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presents David Hwang's

THE DANCE AND THE RAILROAD
THE SOUND OF A VOICE

Co-directed by Ong Keng Sen & David Hwang



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CO-DIRECTED BY Ong Keng Sen and David Hwang

Tay Tong PRODUCTION MANAGER

Justin Hill, Henri Chen SET DESIGNERS (*The Sound of a Voice*)

Kalyani Kausikan, Ong Keng Sen SET VISUALISERS (*The Dance and the Railroad*)

Kalyani Kausikan LIGHTING DESIGNER

Mark Chan COMPOSER / Ashley Lim HAIR

Caroline Smith-laing LIGHTING ASSISTANT / Lorraine Frugneit SOUND ASSISTANT

Lok Meng Chue STAGE MANAGER (*The Dance and the Railroad*)

Koh Joo Kim STAGE MANAGER (*The Sound of a Voice*)

Goh Siew Geok OPERA TRAINER / David Kwok KENDO TRAINER

Ng Soy Cheng PUBLICITY MANAGER / Emanuel David Tan PUBLICITY ASSISTANT

Lawrence Tan & Chan Mei Lian GALA COMMITTEE

Michele Lim FRONT-OF-HOUSE MANAGER

MESSAGE

THE DANCE AND THE RAILROAD and *The Sound of a Voice* look deceptively simple on first reading. But in them, David Hwang has created complex, rich textures that transcend geographical and cultural barriers.

His story of two railroad workers in the Sierra Nevada mountains has become very close to my heart. Their struggle for dignity, their strength, their dreams, remind me of TheatreWorks' pioneering spirit and brings me one step towards my Chineseness.

It has been a highly rewarding and inspirational rehearsal process, an extension of some of my work with Western drama and Chinese opera in *Three Children*. Unlike *Three Children*, where the opera sequences were contained, Beijing opera is a motif which runs through *Dance* and is a constant reference point. Hence, Kay Tong and Boon Pin have had to work very hard to bring opera into their bodies and state of mind. Through sheer perseverance and application, they have found something truly theirs, an amalgam of taiji, Beijing opera and their own movement patterns.

Sound compliments the robustness of *Dance* by its stillness and sparseness. As part of the process, the actors and I went into Japanese culture to understand more of it. However, the Japanese that we met were adamant that the concept of witches is strictly fictitious. From that foray, we decided to focus on the drama itself and not be bogged down by cultural authenticity.

Sound provided ample opportunity as the Japanese culture and the story of a magical encounter between a wandering samurai and a witch in the forest is but a metaphor for the male/female relationship. David has given an old theme a new lease of life. I am still amazed after eight weeks of rehearsals how immediate and universal the play can be.

Ong Keng Sen



ONG KENG SEN has been TheatreWorks' Artistic Director since 1988. As the President of Varsity Playhouse for two years, he directed *Passion Play*, *Night Mother* and *Oedipus*. His more recent directing credits include *Beauty World*, *Three Children*, *Miss Julie*, *To My Heart With Smiles* and *Safe Sex*. In October last year, Keng Sen directed *Peter's Passionate Pursuit* with Kuala Lumpur's Five Arts centre under an artistic exchange programme.



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MESSAGE

I AM VERY PLEASED to be returning to Singapore to participate in TheatreWorks' production of *The Dance and the Railroad* and *The Sound of a Voice*. I last visited Singapore for the 1982 Festival of Arts production of my play *FOB*. At the time, dedicated actors such as Lim Kay Tong (who starred in *FOB*) were beginning to envision a Singaporean theatre. Eight years later, that dream is a reality.

The two plays you will see tonight were written in the early stages of my career. *The Dance and the Railroad* (1981) was my attempt at a historical piece; the Chinese Railroad Workers Strike of 1867 was significant in contradicting the popularly held stereotype that coolie labourers in America were passive and weak. The facts indicate quite the opposite; these were assertive men who were brave enough to retain their basic human dignity and fight for their rights under the most oppressive of circumstances. *The Sound of a Voice* (1983) was my homage to Japanese literature and film; the *Kwaidan*-style ghost story also addresses the inability of some men to overcome their ingrained misogyny.

Both these works helped me greatly to grow and mature as a writer. TheatreWorks is similarly a young and talented organization; the meeting of their resources and these plays, I hope, will provide a moving and challenging experience for theatre, playwright, and audience alike. Thank you for your continuing support of a vital cultural institution. Have a lovely evening.

David Hwang



DAVID HWANG made his Broadway debut with *M. Butterfly*.

He is the author of *FOB* (1981 Obie award for best new play), *The Dance of the Railroad* (Drama Desk nomination, Guernsey's best plays of 1981-82), *Family Devotions* (Drama Desk Nomination), *The House of Sleeping Beauties*, *The Sound of a Voice*, *Rich Relations* and *1000 Airplanes*, a collaboration with composer Philip Glass and designer Jerome Sirlin.

Mr Hwang is scripting the film adaptation of *Seven Years in Tibet* for the program development group and is slated to direct his first film for Brandmann Productions/American Playhouse.

Born in Los Angeles in 1957, he attended Stanford University and the Yale School of Drama.

For *M. Butterfly*, Mr Hwang was honoured with the 1988 Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and John Gassner Awards.

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SLOW BOATS FROM CHINA

IN SPITE OF the combined restraints of law, religion and family ties, millions of Chinese have migrated overseas since the 1880s.

Much of this emigration could be traced to the tumultuous political events in 18th and 19th century China, when neither life nor property was safe. Nature added to the destruction with floods and famines, rampant in the mid-19th century. Overpopulation was also putting tremendous pressure on available land in South China and the area became an agrarian hell of rack-rent and hopeless sharecropping.

To keep the families alive, many were forced to migrate — the attraction of a decent livelihood elsewhere proved irresistible.

However, the Chinese emigrant saw his departure as only a temporary solution to the poverty and deprivation which he faced at home. Whether he found himself in Malaya or California, his first thoughts were for his family and kinsmen in the village where he grew up, and to which he hoped to return, if not a wealthy man, at least with some capital.

This mental orientation to their homeland produced the typical sojourner. He clung to his cultural heritage, and not having any long-term commitment to the host society, did not learn or adjust to the norms of that society. Thus, these immigrants banded together with their fellow countrymen to replicate minitured Chinese worlds — Chinatowns — a phenomenon common to both Southeast Asia and America.

The Chinese began entering the Malay peninsula in large numbers from the mid-19th century. Very similar to the situation in Singapore, the Chinese came to partake of the increasing opportunities opened by British colonialism.

Recruited by contractors or coming on their own, the hordes of Chinese coolies worked in tin mines and rubber estates while those with capital became traders and middlemen for the British. However, it must be noted that substantial numbers of Chinese were already resident throughout the region by the 17th century.

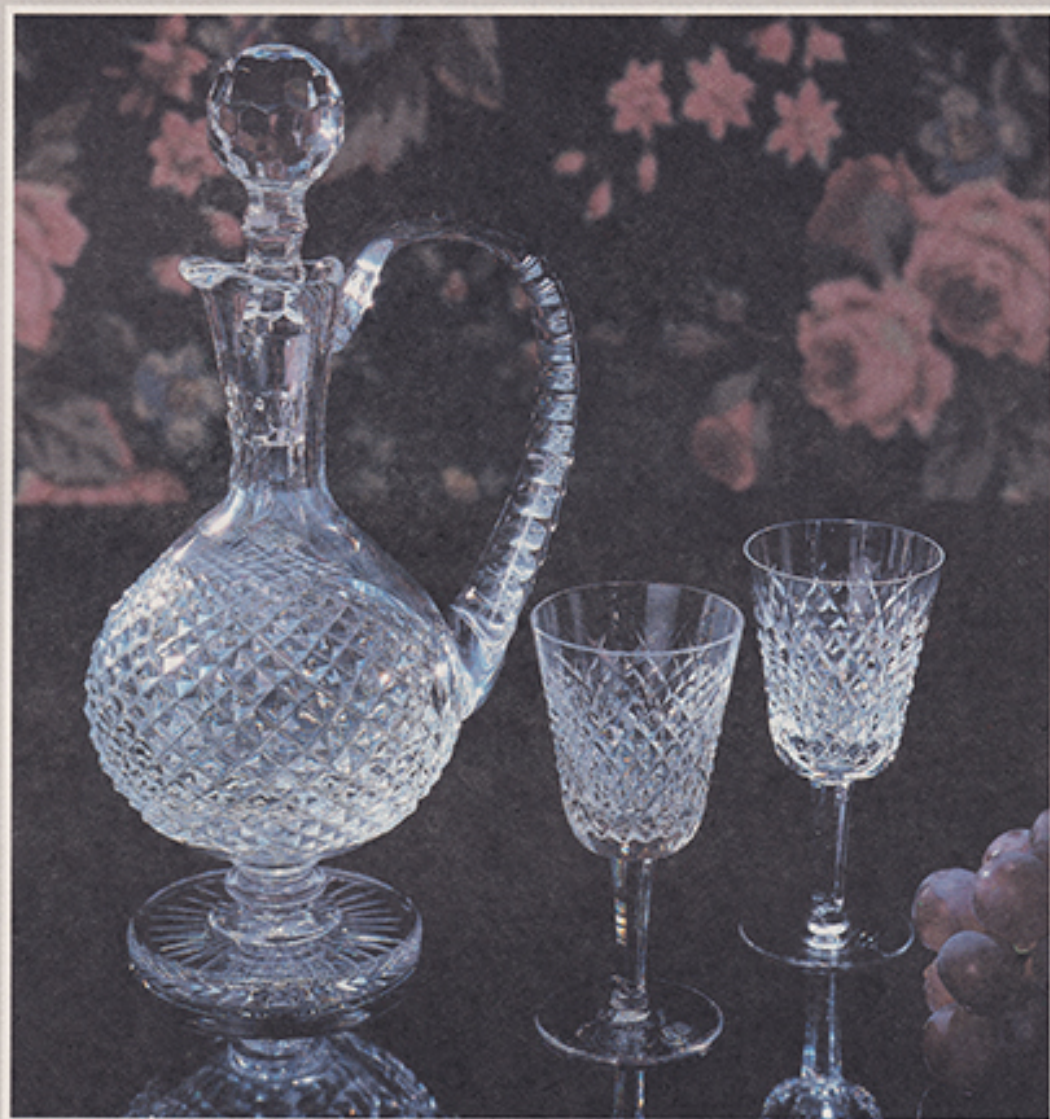
The Chinese did not migrate to America in great numbers till gold was discovered near Sacramento in 1848. Thousands flooded Macao and Hongkong to catch a ship to the Golden Mountain (*Gum Shan*).

The journey they took was similar to those of their kinsmen who headed towards the Nanyang — in cramped decks and sweltering holds of leaky vessels. Often, fares were paid for in return for contracts that enforced high interest rates of repayment and brutal working conditions.

By 1870, when the Californian gold fields had been worked over, the Chinese labour force set upon the task of building 1,800 miles of railway through the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains. Most of the work was done with pick and shovel in extreme heat and freezing cold, so much so that the California-Oregon line has been considered one of the mightiest feats of Chinese labour besides the Great Wall of China.

*(Abstracted from Your Chinese Roots
by Thomas Tzu-wei Tan, Times Books International, 1987)*

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HARD TIMES ON THE RAILROADS

ON 1ST JULY 1862, the American Congress passed the Pacific Railway Act which chartered two railway construction companies to build and operate a railroad passing through the continent of America.

Labour was a problem as many men used railroad work only as a free means of transportation to gold mining camps, and on arrival at the mines they would abandon their jobs with the railroad.

The solution to this labour problem came with the influx of Chinese immigrants. Between 1871 and 1880, almost 250,000 Chinese arrived in California. These men, as were those who came during the previous decade, were recruited by the agents of mining and railroad concerns.

They were to prove their worth — at the cost of the hardships they faced on the railroads.

The climate was harsh and the unyielding terrain compounded engineering difficulties. The men attacked the mountains mainly with picks and shovels. Crowbars pried away boulders and hammers were used to break the boulders into rocks which were carried away, basket load by basket load, on poles slung across shoulders.

Then there was dynamite — which made work slightly easier but far more dangerous.

The Chinese wove baskets out of reeds and with a pulley system, lowered one or two of their fellow workers from the top of cliffs thousands of feet high. From this precarious position, the men planted the explosive to blow up the cliff face. Sometimes, defective

explosives caused the death of workers, at other times, the men were not hauled up fast enough or the rope, on which their slender lives hung, broke.

Even when things went according to plan, the Chinese workmen had to face the blustery winds of the High Sierra which made climbing and working in the winter months dangerous. Sudden blizzards caused makeshift shelters to collapse, killing men, or snow drifts and avalanches would bury men alive.

In the summer months, they suffered under the extreme heat.

Whereas the average white worker earned about \$35 per month with food and lodging, the Chinese were paid less and were not provided with rations or accommodation. Most ended up with just \$20 per month, barely enough to hold body and soul together, and hardly sufficient to send remittances to their families in China.

When the railroad was completed, there were celebrations, speeches and parades throughout the country, but the Chinese were not allowed to take part in any of them and their contribution to the feat was all but ignored.





ON CHINESE OPERA AND KENDO

DAVID HWANG HAS ALWAYS written plays with a cultural identity, works which impart an American touch to the Asian culture. The two plays, *The Dance and The Railroad* and *The Sound of a Voice*, have therefore a dramatic blend of Oriental and Occidental styles.

Due to these demands of the script, the cast, have had to undergo special training in opera techniques and kendo to prepare for their roles.

Mdm Goh Siew Geok, who is coaching Kay Tong and Boon Pin for *The Dance and The Railroad*, is from the Leling Beijing Opera Troupe. She has been teaching opera for almost ten years and had her first contact with Chinese opera in her early teens. Mdm Goh has studied at a prestigious performing arts academy in Beijing under the sponsorship of The Rotary Club of Singapore.

"Times have changed," Mdm Goh recalled, "training used to be so regimental in the 60s, but now an exchange of ideas, a rapport, exists between mentor and pupil."

A Chinese actor begins daily practice, as a matter of course, at the age of eight or ten, repeating basic movements and training the voice to maintain strength and timbre.

From early youth, the actor concentrates on one of the four fundamental roles in Chinese opera — *sheng* (men's roles), *tan* (women's roles), *ching* (painted faces) and *chou* (comic) — and plays this part for life. He must be proficient in many languages: the speech of sleeves, hands, steps, beards... In essence, Chinese opera is a virtuosic display of the actor's ability.

An actor's voice is his most highly-

prized talent. As Mdm Goh pointed out, "you do not watch, but listen to a Beijing opera. Back in those days, the correct way to appreciate the opera is to sit back with your eyes closed and drum your fingers to the rhythm of the music."

Nevertheless, the actor's coordination of mime, dance, song and recitation must be impeccable, since the style that controls each of these is rigid and the opera would lose its unique flavour if a particular set of mannerisms is not followed.

Mdm Goh, who teaches Art and Home Economics in a secondary school, had this to say about her two proteges: "They're quick learners, considering they have absolutely no basics to begin with."

Apart from opera movements, she also taught Kay Tong and Boon Pin to sing in Mandarin to obtain the correct pitch and rhythm. Later, the technique was applied to the English text. Kay Tong found this a new challenge: "My previous trainings were much steeped in the Western theatre tradition, so this is a wonderful opportunity to delve into a new area."

The encounter between a wandering samurai and a solitary witch sets the mood for *The Sound of a Voice*. Kendo instructor David Kwok, who choreographed the fighting sequences in *Rashomon* (1986), once again lends his expertise in this production.

Kendo is a ritualised form of Japanese sword-fighting derived from ancient combat skills, and originated as early as the 8th Century though protective body equipment was not introduced till the 18th Century. A wooden sword, *bokuto*, is used for training and practice while the clothing

comprises a jacket and a floor-length garment, *hakama*, tied around the waist.

A member of the Singapore Kendo Club, David picked up kendo in 1980 while he was in the army. He also practises judo, fencing and Chinese martial arts. "A lot of determination is required in order to be technically proficient in kendo," said David. "It's like working in theatre, the love must first be there."

Training involves learning the cuts, thrusts, appropriate blocks and parries, counterattacks and footwork. The art of drawing the sword from and returning it to the scabbard is known as *iaido*, while the swordplay technique is called *ken-jitsu*. In a competition, the attack is judged on three qualities: *ki* (spirit), *ken* (sword) and *tai* (posture).

"The moves have to be so clean and clinical," explained Nora, who said she has "a natural aversion to combat." On the other hand, Kay Siu who had some experience in kendo from *Rashomon*, likened his routine to a dance. In addition to kendo classes, the cast practised taiji to obtain the right centering, balance and fluidity of movement.

Kendo, according to David, is much more than a martial art; it is a philosophy. And to master the fine techniques of this enigmatic, yet physically-demanding, art is no mean task. As Kay Siu succinctly puts it: "It's a case of the spirit being willing but the flesh being inept."

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THE SHAKUHACHI



THE JAPANESE bamboo flute, the *Shakuhachi*, belongs to the family of notched vertical flutes: a diagonal indentation is cut into the upper open end of the flute, creating a notch which the player breathes into to produce the sound. The diagonal nature of the cut, combined with the unusually wide bore, result in the very distinctive 'breathy', haunting tone of the *Shakuhachi* and its marvellous capacity for wide modulations of timbre, volume and pitch.

The *Shakuhachi*, like the *Koto* and the *Samisen*, is derived from an earlier Chinese instrument known as the *Chiba*. The *Chiba* was probably introduced into Japan in the 13th Century, sometime after the introduction of Zen Buddhism. Japanese legend also attributes the origins of the Zen *Shakuhachi* repertoire to the Chinese Zen Master Pu Ko (Japanese: *Fuke*), but it is more likely that the music we now come to recognise as distinctively *Shakuhachi* is of purely Japanese provenance.

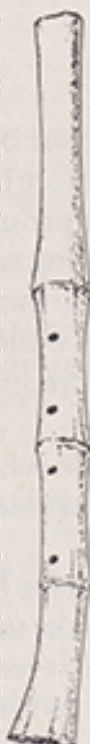
The great Buddhist revivals of the 11th to 13th centuries in Japan gave birth to loosely organised groups of mendicant monks some of which adopted the *Shakuhachi* as their symbol. But it is only from the 17th Century that we have clear record of the connection between the *Shakuhachi* and Zen: the *Fuke* Order of Zen monks officially regarded the *Shakuhachi* not as a musical instrument but as *zenki*, an instrument of Zen. Accordingly, playing the *Shakuhachi* was part of religious practice. The essence of *Shakuhachi* playing was to "play detached from reason", to attain the stage where "absolute sound, sound itself" appears.

To quote the *Kaisei Hogo*, "The success of *Shakuhachi* spiritual practice really only depends on the spirit and breathing. If the spirit is enlightened, breath becomes spirit. If the spirit is unmoved, breath becomes perfect. That is what it means to enter fully into Zen."

With the dawn of the Meiji era, the *Fuke* Sect was dissolved and the *Shakuhachi* was freed from being solely an instrument of Zen.

Nowadays, this marvellous bamboo flute has become a freely available instrument once again, used by many Japanese and Western musicians in various musical idioms from Jazz to New Age. Notwithstanding, though, the *Shakuhachi*'s long and singular history still tie it inseparably to Zen tradition. Listen to its lonely tone and realise that "spiritual breath is, in reality, emptiness and nothing."

Mark Chan



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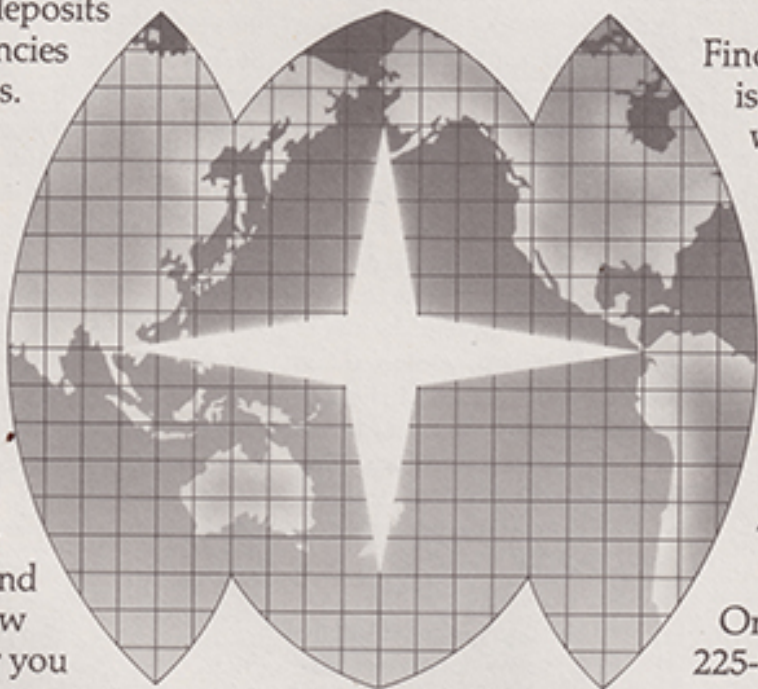
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THEATREWORKS & DAVID HWANG

I FIRST MET DAVID HWANG in 1982. He was in Singapore to co-direct his play *FOB* for the Singapore Arts Festival. It was a joint US/Singapore production. Co-director Dr Max le Blond, actress Claire Wee and myself were the Singapore end while David and actor Keenan Shimizu made up the US contingent.

David had arranged that we play three nights at the Hongkong Arts Centre prior to the festival engagement in Singapore. The night before we were to fly to Hongkong, Claire was involved in an accident and broke her leg.

After ringing several Asian-American actresses, David managed to get Lauren Tom who was available and willing to fly from New York, meet us in Hongkong the night before performance, rehearse the next day and open the show with us. She did and the play was received favourably. In Singapore, *FOB* sold out and had generally excellent reviews.

During Max and David's intense and intensive rehearsals, through the audiences' excitement in Hongkong and Singapore, many thoughts raced through my mind.

FOB created three perceptions for me. Firstly that theatre needed desire and commitment — everyone pulled together to put on as good a show as possible because they wanted a production of quality. Secondly, the only way to create was by doing it and thirdly, Asian-American theatre only found a voice because of desire, commitment and action. After all, David, Lauren and Keenan were pursuing theatre full-time.

I had only just got involved again in Singapore English language the-

atre in 1981 after a four-year initiation in the early 1970s. The work in the early 70s — with The Stage Club, The Experimental Theatre Club and the University of Singapore — was satisfying for me but the lack of audiences depressing, with the exception of sell-outs like Chandran Lingham's *Equus* and Prem Kumar's production of Robert Yeo's *Are You There Singapore*. These gave some glimmer of hope. How far was theatre reaching out?

During sporadic returns from theatre studies and work in the latter part of the 70s, it seemed that writers and practitioners like Robert Yeo, Raymond Ong and Max le Blond had furthered the cause of English language theatre through the Drama Advisory Council. However, performances were still occasional. Productions occurred largely due to the prodding of le Blond, Lingham and Experimental Club presidents John Chan and Suresh Menon. Attendances were also erratic.

When the 1980s arrived, something happened. "Sniffing the air" you could almost smell the eagerness of a new, curious and better educated generation waiting to be wooed. Practitioners were prepared for greater commitment and just needed rounding up and galvanising.

But some of us were afraid that nobody would make a move. There had been outlets — the ETC helped the group, which would later form TheatreWorks, produce Terry Rex and Susan's Party (directed by Lim Siau Chong), and the government's grants, drama and arts festivals also provided an occasional channel for production. And all the time, more and more

people were going to the theatre.

But if productions were spread out erratically, there would be little chance of audience growth. Yet, the signs were there: there was potential to get practitioners and audiences involved regularly in such a way that theatre became a way of life in Singapore.

Then came the explosion. TheatreWorks, Act 3, Stars, Asia In Theatre Research Circus, Necessary Stage etc, each differing in taste but fuelled by the same hunger — to leave a mark, a legacy. It wasn't that sudden, really. Things had been stewing for a long time.

For me, in my subconscious perhaps, were the memories and lessons from experiences like *FOB* which will never dim, recede or die. The play, after all, was about a desire for, and commitment to, dreams realised and unrealised. It was also the production itself, the people involved and the possibilities, probabilities and illuminations that have helped to continually remind that it is always imperative to hunger, strive and create something permanent. It was, and is, a search for identity.

The rest: constancy and resolute perseverance.

Lim Kay Tong

CAST THE SOUND OF A VOICE



LIM KAY SIU

An accomplished actor, Kay Siu's first stage appearance was in *Be My Sushi Tonight* (1985). His versatility is evident in the many roles he has played in TheatreWorks productions since then. *The Elephant Man*, *Rashomon*, *The Maids*, *To My Heart With Smiles* and *As if He Hears* form but part of his string of credits. A member of TheatreWorks Actors' Ensemble, Siu's film roles include an appearance in the CBS TV production, *Passion Flower*.



NORA SAMOSIR

A member of TheatreWorks Actors' Ensemble, Nora's first performance in a full length play was in *Little Murders* (1978). She also appeared with Kay Siu in *Be My Sushi Tonight*, TheatreWorks' inaugural production. A junior college English Literature teacher, she has managed to find time to take on many and varied roles in productions such as *The Maids*, *Rashomon*, *Miss Julie*, *To My Heart With Smiles*, *Mixed Signals* and *As if He Hears*.





CAST THE DANCE & THE RAILROAD



LIM KAY TONG

A member of British Equity and a founder director of TheatreWorks, Kay Tong graduated with a BA in English and Drama from Hull University. A professional actor on screen and stage, his television and screen credits include *Shanghai Surprise*, *Tanamera*, and *Noble House*. His impressive stage credits include *Equus*, *Be My Sushi Tonight*, *The Maids*, *Rashomon*, *The Elephant Man*, *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole*, *Three Children* and *Metamorphosis*.

KOH BOON PIN

Boon Pin's performance in *Metamorphosis* has left an indelible mark in the memories of theatregoers. A licentiate of the London Academy of Music and the Dramatic Arts, Boon Pin specialises in all forms of communication skills concerning the use of the voice. He teaches at a speech training centre in Singapore. Boon Pin's other stage credits include *Stars' From One To Midnight* (Drama Festival 1987). He recently took a leading role in Singapore's 25th Anniversary production, *My Country, My Singapore*.





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Tay Tong PRODUCTION MANAGER

Tay Tong has stage-managed memorable plays such as *Oedipus* (Varsity Playhouse), *A Devised Play* (Shell Players) and *Beauty World*. He is TheatreWorks' full-time Production Manager.

Justin Hill CO-SET DESIGNER (*The Sound of a Voice*)

Justin, an architect, is TheatreWorks' Resident Set Designer. He has designed for the Drama Festival, Festival of Dance and the Singapore Arts Festival since 1981. His impressive credits include *Be My Sushi Tonight*, *Army Daze*, *Beauty World*, *To My Heart With Smiles* and *Mixed Signals*.

Kalyani Kausikan LIGHTING DESIGNER CO-SET VISUALISER (*The Dance and the Railroad*)

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

Mark Chan COMPOSER

Already an established name in Singapore's music scene, Mark is a man of many talents. A songwriter, composer and artist, he has scored many theatre productions in Singapore. His recent works with theatre include *The Silly Little Girl And The Funny Old Tree*, *Medea*, *Mother Courage*, *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Three Children*.

Ashley Lim HAIR

Ashley, who works at Botticelli Beauty Centre, created the hairdos for *Metamorphosis* and masks for *Safe Sex*.

Goh Siew Geok OPERA TRAINER

A teacher of opera techniques at the Leling Beijing Opera Troupe, Siew Geok performed in the last two Festival of Arts. She has studied Performing Arts in Beijing under a Singapore Rotary Club scholarship.

David Kwok KENDO TRAINER

David is a member of the Singapore Kendo Club and has been involved with the sport since 1980. He was responsible for choreographing the swordplay in TheatreWorks' *Rashomon*.

Caroline Smith-laing LIGHTING ASSISTANT

Caroline's involvement with Singapore theatre began with backstage work in TheatreWorks' production of *Hanjo and Kantan* and then *Army Daze*. She is currently also doing production and stage work with the Asia In Theatre Research Circus where has been involved in productions including *Medea* and *Mother Courage*.

Lorraine Srugneit SOUND ASSISTANT

Lorraine has been involved in the production of foreign documentaries and feature films for some years and had helped out in TheatreWorks' production of *Safe Sex* last year.

Lok Meng Chue STAGE MANAGER (*The Dance and the Railroad*)

Meng Chue is a member of the TheatreWorks Actors' Ensemble and was the Production Manager for *Army Daze*. Her impressive acting portfolio comprise *Fanshen*, *The Maids*, *Beauty World*, *Three Children* and, more recently, *Metamorphosis*. This is the first time she is stage managing a production.

Koh Joo Kim STAGE MANAGER (*The Sound of a Voice*)

Joo Kim has had varied experience in backstage work. She was Assistant Stage Manager for *Medea*, Stage Manager for *Round And Round The Dining Table*, played in the orchestra for *Mother Courage* and *Three Children*, and was Lighting Assistant for *To My Heart With Smiles*.

Ng Soy Cheng PUBLICITY MANAGER

Soy Cheng is TheatreWorks' Public Relations and Business Manager. She has managed publicity for plays such as *Miss Julie*, *To My Heart With Smiles*, *Mixed Signals*, *Metamorphosis* and *Safe Sex*.

Emanuel David Tan PUBLICITY ASSISTANT

David was involved backstage in *Mixed Signals* and *Safe Sex*. He was also the Sound Assistant for *Metamorphosis* at the 1989 Drama Festival.

Lawrence Tan GALA COMMITTEE MEMBER

A fashion stylist, Lawrence has helped backstage at *Mixed Signals* and *Rigor Mortis* (Necessary Stage). He was the Publicity Assistant for *Safe Sex*.

Chan Mei Lian GALA COMMITTEE MEMBER

A lawyer, Mei Lian was first involved in backstage work in *Mixed Signals* and this is her first venture in organising gala night.

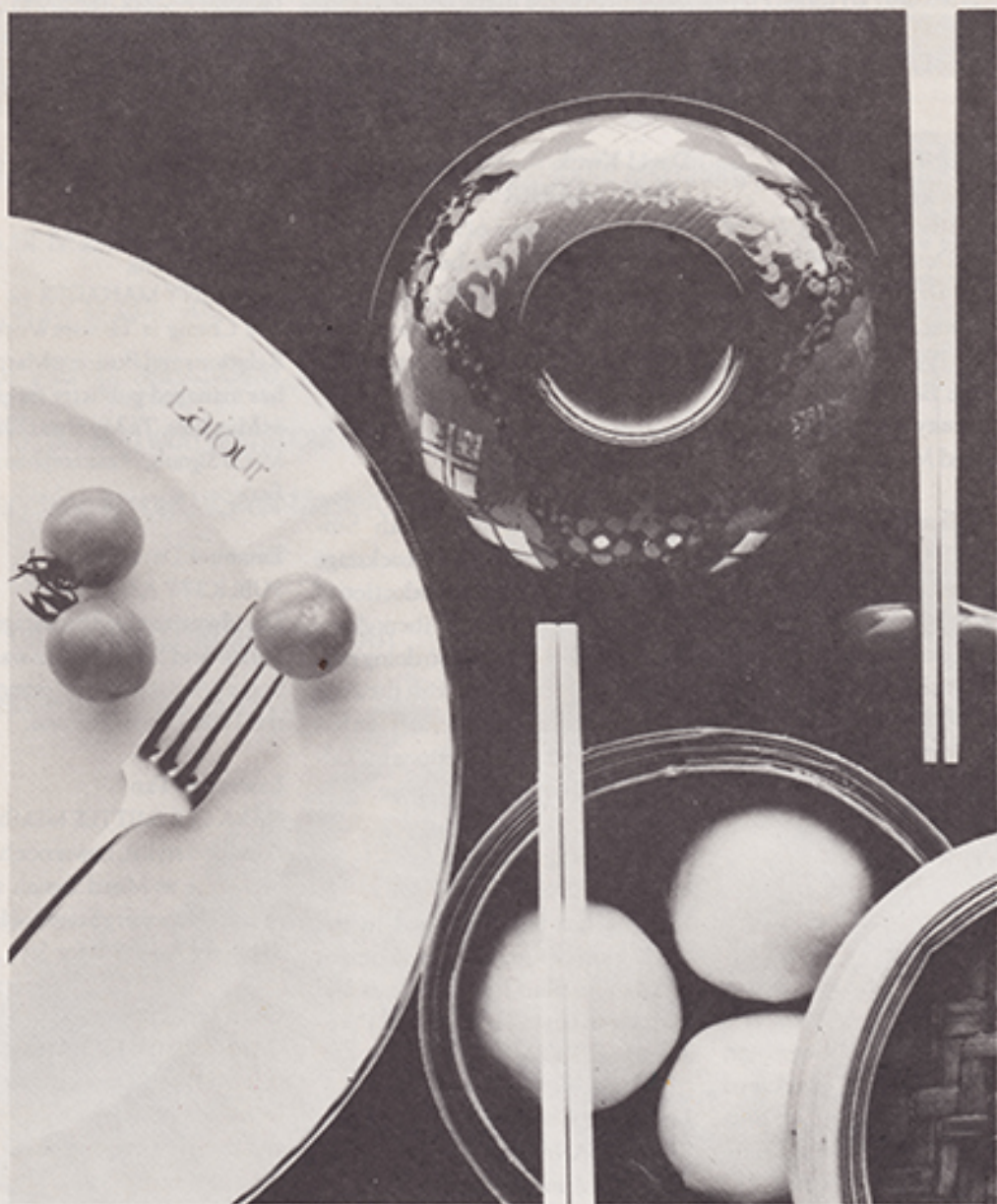
Michele Lim FRONT-OF-HOUSE MANAGER

Michele was Assistant Stage Manager for the premier run of *Beauty World* and helped organise gala nights for *Miss Julie* and *Metamorphosis*. She was also Front-of-House Manager for *Mixed Signals*.

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Special thanks to our corporate sponsors — Tangs Studio, Glaxo and Waterford Wedgwood Singapore — for sharing our faith and making this David Hwang Festival possible.

The United States Information Service for providing the grant for David Hwang's airfare and supplying material on Asian-American immigrants.

The Westin Plaza for David Hwang's accommodation in Singapore.

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

David Kwok for kendo lessons.

Mdm Goh Siew Geok for giving opera voice and movement training.

Mrs Michiko Waki for lessons on Japanese tea-serving and etiquette, and for the loan of her kimono.

Mr T. Imanaka for enlightening us on aspects of Japanese culture.

The Japanese Association Singapore for their assistance.

Times Editions Pte Ltd for permission to abstract material from *Your Chinese Roots*.

The Press and Media

All advertisers for their support.

Ashley Lim for his hair creations. Faceworks for doing the make-up.

Ooi Yu-lin for her assistance in sourcing research materials.

The Gala Committee and their assistants for their work and effort on the gala and foyer decorations.

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

Albert Lim KS Photographer for publicity stills.

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

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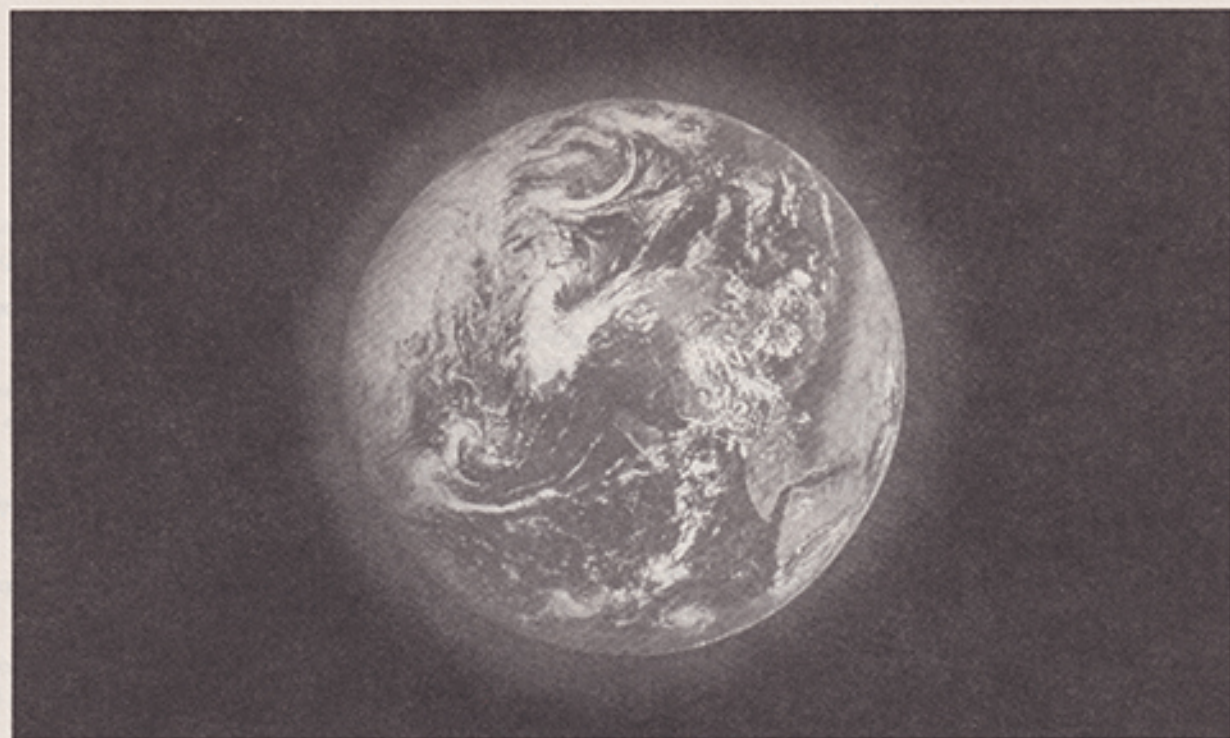
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THEATREWORKS

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Vol. 1 No. 2

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TheatreWorks on the Move

TheatreWorks will be five years old this month. A good time to take just one more breath before moving quickly into a busy year.

The most significant event in 1990 is our anticipated shift to a more permanent home: Fort Canning. It means much to have enough room for offices, rehearsal and storage space and a small theatrette.

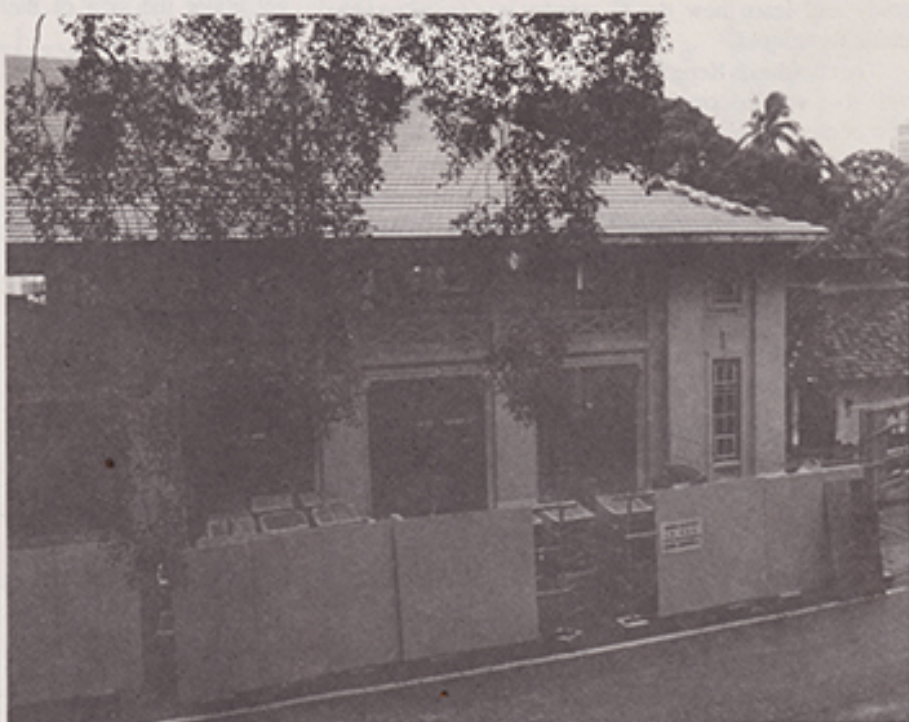
In conjunction with the opening of this space, we will hold a month-long retrospective of Singapore plays: seven in all, as well as seminars, play readings of new Singapore works and discussions.

Fort Canning

Many of these events will take place at the Fort Canning facility, with larger productions down the hill at the Drama Centre. All this will happen at year's end.

Before that, we will kick off 1990 with the David Hwang double bill followed by Wilson Wong's reworking of his prize-winning *Greensocks* in March. Then the preparatory work for the retrospective will begin.

TheatreWorks is proud to announce that it's Artistic Director, Ong Keng Sen, has been awarded a British Council scholarship. He is expected to be attached to



TheatreWorks' Fort Canning premises in the process of renovation by the URA.

the Shared Experience Company at the National Theatre, Bristol Express at the Riverside Studios and the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre Muse in the North-West and in London (*see page 2 for full report*).

Lim Yu-Beng

Lim Yu-Beng, a graduate in theatre studies from Pepperdine University in California, has been appointed Associate Artistic Director, and will initiate and oversee projects during

Keng Sen's absence.

Artistically, the addition of a small theatrette later this year will enable us to supplement our main productions with a wider scope of activities. We will be able to undertake more training programmes for our existing core of actors and newcomers. New works can be presented in the form of readings, workshops and discussions with their writers. Plays in progress can be shown and developed. Theatre-in-education projects

will be started. Shows will be devised and presented here by our ensemble of actors, not to mention lunchtime and late-night productions.

We intend to start all these at some stage in 1990 and 1991. It is TheatreWorks' belief that apart from the creation of a larger body of Singaporean work, there should be as wide a range of productions and theatre activities as possible.

We hope you have a great play-going year.

Keng Sen granted Theatre Scholarship to Britain

Ong Keng Sen, TheatreWorks' Artistic Director, will be playing a new, yet familiar, role from February to August this year. As a Fellow of the British Council, he will be attached to various theatre companies in the United Kingdom to study and learn new dramatic techniques.

The companies Keng Sen will join will be small or new companies involved in producing experimental works, unusual or avant garde pieces, or those which are committed to evolving their own dramatic language through their works.

These may seem like strange choices since UK is

home of such grand dames of theatre like the Royal Shakespearean Company and the Bristol Old Vic.

"This request was made in anticipation of the direction TheatreWorks is heading," Keng Sen explained. "The next phase of development is to create an alternative repertoire."

In Keng Sen's plan, TheatreWorks will create an avenue for gestating and experimental works, in addition to the plays which it produces in its mainstream program.

"The alternative repertoire will allow for initiation, exploration and reflection, where new ideas and

players are given a platform. Established practitioners will also be given opportunities to attempt new pieces or explore new staging methods — but without the commercial and critical pressure that the main repertoire normally faces," elaborated Keng Sen.

Keng Sen feels there is a need for him to learn different ways of approaching a play, of working it through, and learn different rehearsal methods to help his players get under the skin of the characters they play.

As TheatreWorks' Artistic Director, he sees his role as increasingly becoming that of a dramaturg — a dramatist who helps to shape new works through constructive criticisms and comments. This has come about because TheatreWorks is committed to staging new and Singapore works.

Hence, Keng Sen feels he needs to develop new skills to help new playwrights create and realise the essential sub-text in their works. His UK trip is thus a chance to become a student again; to learn from others by being exposed to differ-

ent operating methods.

It is also an opportune time for him to watch plays; the luxury of being a member of an audience is rare in Singapore as he is often caught up in rounds of rehearsals.

"It is important that I go with no preconceptions and be receptive. After six months, I hope to have a working knowledge of the English theatre system. From all that I observe, I will have the choice of what to adapt and synthesize into something we can call our own," explained Keng Sen.

Unlike Christine Lim and Nora Samosir who attended directing courses as Fellows of the British Council in 1988, Keng Sen will not be attending any courses, so he has more flexibility.

It will be an important time for him. "It will be a time for reflection — where I want the company to go in the next two years. This is the time to create useful opportunities and to glean what I can."

On his return, Keng Sen will no doubt apply all that he will learn to raise the standard of professional theatre in Singapore.



AVOID TICKETING DISSAPPOINTMENTS: BE A THEATREWORKS SUBSCRIBER

With the support of an increasing number of theatre-goers, TheatreWorks, in its first five years, has had on many occasions played to full-house audiences. Tickets were at times sold out weeks before the play opened.

To help regular theatre-goers obtain tickets, TheatreWorks has established a subscription service which allows tickets to be booked months in advance. This is presented in the form of a season brochure obtainable on request.

Alternatively, you could be put on our mailing list. Simply fill in your name and address on a survey card distributed at every TheatreWorks performance. Being on our mailing list means that you will be kept abreast of the latest developments in the company, and will also be among the first to receive handbills cum order forms prior to each production.

For enquiries, please call 2800188. However, we regret that we are unable to service telephone bookings.



William Keeps a Bit of Jackson

When rehearsals are through and performances are over, when an actor has sorted out his 'post-production blues', it is possible to see if theatre can be a learning experience in life.

Three weeks after his last curtain call as Jackson Ong, William Grosse gives us an insight into how *Jackson on a Jaunt* has impressed itself on him.

For William, striving to find the truth within the Jackson character and within the situations of the play was a slow, painful and arduous process. "Keng Sen (who directed the *Safe Sex* double bill) helped us to find 'something' within ourselves which we could tap or set free and use in the play," said William.

Dealing with the issue of AIDS, 'masks' and relationships reminded William that he too had 'masks' and there were old wounds deeply embedded in his psyche.

In exploring the character of Jackson, William saw that with masks stripped off, people are, in the end, all basically the same "when we have to deal with our weaknesses, frailties and ultimate humanity."

"There are many Jacksons in the world and there is a bit of him, I feel, in everybody" he continued.

For William, *Jackson on a Jaunt* is about confrontation or the reluctance, inability or unwillingness to confront and deal with the truth within and around us.

"Sometimes, I think we don't suffer as much from an identity crisis as much as a crisis of truth."

The truth here is that this play affected William "quite a great deal". And the feelings that were generated and recalled during the rehearsals and performances forced him through some "emotional turbulence."

Playing Jackson forced him to reevaluate what is important to him (and Jackson) and reminded him that it was easy to take life, ourselves and others for granted.

"However, the realisation that this barrage of emotions 'suffered' during the play would slowly dissipate after some time made me feel more for the AIDS patients. For them, their suffering would only go away with their deaths," said William.



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TheatreWorks is pleased to acknowledge that three of Singapore's leading companies have come together in support of its 1989/90 season.

The companies are Tangs Studio, Glaxo and Waterford Wedgewood Singapore. 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.

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 and foresight of Tangs Studio, Glaxo and Waterford Wedgewood Singapore will, eventually, bring the Singapore dream of a cultured society closer to reality.



Share Your Talent

TheatreWorks is always happy to welcome those who wish to participate in theatre. Tell us if you have something to share — be it as actor, director, carpenter or publicist.

We are committed to discovering and nurturing all theatre-related skills and all we ask for is a high level of commitment — because we want the most for Singapore theatre.

If you would like to be active in any aspect of theatre, please write to us at:

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