Dreams* (1987), *China Blue* (1991) and *The Other Actor* (1993).

He began writing music for the theatre in 1989. He became TheatreWorks' Music Composer-in-Residence in 1990. Mark produced for TheatreWorks its first CD on theatre music entitled *The Other Actor*. This was the first time that Singaporean written theatre music had been documented and produced in this form.

LEE POON KAY **Teck Ghee Community Centre** **Chinese Orchestra**

Lee Poon Kay is the leader of the Teck Ghee Community Centre Cultural Group. He learnt to play various Chinese instruments in 1968. He works in a shipbuilding industry and allows time after work to keep traditional arts alive by teaching and performing with his Chinese Orchestra group at Teck Ghee.

The Teck Ghee Community Centre Cultural Group was formed in 1990. It started life as a seven-member Chinese Orchestra. Today the group is 280-strong and its activities have expanded to include a children's singing group, a Chinese folk song choir, a Cantonese Opera section, a Chinese calligraphy group, a children's Chinese orchestra, a lion dance troupe and Wushu (Chinese swordplay). The group aims to promote as many different forms of the Chinese traditional arts as it can, and yet at the same time manages to be innovative in its approach. This production marks Mr Lee's and the Teck Ghee Community Centre Chinese Orchestra's first collaborative performance with an English language theatre company.

CHOY YIEN CHOW

Martial Arts/Opera Master

Choy Yien Chow is a well-known Martial Arts instructor in Singapore. He was trained in Beijing and Cantonese Opera by Mr Liu Fook San and Xiao Di Di respectively, and in Martial Arts by Hong Kong's Yam Tai Fan and the Chin Woo Athletic Association. In 1967, he founded the Kampong Glam Constituency Lion Dance Troupe and has trained many Wushu performers. Choy has assisted several performing arts organisations in directing action operas and has also performed as an 'action' actor in the operas.

He is now leading his own troupe, the Choy Brothers' Opera Troupe, in staging excerpts of Chinese operas which include "A Parting Song of Love", "Meeting at West Lake" and "War and Romance". He has travelled and given performances in the Edinburgh Arts Festival and at the New Opera House in Cairo as well as many cities in America. He recently performed in Sydney as part of the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board's performing troupe.

The Martial Arts/Opera performance in "Lao Jiu" will be performed by Mr Choy and three of his apprentices, Mr Koh Yong Chye, Mr Choong Seng Cheong and Mr Peck Teck Boon.

LEE GEOK ENG

Traditional Hokkien Glove Puppeteer

Lee Geok Eng, 46, is the daughter of the late Master Puppeteer Lee Chye Ee. A well known master puppeteer for three decades, Master Lee mastered the art in China and brought his troupe See Yah Hiu to Singapore after the Second World War.

Trained by her father at the age of ten, Madam Lee was her father's main assistant for many years.

During the mid-1960s the audience for puppetry performances declined rapidly because of new forms of entertainment. Master Lee and Madam Lee had no choice but to quit puppetry performance. In 1988, Master Lee and Madam Lee were invited by the Oral History Centre to perform for the Heritage Week. This invitation ignited the revival of the Lee family traditional art.

Sadly Master Lee died in a motor accident in 1991, leaving Madam Lee to carry on this traditional art alone. In April 1993, Madam Lee was invited to perform excerpts of traditional puppetry in the English version of "Lao Jiu", presented by TheatreWorks. Mdm Lee's puppets stunned the audience with their wonderful techniques and nimble movements. It proved to be a rare and memorable encounter for English theatre audiences.

In the same year, the Oral History Centre also extended an invitation to Madam Lee to assist in the making of a documentary on her father, which captured their superb family art for posterity.

TOK DALANG PAK HAMZAH AWANG AMAT

Wayang Kulit Trainer and Maker

Pak Hamzah, 54, is the best known tok dalang (master puppeteer) in Kelantan. He is the first recipient of Malaysia's National Arts Award (Anugerah Seni Negara, 1993) and has had three other awards bestowed upon him by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Sultan of Kelantan.

He has travelled to and performed in almost all of Western Europe, the United States, Hong Kong, Singapore and Russia.

Pak Hamzah started learning the art when he was nine years old. He is also an accomplished craftsman. He makes wayang kulit puppets and the traditional musical equipment which includes the drum, gedombak, serunai (flute) and rebab. He also teaches wayang kulit music part-time in Penang's University Sains Malaysia.

HO KAH WAI

Leader of Warhorse Puppetry

Kah Wai is a co-founder of Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble, a theatre company which employs different forms of puppetry in its productions. He has acted in and directed many of its productions. Some of his works are "Rashomon II", "Play Black", "The Whale in The Back Yard" and "Hugged the Tree". Kah Wai has truly come full circle with the English production of "Lao Jiu", having participated in the Mandarin version in 1990 as one of the shadow puppeteers. He was last seen as an actor in "Us in Singapore", a TheatreWorks' production.

TAN IN IN

Warhorse Puppeteer

Tan In In is an artist. She trained in sculpture at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore. Since 1992 her sculptures have been exhibited in a variety of exhibitions. Some of her works include installations and performance art. Her first theatre involvement began with the Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble in 1991. Since then, she has contributed her artistry in theatre set constructions and puppet making. She is participating in a group exhibition representing Singapore's Artist Village in the Adelaide Festival in 1994.

PANG MING MEI

Warhorse Puppeteer

Ming Mei has just graduated from the Victoria Junior College Theatre Studies Department. She has acted and handled backstage work for productions both on and off campus. She has her heart set on a Theatre Studies degree in Singapore. "Lao Jiu" marks her first involvement with puppetry.

CAST LIST

LIM KAY SIU – Father

Kay Siu began his acting career with TheatreWorks in 1985 when he performed in the company's production of "The Elephant Man" and "Piaf". He decided to make theatre his full-time profession in 1990. Since turning professional, Kay Siu has appeared in numerous productions both in and out of Singapore, working with eminent South East Asian directors like Singapore's Ong Keng Sen, Indonesia's Arifin Noer, Malaysian's Krishen Jit and Philippine's Nonon Padilla. With TheatreWorks, he acted in acclaimed productions such as "Beauty World" (1988); "To My Heart With Smiles" (1989); "Mad Forest" (1990) and "The Moon is Less Bright" (1991). He was also involved in other projects like David Mamet's "Life in The Theatre"; and "Nagaland", a commercial musical theatre project which toured Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. In August 1993, he worked with U.K.'s Mu-Lan Theatre Company in "Three Japanese Women". Kay Siu will appear in TheatreWorks' upcoming play "Scorpion Orchid" by Lloyd Fernando for the Singapore Arts Festival in June 1994.

MARGARET CHAN – Mother

A veteran actress who took to the stage at age four, Margaret is a pioneer of English theatre in Singapore, performing for the University of Singapore Society and Experimental Theatre Club in the 1970s. Margaret is also the first Singaporean to be invited to represent her country at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1985 where she played Emily in "Emily of Emerald Hill", a landmark Singaporean monodrama.

Margaret reprised the role of Emily in August 1993. This was a tribute performance for the Singapore's former President Wee Kim Wee when he stepped down from office. She has acted in TheatreWorks' productions of "Piaf" (1988); "Beauty World" (1988); "Green Socks" (1989) and "Lao Jiu" (1993). Margaret's acting work also extends to television and the big screen. She played the local lead in Singapore's first English feature film "Medium Rare" which was produced in 1991.

LEE WEN – Chen Shifu

Lee Wen left his banking job at Chase Manhattan Bank in 1989 where he had been working for seven years to pursue an education and career in the arts. Since 1989 he has participated in numerous exhibitions which include the QU*ART Gallery in Hong Kong; "5th Fukui International Video Biennale" in Tawara, Japan; The Singapore Art Fair in 1993 and various art exhibitions organised by the Artists' Village – an independent organisation established to promote and support Singapore artists and their work. In 1991, he represented Singapore in a travelling art exhibition showcasing 25 years of art from Singapore in the United States. Lee Wen also participates actively in art symposiums and seminars. Recently, he held a one-man exhibition at the Substation in Singapore entitled "Journey of a Yellow Man No.3: DESIRE". This exhibition also included a performance of installation art.

LOONG SENG ONN – Lao Jiu

A lawyer by training, he left litigation work and is now serving in an administrative position in the public sector which gives him more time to pursue his love for the theatre. Performing since 1984, Seng Onn has acted in TheatreWorks' productions of "Green Socks" (1989); "Fried Rice Paradise" (1991); and "3 Children" (1992) a highly acclaimed production which performed in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Yokohama and Tokyo. Other productions in which he has acted are "The Zoo Story" by Edward Albee; "Can't Pay, Won't Pay" by Dario Fo; "Mother Courage" by Bertolt Brecht (1987); "Peter's Passionate Pursuit" by Eleanor Wong, which later performed in Manila in the first ASEAN Theatre Festival in 1988; "Conference of the Birds" based on the poem by Farid Uddi Attar, stage version by Jean-Claude Carriere and Peter Brook (1991); "Blue Remembered Hills" (1992) by Dennis Potter; "The Tragedy of Macbeth" by William Shakespeare (1993).

TAN KHENG HUA**Sister #1, #3, #5, #7**

Kheng Hua has spent much of the last six years juggling her time between acting for TheatreWorks and her professional career in marketing for a retail company. She has acted in numerous plays in a variety of different roles, principal, supporting, as well as ensemble. Her versatility has seen her as the innocent city-girl in Choo Leng in Goh Poh Seng's "Moon is Less Bright" (1990); the wilful Andromeda in Jean-Paul Sartre's stage version of Euripedes' "Trojan Women" (1991); Lucia Vladu and a dog in Caryl Churchill's "Mad Forest" (1991);

an energetic and androgynous storyteller in Leow Puay Tin's "3 Children" (1992) which toured Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Japan; a vampish and wicked songstress in Dick Lee's "Beauty World" (1992) which participated in the South East Asian Festival and the Tokyo International Theatre Festival in Japan; and most recently, she was seen in the principal role of a lesbian lawyer in Eleanor Wong's "Mergers and Accusations" (1993) presented as part of the SPH Young Playwright Series II.

JOHNSON CHOO**Brother-in-law #1, #3, #5****Boyfriend of Sister #7**

Johnson's involvement in theatre started in 1987 with Mandarin plays. The highlight of this experience was his participation with theatre group Arts and Acts in 1990 when it presented a play at the Toyoma International Amateur Theatre Festival in Japan. The production won a merit award and he won a silver award for directing. TheatreWorks productions which he has acted in are "Red Man, Green Man" (one of the plays staged at Theatre-Carnival-On-The-Hill, 1992), "Lao Jiu" (1993) and most recently in "Under The Bed" (1993), a romantic dance-drama and the first Singapore-Canadian theatre collaboration. He is a television producer and director with Singapore Broadcasting Corporation.

CASEY LIM – Brother-in-law #2, #4**Fiance of Sister #6****Boyfriend of Sister #8**

Casey is an information systems consultant in a management consultancy firm. His involvement in theatre began during his school days, when he tried his hand in scriptwriting, directing,

producing and acting, which included a localised version of Shakespeare's "Merchant Of Venice". He has acted in a number of TheatreWorks' productions – "One Year Back Home" (1990), one of the plays presented at The Retrospective; "Bernard's Story" (1992), one of the plays staged in Theatre-Carnival-On-The-Hill; "Dirty Laundry" (1993), one of the new Singapore plays featured in the SPH Young Playwrights Series II; "The Complete Space Travellers' Guide to Singapore (Abridged)" (1993) – a comedy revue from the Writers' Laboratory; and "Under The Bed" (1993). He is best remembered for his convincing portrayal of an old man in the 1991 production of "The Lift", a Singaporean play.

HAN SHESE CHING

Sister #2, #4, #6, #8

Shese Ching is trained in ballet, modern jazz, singing and acting at the Singapore Armed Forces Music and Drama Company. Her training established her career as a performing artist entertaining various squadrons of uniformed personnel in Singapore. It was only in 1989 that she decided to take her training and talent outside the army to the local stage. Her first theatre role was the 'Nurse' in the Mandarin production of "Lao Jiu" (1989) directed by Kuo Pao Kun. She went on to perform in the Mandarin version of the monologue "Emily of Emerald Hill" (1992). She next performed in English in "Zero001" (1992) a devised play directed by Kuo Pao Kun. In 1992 she joined TheatreWorks in its second production of "Beauty World" playing the much-loved comic character 'Wan Choo'. She has now come full circle with her present involvement in TheatreWorks' English production of "Lao Jiu".

VERENA TAY – the Nurse

Verena graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Masters in English Literature. She has acted in "Dragon's Teeth Gate", part of the 1986 Singapore Arts Festival; "Oedipus" (1987) a play staged by Varsity Playhouse, a drama group from the National University of Singapore, two plays written and directed by Kuo Pao Kun "Mama Looking For Her Cat" (1988) and "The Silly Little Girl and The Funny Old Tree" (1989); "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" (1989) by Brecht; a local play "Exit" (1990); "The Tragedy of Macbeth" (1993); and most recently, in TheatreWorks' "Under The Bed" (1993). Verena also directs. She directed "Second Home" (1991) and "Blood and Snow" (1992), one of the plays presented in the SPH Young Playwright Series I. Her theatre experience also includes stage and production management.

NORA SAMOSIR – the Warhorse

Nora is a teacher by training. Having taught for over nine years she left the Ministry of Education to teach speech and drama to young people in a private institution. In 1993 she left Singapore for Indonesia for a year to teach English literature in a university in Jakarta. Nora was awarded a British Council scholarship to the U.K. to undergo a six-month training in directing in 1988. Nora has acted in many TheatreWorks' production – "To My Heart With Smiles" (1989); "The Sound of a Voice" (1990); "The Moon is Less Bright" (1990); "Trojan Women" (1991); "Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder" (1992), one of the plays in the SPH Young Playwrights' Series I and "Beauty World" (1992).

CREW

NOORLINAH MOHAMED

Stage Manager

Noorlinah's involvement in theatre began during her school days when she acted in school productions. It was only during the 1988 landmark musical production "Beauty World" by TheatreWorks that she considered taking acting seriously. Since then, she has appeared in a number of TheatreWorks' productions – "Beauty World" (1988); "To My Heart With Smiles" (1989); "Metamorphosis" (1989); in Euripedes' "Trojan Women" (1991); "Beauty World" (1992); "The Complete Space Travellers' Guide to Singapore (Abridged)" (1993); and most recently in "Under The Bed" (1993), the first Singapore-Canada theatre collaboration.

She joined TheatreWorks in 1993 as an administrator of the Directors' Laboratory, a one-year training programme for up and coming directors. Noorlinah also does production and stage management work. She administers TheatreWorks' Theatre-In-Education projects and helps to conceptualise and co-produce the Teachers' Packs involved in these projects. This is her first production and stage management experience in a touring production.

CHRISTINE HAR

Assistant Stage Manager

Christine recently graduated from Victoria Junior College Theatre Studies Department and is now awaiting entry to the university. She hopes to pursue a degree in theatre. Her involvement with TheatreWorks began in April 1992 in the Theatre-Carnival-On-The-Hill, a carnival of theatre events (11 plays, Singapore bands, cartoon exhibitions, black & white 1950s Mandarin movies,

dance, cabaret acts each night) spread over two weeks. She then continued her involvement with TheatreWorks in stage-managing, operating light and sound for "Sammy Won't Go To School" (1993), a production presented under TheatreWorks' Directors' Laboratory series and Lab Report 4 (1993) – readings of new work-in-progress by members of TheatreWorks' Writers' Laboratory.

JACINTA LOO WAI PENG

Assistant Stage Manager

Jacinta graduated from Ngee Ann Polytechnic with a diploma in mass communications. She intends to pursue a further degree in film-making. Her first involvement with TheatreWorks was in 1992 where she designed and painted the backdrops for the Writers' Lab production of "The Complete Space Travellers' Guide to Singapore (Abridged)". Since then, she has designed and produced sets, props and costumes, operated sound for other productions as well as conceptualising many theatre foyer designs for TheatreWorks. Jacinta is one of the members of the designing team which designed and produced the original puppets and flags used in the 1993 production of "Lao Jiu".

DAHLIA BTE OSMAN

Technical Assistant

Dahlia is an artist and printmaker. She graduated from the La Salle College of Arts in 1993. Her works have been exhibited at the Singapore Art Fair (1992 and 1993), "The Visual Arts Day" organised by the National University of Singapore (1992), "Heart of Art" organised by Overseas Union Bank (1992), "Contemporary Printmaking Exhibition" organised by the Goethe Institute in Singapore. Dahlia assisted Tok Dalang Hamzah Awang Amat in the making of the 'brothers-sisters' puppets used in this Perth production of "Lao Jiu". She painted the puppets together with the main designer, Geraldine Lau.

LAO JIU

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Smoking is not permitted in the auditorium and the
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Singapore: *Lao Jiu (The Ninth Child)*, by Theatreworks Singapore and written by Kuo Pao-Kun, brings to life the clash of East and West cultures, the merging of old and new - "...the painfully real Singaporean experience". The Straits Times.



Australia: The Sydney Theatre Company presents *Two Weeks with the Queen* from the novel by Morris Gleitzman. The wonderful adaptation by Mary Morris has seen smash hit seasons in Sydney and Adelaide.

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France: *Ubu* by Nada Theatre performs its Australian premiere. Alfred Jarry's anarchic satire on the corrupting influence of power - "...Nada Theatre's *Ubu* gets away with murder". The Scotsman.



Netherlands: The Australian premiere of *Topolino* by Vis A Vis. Their recipe for an evening of hilarious and inventive entertainment played under the shelter of the Freeway Underpass. *Topolino*, the Italian pet name for the Fiat Bambino, is fast and crazy comedy.



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