

**THEATREWORKS**



26-29 JULY 1995

2-5 • 8 AUG 1995

10-12 AUG 1995

8 PM

THE BLACK BOX

A N G T A U M U I

# THEATREWORKS



*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 and dedicated to sharing the Magic of Theatre •*

TheatreWorks (S) Ltd, a non-profit organisation, was incorporated in February 1985 as the first English language adult professional theatre company in Singapore.

TheatreWorks has produced critically acclaimed productions and is recognised for its plays and its experimental approach. The successful fusion of Western and Eastern dramatic traditions in its productions has earned it the reputation of being an innovative theatre company.

The company ensures a balanced repertoire and a varied programme for its audiences with its popular entertainment plays and landmark theatre events like *The Retrospective of Singapore Plays (1960-1990)*, *Three Children*, *Beauty World*, *Madame Mao's Memories*, *Theatre Carnival on the Hill*, *Lao Jiu*, *Longing and Broken Birds*.

TheatreWorks has also spearheaded training programmes for theatre practitioners like The Writers' Laboratory, SpringBoard and the Directors' Laboratory.

Besides working with the Singapore creative community, the company has engaged in exchange programmes with foreign theatre companies. Through some of these exchanges and collaborations, new works have been developed with Singaporean actors and practitioners.

The company has toured many countries around the region and the world. TheatreWorks toured Japan and Kuala Lumpur with its production of *Three Children*. The company also presented *Madame Mao's Memories* at the invitation of the Traverse Theatre for the Edinburgh Festival in August 1992. The first TheatreWorks musical, *Beauty World*, was performed in four Japanese cities at the SEA Festival and the Tokyo International Festival in September/October 1992. In February 1994, the company performed *Lao Jiu* in the main programme of the Festival of Perth.

As part of its mission to promote theatre to a wider section of the community, TheatreWorks has started a series of audience development programmes which include theatre-related training workshops, lectures, seminars, theatre-in-education programmes for schools, public lectures and student attachment schemes and talks at the Black Box.

TheatreWorks receives support from corporate patronage, special sponsors, the National Parks Board and the National Arts Council, the British Council, the United States Information Service. Hotel accommodation for foreign visitors is sponsored by the Westin Stamford and Westin Plaza, and the Writers' Laboratory is sponsored by the Singapore Press Holdings. These companies and organisations are distinguished by their enlightened leadership and sound corporate philosophies. 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.





## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Leow Puay Tin graduated from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. She went to the University of Hawaii in Honolulu where she obtained her Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting. In 1989-1990, Puay Tin received an Advanced Diploma in Voice Studies from the Central School of Speech and Drama in London.

Her professional theatre career began in 1981 when she acted in *I Have Not Forgotten The Dumb*, a non-scripted performance, which was staged in KL. Thereafter, her next play, *Tikam-Tikam: And Her Grandmother Said* was staged and performed in KL in March 1983.

In 1984, Puay Tin performed *Emily of Emerald Hill* by Singaporean writer Stella Kon, in Kuala Lumpur and Seremban. The monologue was also brought to Hawaii as part of the performing Arts Series at the Institute of Culture and Communication, East-West Centre in April and May 1987. Thereafter, the play toured Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Ipoh, Penang and Tawau.

Puay Tin is also known in Singapore for her play, *Three Children*, which was first staged by TheatreWorks in November 1988. The play was directed by Ong Keng Sen and Krishen Jit. The TheatreWorks production was re-staged in Singapore 1992 and toured Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo and Yokohama. *Three Children* is presently used as a course text at the National University of Singapore.

Her latest play, *The Window*, recently won the third prize in the New Straits Times Playwriting Competition.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR/ACTRESS

Lok Meng Chue made her first "public" appearance in 1982 with her role in *Samseng and the Chettiar's Daughter*, an adaptation of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*. In 1985, she acted in TheatreWorks' second production *Fanshen* by David Hare. She also acted in the original production and rerun of the sellout hit, *Army Daze* by Michael Chiang. In 1988, she acted in *Three Children* by Leow Puay Tin. The production toured Japan and Kuala Lumpur in 1992. She also acted in *Beauty World*, TheatreWorks' first musical, in the Singapore Arts Festival. The production was invited to tour Japan in 1992. In 1990, she joined TheatreWorks full-time as its first professional actress. In 1992, she received a fellowship from The British Council and participated in the International Advanced Theatre Direction Workshop in London. In 1994, Meng Chue received a fellowship under a Multi-regional international visitor project organised and sponsored by the United States Information Service.

Meng Chue's first directorial attempt was *The Complete Space Traveller's Guide to Singapore, (Abridged)*, an original Singaporean script, workshopped by members of the Writers' Laboratory in late 1992. She directed *Dirty Laundry* by Theresa Tan, and *Watching The Clouds Go By* by Robin Loon, both which are original Singaporean plays. She also co-directed *Us In Singapore* and *Scorpion Orchid* (Festival of Arts 1994) with Krishen Jit. In 1994, Meng Chue re-staged *Lao Jiu* when it was invited to the Festival of Perth. She also co-created and acted in *Longing*, a theme park carnival which took place all over Fort Canning Park. She also directed an experimental work-in-progress, *Where Do You Go, Jeremy?* an original play in French by Philippe Minyana. She directed 3 new original plays in the SPH Young Playwrights Series and acted in one of them. In June 1995, Meng Chue became a member and Associate Artist of TheatreWorks.



## PRODUCTION LIST

*Playwright* Leow Puay Tin  
*Director/Performer* Lok Meng Chue  
*Production Manager* Tan Lay Hoon  
*Set Designer* Mona Choo  
*Lighting Designer / Technical Manager* Lim Yu-Beng  
*Stage Managers* Jaiakumar Sinan & Lucilla Teoh  
*Lighting Operator* Lucilla Teoh  
*Sound Operator* Jaiakumar Sinan  
*Crew* Norizah Mohd Sabudin  
*Hair Design* Ashley Lim  
*Make-up Design* Joseph Ng  
*Publicity Flyer Design* Alan Seah of Generator Creative  
*Programme Design* Bruce San of 2000 Advertising & Design



## COMPANY STAFF

*Artistic Director* Ong Keng Sen  
*General Manager* Tay Tong  
*Associate Artist* Lok Meng Chue  
*Business/PR Manager* Michele Lim  
*Production Manager* Tan Lay Hoon  
*Publicity Assistant* Leslie Lee  
*Ticketing* Neo Kim Seng  
*Accounts* Sally Neo



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TheatreWorks would like to thank . . .

- Jane Lim from RJ Paper for her assistance and support
- Jonathan Gwee and Jacintha Loo for their assistance during the bump-in
- Mark Chan, Claire Wong and Loong Seng Onn for the voice over recording
  - Jeannie Ho for photography
- Keyne Ho from Plato Creations for the photoshoot make-up
- All others who have helped to make this production possible





ANG TAU MUI first made her appearance as the girl who sold red bean soup (ang tau chui) in two of my earlier works, *Tikam-Tikam* and *Three Children*, where she disappeared suddenly.



In this play, *Ang Tau Mui, A Modern Woman*, her story continues. She is now in her mid-40's, running about in a shopping complex, looking for something to buy, in the hope that the elusive something (or someone) could help her understand her life as a modern woman, and thereby assuage some of the pain she experiences in her quest for self-fulfillment and self-determination.

Contrary to popular perception and opinion, I call *Ang Tau Mui* – the runaway daughter of a blacksmith, a primary school graduate, an ex-backlane hawker (and possibly child prostitute), an idoliser of Lin Dai, and a subtly rebellious citizen – a modern woman.

In part, this has been consciously done. To draw attention to marginal (and marginalised) people like *Ang Tau Mui* and allow them to be perceived in the light of their own quests and truths, rather than be judged by societal norms and standards.

Also, I feel that *Ang Tau Mui* belongs to the tradition of exceptional women, past and present, who possess a drive for self-transformation, the daring to defy or step out of conventions, and the nerve to dream up possibilities contrary to the facts of their circumstances.

In short, *Ang Tau Mui* is a woman who has tried to live as truthfully as she could. And one who believes in self-liberation.

Whether I have succeeded to do justice to her, I don't know. It is for others to judge, and I am keen to know their response to *Ang Tau Mui*.

However, I am glad that *Ang Tau Mui* has already found a number of friends in Malaysia and Singapore, amongst them, Meng Chue.

As an actress, Meng Chue knows *Ang Tau Mui*, whom she taunted in *Three Children* back in 1988. Meng Chue is one of those rare actresses who can move well and sing too. A performer of integrity who believes in hard work and research; I know for a fact that she has been watching Lin Dai movies on video to experience *Ang Tau Mui's* fascination with the movie goddess.

Also, Meng Chue herself is a modern woman.

All these make me feel extremely fortunate and happy that Meng Chue is doing *Ang Tau Mui*. Thank you, Meng Chue.

And many thanks to Keng Sen and TheatreWorks, who have been very supportive of my work.

There is one other person to thank (who is not involved in this production). Krishen Jit of the Five Arts Centre, Kuala Lumpur, has been involved in every production involving *Ang Tau Mui*. He designed the performance concept and directed me in *Tikam-Tikam* (1983); co-directed *Three Children* with Ong Keng Sen (1988, 1992), and twice directed me in this monologue last year.

When I was revising this play through improvisations last year (after two workshop performances in KL in February), I experimented on a number of things. Krishen helped me significantly by zeroing in on *Ang Tau Mui's* letters to Lin Dai which now form the second half of the play.

Leow Puay Tin, July 1995



"In presenting this series of plays, it marks another milestone in my life. Not only on an artistic level but also from a personal viewpoint.

Looking back on the small portfolio of works that I have directed so far, I was surprised and pleased when TheatreWorks offered me the opportunity to plan a season of works – to choose what I would like to do. The encouragement and confidence they have in me has always been the strongest incentive towards fuelling my own belief in theatre.

I am indeed blessed with the opportunity to continue to work in an environment which is not only nurturing and familiar but also constantly challenging and exciting.

When I was given the choice to do what I want, a reflection of my own vision – what is important to me, and to plan a 12-month season of plays/performances for the company, naturally I froze. I needed, asked and got time off to think about it. No, I did not assume the posture of Rodin's 'Thinker' or put on my thinking cap. I continued to live my life, day in, day out, and no, I did not go climb any mountains in Nepal.

The plays I have chosen to direct over the next few months – *Ang Tau Mai*, *Therese Raquin* and *Shakuntala* – are reflections on some of my thoughts and feelings about myself – a woman living in the nineties. It is not surprising that the central energies and protagonists in all three are women. I have not set out to define what it means to be a woman living in the nineties. It is too clichéd and for me personally, not necessary. I am attempting to celebrate the joys, frustrations, triumphs and tribulations of being a woman.

### On *Ang Tau Mai*, the play

*Ang Tau Mai* lives in her own imagination. A fantasy world filled with memories, dreams and vivid characters away from the cold, clear thrust of reality. She is a 'modern' woman – she can choose to live however, wherever and with whoever. Refusing to be immobilised by the demands of blood bonds and the daily humdrum of human existence, she sets her own rules and exerts her right to create and control her life.

And the 'modern' world offers much to feed and fire her imagination. She plunges into their irresistible whirlwind of bright lights, empty promises, and mindless materialistic consumption.

I feel a deep empathy with the character of *Ang Tau Mai*. I have often felt the need to escape into my own fantasy world where everything is perfect and just the way I like it. The power of imagination if harnessed can indeed create the greatest of all works but it can also be the tool of self-deception and destruction. Last but not least, special thanks to my friends and colleagues who have given me invaluable feedback during the rehearsal process."

*Lok Meng Chue, July 1995*



## LYRICS TO THE SONGS IN *Ang Tau Mui*

### DREAM

People say life is like a dream • I say a dream is like life  
You feel happy • You celebrate for a moment  
A moment later • You are grieving, you're all alone...

The emperor's glory • The beggar's misery  
Snow on the hill-tops • Treasures in the deep seas  
When you awake from dreaming • Your moment in life is over  
*(translated by Leow Puay Tin)*



### LOVE WITHOUT END

I cannot forget, I cannot forget  
I cannot forget your wrongs and your rights  
Cannot forget our stroll in the rain  
Cannot forget our embraces in the wind

I cannot forget, I cannot forget  
I cannot forget your tears and your smiles  
Cannot forget the falling Autumn leaves  
Cannot forget the withering Spring blossoms

Chorus:

The long lonely lane  
Lit only by the crescent moon  
The cold empty swing  
Swaying gently in the wind

They remind me of your warning  
Word by word - forget, forget  
They keep murmuring my heartfelt song  
Word by word - impossible, impossible to forget

I cannot forget, I cannot forget  
Cannot forget Spring has ended and flowers have died  
Cannot forget the sorrow of separation  
And cannot forget the pain of yearning  
*(translated by Lok Meng Chue)*



### THE EMPEROR AND THE BEAUTY

I have lost my heart to you  
My soul is already yours  
I would rather be a wine waiter  
So that I can live with you forever  
*(translated by Lok Meng Chue)*



### COMING UP NEXT ...

TheatreWorks presents  
A new play by Eleanor Wong  
Directed by Ong Keng Sen...

#### WILLS AND SECESSION

A bold and refreshing look at love, marriage and family in the 1990s.

14-21 September 1995

The Jubilee Hall, Raffles Hotel

*(adult themes, parental guidance advised)*

Call 338 6735 NOW for tickets...



### SPECIAL BONUS!!!

Present your ticket stub from

*Ang Tau Mai*

at

The Blue Ginger Restaurant

at

97 Tanjong Pagar Road

and

get a 10% discount off your total meal order!

This offer is valid till

31 August 1995,

and is not valid with any other special offers and discounts.



### OFFICAL HOTEL



THE WESTIN STAMFORD  
& WESTIN PLAZA  
Singapore

