



# Workhorse Afloat

by TheatreWorks

Partly sponsored by:



UOB CARD CENTRE

25 - 26 June

Victoria Theatre



ASK US ABOUT UNIT TRUSTS,  
FOREIGN CURRENCIES, SAVINGS ACCOUNTS AND  
THE INTRIGUING WORK OF SALVADOR DALI.



At the United Overseas Bank (UOB) Group, we celebrate the arts through fervent support. You'll notice Dalí's sculpture, 'Homage to Newton', towering at the entrance of our building, the UOB Plaza. Our commitment doesn't stop there. You'll see us at the theatre, concerts, in galleries and at film festivals – in fact, just about any place where art flourishes. Because at the UOB Group, we're united behind the arts.

WE'RE UNITED  
BEHIND YOU



UNITED OVERSEAS BANK GROUP  
SINGAPORE'S LEADING BANK GROUP



# THEATREWORKS

Presents

## WORKHORSE AFLOAT

*Workhorse Afloat is the second of a trilogy excavating Singapore history and its relationship with contemporary urban life.*

1995: *Broken Birds*

1997: *Workhorse Afloat*

Conceived and directed by **Ong Keng Sen**

In collaboration with

**Writer**

**Film-makers**

**Choreographer**

**Set Designer**

**Lighting Designer**

**Devised with the cast of**

**Musicians**

**Production Director**

**Technical Manager**

**Production/Stage Manager**

**Stage Manager**

**Production Assistant**

**Lighting Assistant**

**Assistant Stage Managers**

**Sound Operator**

**Lighting Operator**

**Production Crew**

**Publicity /Print Concept/ Design**

**Administrator**

**Publicity/ Print Executive**

Robin Loon

Wu Wenguang (Beijing)

K Rajagopal (Singapore)

Wenhui (Beijing)

Christine Jones (New York)

Scott Zielinski (New York)

Lim Yu-Beng

Low Kee Hong

Sharon Lim

Rosita Ng

Tang Fu Kuen

Rosita Ng

Segar s/o Sivanasen

Tay Tong

Lee Cheng Heng

Lisa Porter

Jerome Ng

Elvan Ong

Erik McDaniel

Esther Tan

Roziah Bte Abdul Rahim

Paul Chan

Choo Chang Joon

Eric Loh

Low Su Ming

Valerie Oliverio

Gail Perera

Mervyn Quek

Yong Shuh Ying

WORK

Michele Lim

Leslie Lee

# Director

## ONG KENG SEN

Director, Fulbright Scholar, Singapore Young Artist 1993 and the Artistic Director of TheatreWorks, Singapore's leading English language theatre company.

In 1994, he was awarded a grant by the Asian Cultural Council based in New York for his achievements in Singapore and Asian theatre. In April 1995, he became the first Singaporean to be invited to direct at the prestigious Joseph Papp Public Theatre, New York Shakespeare Festival. Since his graduation from the New York Tisch School of Arts Graduate Programme, he has directed epic outdoor and site-specific productions which were acclaimed by both the press and audience as ground-breaking with artistic and social significance. This includes numerous productions in Fort Canning Park such as *Broken Birds*, *The Yang Family* in a Chinatown shophouse and *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral*. The last has been invited to Canada this year.

In June 1996, Keng Sen directed *Six of the Best*, a play inspired by the controversy of the Michael Fay incident. It was a sell-out hit which also received much coverage from the international press. Thereafter, he directed his full-length feature film, *Army Daze*.

His most recent projects were *The Flying Circus* and *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror*. The former is an inter-cultural collaboration between artists from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Japan. *The Flying Circus Project* will culminate in an Asian inter-cultural production of *Lear*, premiering in Tokyo in September this year. *Destinies* was a critically acclaimed site-specific production with the audience and performers inside the Suntec City Fountain.



# Film-maker

## WU WENGUANG

Wu Wenguang was born in Yunnan, China in 1956. He went to the countryside after graduating from high school in 1974, and worked as an elementary school teacher for three years.

Thereafter, Wu entered the Department of Literature at Yunnan University in 1978 and graduated in 1982. He taught at a junior high school for three years, and then joined the Kunming Television and China Centre TV in 1985 to work as a news journalist for four years. In 1989, Wu left the TV station to become an independent documentary film-maker and freelance writer under the Wu Wenguang Workshop.

His films have been seen in major international film festivals, including the Hong Kong International Film Festival, ICA Cinema London, Berlin International Film Festival, Lincoln Centre's "China's New Film" Festival in New York, Vienna International Film Festival and Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival. Three of his major documentaries, *Bumming In Beijing*, *My Time In The Red Guards* and *At Home In The World* have been screened at the Singapore International Film Festival.

# Choreographer

## WENHUI

Wenhui was trained at the Yunnan Province Performing Arts School in 1974. Since graduation, she has worked as a dancer and choreographer in Yunnan from 1980 to 1985. In 1985, she enrolled in the Beijing Academy of Dance and took up a four year course in dance choreography. She graduated in 1989 and has been the chief choreographer in the Dongfang musical company until now.

In 1994, Wenhui travelled to the United States and studied dance technique and training in such illustrious institutions as the Limon Institute in New York; the Erick Hawkins School of Dance; the Trisha Brown Company Fall Workshop and the George Washington University. Upon her return to Beijing in the same year, she created her own company, Dance Life Studio. In September the same year, she performed *100 Verbs* in Washington and New York. In 1995, Wenhui participated in workshops conducted by Folkwang Dance School in Germany and the Pina Bausch Company. In December the same year, she premiered her new piece *Cohabitation* in the National Small Art Theatre Festival in Guangzhou. Both these productions have travelled extensively abroad, having been showcased in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Russia.

Wenhui has also dabbled in theatre. She acted in a production of *File O* performed by the Drama Workshop. This production was also performed in the Brussels International Arts Festival (1994), the Exit Festival in France and the 1995 Montreal International Arts Festival. This production also participated in the Hamburg Summer Festival, the London Living Theatre Festival and the Paris Autumn Arts Festival, to name a few.



# Writer

## ROBIN LOON

Robin Loon is 29 years old. Since completing his post graduate studies at the National University of Singapore early this year, Robin has been busy with writing for two TheatreWorks productions, *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror* and the upcoming *Workhorse Afloat* for the Festival of Asian Performing Arts 1997.

His past works for TheatreWorks include *Absence Makes The Heart Grow Fonder* (1992), *Watching The Clouds Go By* (1994), *Broken Birds* (1995) and *Destinies Of Flowers In The Mirror* (1997). He was also the Festival Director for TheatreWorks' Festival of New Writing and the Director for *Ginnie's Favourite Colour* in 1996.

# Designers

## **CHRISTINE JONES** *Set Designer*

Christine Jones graduated from the New York University in 1992 with a Masters in Theatre Design.

Her design credits include productions for the New York Shakespeare Festival, Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage Theatre, Signature Theatre, Company, Theatre For New Audiences, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, LaJolla Playhouse, Hartford Stage Company and the American Repertory Theatre.

This is Christine's first production for a Singapore theatre company.

## **SCOTT ZIELINSKI** *Lighting Designer*

Scott was the recipient of the 1990-1991 Theatre Communications Group/National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for Designers. He has designed for many theatres in the United States, both regionally and in New York. In Europe, his design credits include productions for the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain, English National Opera and Lyric Hammersmith in London, and Theatre Newmarkt in Zurich. He has also lit dances for the American Ballet Theatre and San Francisco Ballet. Recently, Scott has been working on several projects with renown director Robert Wilson, including a production at The Edinburgh Festival 1996.

*Workhorse Afloat* marks Scott's third collaboration with Ong Keng Sen, the first being *A Language Of Their Own* (1995, The New York Shakespeare Festival) and the second being *Mortal Sins* (1995, TheatreWorks).



# Film-maker

## **K RAJAGOPAL** *Film-maker, Aanae (Brother)*

Raja has acted in many TheatreWorks productions. These include *Lao Jiu* (1993), *Longing* (1993), *Broken Birds* (1995) and *Six of the Best* (1996).

He is also the three-time winner of the Special Jury's Prize in the Silver Screen Awards, organised by the Singapore International Film Festival. These were won for the films, *I Can't Sleep Tonight* (1995, co-directed by Rose Sivam), *The Glare* (1996) and *Absence* (1997).

Apart from being on stage for *Workhorse Afloat*, Raja also contributes a short film, *Aanae (Brother)* to the production.

## **CAST OF AANAЕ (Brother)**

Azad Ahamed  
V Subramaniam  
Velu Gobal Krishnan  
Jai Suresh  
Loong Seng Onn  
Adrian Lim

<b>Cameraperson</b>	Karen Cai
<b>Editor</b>	Jasmine Ng
<b>Sound</b>	Michael Lee
<b>Lights</b>	Henry Ng
<b>Sound Engineer</b>	Nor Ghani
<b>On Line Editor</b>	Ong Seow Fang
<b>Stills Photography</b>	Wah



# Cast

**Lim Yu-Beng** is an actor and director. His acting credits for TheatreWorks include *Beauty World* (1992), *Longing* (1993), *Broken Birds* (1995), *The Yang Family* (1996), *Six of the Best* (1996) and *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror*.

**Low Kee Hong** is presently a Masters student majoring in Sociology. Kee Hong has appeared in TheatreWorks' productions including *Mortal Sins* (1995), *The Morning Star Project* (1996) and *Ginnie's Favourite Colour* (1996). He was last seen in TheatreWorks' play, *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror*.

**Sharon Lim** is a lawyer. Her past acting credits for TheatreWorks include *Broken Birds* (1995), *The Yang Family* (1996) and *Ginnie's Favourite Colour*. Sharon last appeared in TheatreWorks' production of *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror*.

**Rosita Ng** first appeared in TheatreWorks' *Fried Rice Paradise* in 1990. Since then, she has acted in the company's productions of *Beauty World* (1992), *Woman On The Tree On A Hill* (1992), *Broken Birds* (1995) and *Wills and Secession* (1995).

**Tang Fu Kuen** is presently serving his National Service. He has appeared in many TheatreWorks productions. These include *Longing* (1993), *Broken Birds* (1995), *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (1995), *The Yang Family* (1996) and *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror* (1997).



# Subramaniam's Story

An interview conducted with a foreign Indian worker.  
The name of this person has been changed.

**M**y name is Subramaniam. I am 26 this year. I am going home in November.

I have been in Singapore for three and a half years. I cannot say that I like Singapore. I never wanted to come here.

I always wanted to be a soldier because I think it is an honour to defend my country.

I applied to be a soldier three times. The first time I was rejected. That was because I got my school certificate wet and the water washed off the results. I penciled the results in and they say that I had written it myself. They put a stamp on the back of my certificate and threw me out of the office. They wouldn't take me in again.

I wanted to become a policeman but they said I was too short.

My father was the one who wanted me to leave for Singapore. He said, "You cannot stay here. You better give up becoming a soldier. I am going to borrow money from your mother's sister and send you to Singapore."

I wanted to learn printing. I said to my father, "Why don't you give me the money and I learn printing?" He said, "No. You are going."

People from my village have been coming to Singapore since 1984. I heard many things about Singapore before I came. They said that Singapore is good and clean and you can earn a lot of money: in four years you can earn 400,000 rupees. But I have also heard that some companies in Singapore treat their workers very badly.





The day I left for Singapore was the saddest day of my life. I thought that I was never coming home. I was depressed for six months in Singapore and I kept wanting to run back home - but my friends here helped me get over it.

Finally, I am going home in November.

Why do I want to go home? Who doesn't want to see his parents?

Regrets? Not much - except that I feel that I didn't earn enough money. I am only taking home about 100,000 rupees. My company didn't pay well and there was no overtime.

I remember the day before I left India, my friends came to visit me. I couldn't sleep. I was thinking to myself, "How am I going to cook for myself and do all these things by myself? Why must I go through this in my life?" I was very depressed but my friends brought me out to watch an old Indian film starring Sivaji Ganesan.

I like old movies because their storylines are better and the acting is stronger. The new movies are not so good - they are lower in standard.

After the movie, my friends talked about old times and we had dinner in a very expensive restaurant. The next morning, they sent me off. I cried. My parents stayed at home and an uncle and some friends sent me all the way to the Madras airport. It takes about fifteen hours by bus to travel from my village to Madras.

The employers here don't respect people like me. They think that I am here because I have no choice and that means they can treat me badly. They think that we are here just to earn money and that we should be grateful to them as we are better paid here than in India. What they don't realise is that we are earning a lot of money for them.

They only like you if you are servile, or at least pretend to be servile. People who are smart act servile and they are treated well. If you resist, then you will not do well.

In the three and a half years that I have been here, Singapore has changed a lot. There are more rules now than when I first came and now I have to learn to be very careful or else I will get into trouble. Singapore has progressed - I think it was number twenty when I first came and now it is number seven. A lot of investments and job opportunities, every one is searching for excellence.

My job? I lay cables along the tarmac roadside. Each roll of cable is about two hundred and fifty metres long and I lay them out after the pipes are laid.

The hardest part of my job is the sun. It gets so hot that sometimes I can't breathe. The dust makes me cough.

Also, I live in a place that is very stuffy. It is the worst place in Singapore. I live with forty other people in a place in Kim Chuan Road. There are eight people in one room. You don't believe me? Come and see and you will find out.

If I get sick, I can see the doctor and the company will reimburse me. If I get an MC, I will not get paid. Once I was on MC for five days. They cut my pay for five days.

Before I came to Singapore, I was interested in many things. Printing is one of them. I like printing because I like words. I read a lot when I was in India. I also acted in a few plays. I like art and camerawork. I think my future is in printing. I will go home and take up a course in printing so that maybe I can start my own business. I will go work in Madras because there are better prospects in the city. There is no progress in farming. Maybe my youngest brother will take over my father's land. We have one acre of land.

I go to Tekah market about three times a week. I go there to do my marketing. Sometimes when I am depressed, I will buy fruits and go to the park there. Once in a while, I will have a meal at Thambi's. I know it's spending money but it makes me happy. The food is different here. It is not as tasty.





I write home twice a week and I try to call home once a month. We have no phone at home so I have to call a shop. The people will tell my father that I have called and I will call back half an hour later. I speak to my father mostly because my mother doesn't like to leave the house. But I am closer to my mother.

I brought old photos of my father to family to keep me company here. And a play. It is called "What Is Summer?" - a very good play about family. Strong storyline. The main moral is that if you do good, you will win. In Singapore, I have no friends who share my interests. At night, I either watch news on TV or I will read.

Most of the time, I am too tired.

The first thing I will do when I get home is to give out all my presents for my family and friends. Saris, an iron, stationery, watches and foreign things. Also, I will give my family gold. The next thing I will do is to find out about the printing school.

I remember that my mother and aunt told me to behave myself when I am in Singapore - to be very disciplined and not to have bad hobbies. I also promised them that I will marry the girl they choose for me.

I will only marry at thirty one - I give myself five years to establish myself in printing.

I have no courage to meet girls here. The local Indian women, only the married ones, are nice. Some of them see me on the roadside in the sun, they will buy drinks for me. The single ones will stop speaking Tamil when I come near them. They will speak English.

I speak a little English. One of my old foreman knows English and so he taught me. I don't speak it very well but I can understand. Actually, I don't speak it at all.

What will I remember about Singapore when I leave? No more hardship. I am certain that I am headed for better days.

Has it been worth it?

Yes.

What will I say to the people in my village when they ask me about Singapore? Even if I say don't go, nobody will believe me. They will think that I am stopping them from earning money.

They will learn when they come here.

# The Company

## **THEATREWORKS THE COMPANY**

TheatreWorks (Singapore) Limited

The Black Box, Fort Canning Centre, Cox Terrace,

Fort Canning Park, Singapore 179618

Phone: 338 4077

Fax: 338 8297

Ticketing: 338 6735

E-mail: [tworke@singnet.com.sg](mailto:tworke@singnet.com.sg)

Home Page: <http://www.mis.com.sg/tworke>

*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 Singaporean theatre abroad.*

*The Company recognises its responsibility in encouraging awareness on human and social issues.*

*Ultimately, TheatreWorks is inspired and dedicated to sharing the Magic of Theatre.*



**T**heatreWorks (S) Limited, a registered charity, was incorporated in February 1985 as the first English language adult professional theatre company in Singapore.

Over the years, TheatreWorks has been recognised for their successful fusion of Western and Eastern dramatic traditions, refreshing interpretations and experimental approach.

TheatreWorks has produced critically acclaimed plays that have earned the company a reputation for being the best theatre company in Singapore. The company has toured the region and the world. In 1992, the company toured Japan and Malaysia for *Three Children* and presented *Madame Mao's Memories* at the Edinburgh Festival. In the same year, *Beauty World* toured Japan and in 1994, *Lao Jiu* was performed at the Festival of Perth. The latest outing by the company was in 1996 when they presented *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* at the Cairo International Festival of Experimental Theatre. This year, *Descendants* will continue its international journey to Canada.

With a varied programme, TheatreWorks' repertoire spans from popular entertainment plays as with *Beauty World*, *Private Parts*, *Lao Jiu*, *Wills and Secession* and *Six of the Best* to visual experiences such as *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral*, *The Yang Family* (performed in a Chinatown shophouse) and *Destinies of Flowers In the Mirror* (performed inside the Suntec City Fountain). TheatreWorks has also spearheaded the concept of outdoor carnival theatre with their productions of *Theatre Carnival On The Hill*, *Longing* and *Broken Birds*. These productions are testimonies to the company's commitment to develop theatre audiences qualitatively, as well as quantitatively. After starting the wave of popular theatre, TheatreWorks is forging a cutting edge with their new works. With emphasis on inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural styles and techniques, the works often blur the line between theatre, installation art, video art, photography, sound sculptures, dance and architecture.

As a pioneer theatre company, TheatreWorks realises its responsibility in nurturing and providing opportunities for theatre practitioners. Training programmes such as the Writers' Laboratory have forged closer ties with Singaporean playwrights, serving to encourage and nurture new writing. Other programmes include The Directors' Laboratory which nurtures young directors and the Springboard programme, a theatre skills training programme conducted by theatre practitioners from the United Kingdom. As part of their mission, TheatreWorks has launched a Theatre-In-Education programme for schools, public lectures and consultancy services on aspects of theatre

In the last quarter of 1996, TheatreWorks embarked on *The Flying Circus Project*. This major project, conceptualised and headed by TheatreWorks' Artistic Director Ong Keng Sen, examines the traditional arts and seeks to incorporate them into contemporary arts of the 21st century. The first phase of this three-year project was devoted to Southeast Asian traditional arts. It brought together fifty artists from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan. It will culminate in a new intercultural Asian production of *Lear*, with an internationally renown team of actors and collaborators. This production will premiere in Tokyo in September 1997, playing 12 performances all over Japan.

**Directors:**

Justin Hill  
Lim Kay Tong  
Ong Keng Sen

**Members:**

Jacintha Abisheganaden  
Goh Eck Kheng  
Kalyani Kausikan  
Lim Yu-Beng  
Lok Meng Chue  
Tay Tong

**Honorary Members:**

Alex Abisheganaden  
Michael Chiang  
Lim Siau Chong  
Kim Ramakrishnan  
Sylvia Tan

**The Executive:**

**Artistic Director**

**General Manager**

**Business Manager / Administrator**

**Artistic Associate**

**Publicity / Print Executive**

**Administrative Assistant**

**Accounts**

**Ticketing**

**Mama Muse**

Ong Keng Sen

Tay Tong

Michele Lim

Lim Kay Siu

Leslie Lee

Michelle Bong

Sally Neo

Norizah Bte

Mohd Sabudin

Janey Hou



TheatreWorks would like to say a big

**THANK YOU!**

Our Pioneer Sponsors, Glaxo-Wellcome and The Westin Stamford  
and Westin Plaza Hotel

Our Official Card Sponsor, UOB Card Centre

Our Official Equipment Sponsor, Thomson Multimedia Asia

Our Official Publicity Sponsor, Kris-Lite Pte Ltd

Mrs Lily Tan and the staff of The National Archives of Singapore

Professor James Francis Warren

Ms Tan Beng Luan

Econ Piling Pte Ltd

Mrs Santha Baskhar

Synwin Enterprises and Kerrie Yap for their assistance with the guzhengs

John Portwood of Portwood & Associates

Jothi Flower Shop, Andhra Restaurant, Golden Village Cinemas, Video Headquarters,  
Cameraquip Pte Ltd and AT and T Audio Visuals for their assistance in the film,  
*Aanae (Brother)*

Ramesh Nair, Bernadette Hua, Rena Hasan and Priscilla Norton

The press and media for their support

All stage assistants and front of house assistants for helping out  
at the rehearsals and performances

And everybody who helped made this production possible.

**WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

G Shanmugarajan and the other workers from Econ Piling Pte Ltd

Murugam, Ravi, Aravu, Karuna and Rama

# Acknowledgements

## ~ Major Sponsors ~

Singapore Television Twelve Pte Ltd  
Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited  
Singapore Airlines Limited  
Singapore Tourist Promotion Board  
Singapore MRT Ltd  
Bvlgari  
MasterCard International  
Raffles City Shopping Centre  
Cathay Organisation Pte Ltd  
DBS Land Limited  
Far East Organization  
Philip Morris Group of Companies  
Singapore Totalisator Board  
Union Bank of Switzerland  
Wing Tai Holdings Limited  
Singapore Land Limited  
Singapore Pools (Private) Limited  
Motorola Electronics Pte Ltd  
Singapore Technologies Industrial Corporation  
Shell Companies in Singapore  
UOB Card Centre

## ~ Sponsors ~

Singapore Post Pte Ltd  
The Westin Stamford & Westin Plaza  
Tat Lee Bank Limited  
Savu Investments Pte Ltd & Savu Properties Ltd  
Neptune Orient Lines Ltd  
Thakral Corporation Limited  
N.Y.K. Line 1993 (S) Pte Ltd  
Yeo Hiap Seng Limited  
Jack Chia - MPH Limited

## ~ Festival Supporters ~

American Express International  
Ang Mo Kio - Nee Soon Town Council  
Australian High Commission  
Central Council of Malay Cultural Organisations (Majlis Pusat)  
CHIJMES Investment Pte Limited  
Chinese Opera Institute  
City Centre Town Council  
Diners Club (S) Pte Ltd  
Embassy of Japan  
Embassy of People's Republic of China  
Jurong Point Shopping Centre  
Land Office, Ministry of Law  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan  
National Parks Board  
People's Association  
Sembawang Town Council  
Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation  
The Arts Magazine  
The British Council  
Toa Payoh Town Council  
Urban Council of Hong Kong

Official Festival Airline:



Official Festival Bank:



Arts Station:







NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL



*Singapore*