



THEATREWORKS  
presents

# NAY NAI

By Pichet Klunchun Dance Company

A TheatreWorks Commission

17 – 21 June 2014  
72-13

Photo credit: Natiged Meekran

**"When women were not welcomed  
in the royal court, who replaced  
*Nang Nai* (ladies-in-waiting)?"**

*– Nay Nai Samai Ratchakan Thi Hok*



# NAY NAI

By Pichet Klunchun Dance Company

A TheatreWorks Commission

17 – 21 June 2014

72-13

The Commission of *Nay Nai* is part of TheatreWorks' aim to present innovative contemporary performances, artistic expressions that offer Singapore audiences alternatives. TheatreWorks is the bridge between alternative artistic expressions and the Singapore audiences.

Its home, 72-13, is an incubator for artistic experiments by both local and international artists & creatives, while being a consistent conduit for dialogues between disciplines & cultures.



"Due to the political situation in Thailand now, I cannot say what I want to say directly in this performance."

"What audiences will see is not the key message that I want to communicate with them. They should read the message between the lines. They must concentrate on how they feel from the performance not what they see."

**Pichet Klunchun**  
Choreographer / Director



# INTERVIEW WITH PICHET KLUNCHUN

by Pawit Mahasarinand



## Nay Nai: The Reality TV Show?

**Q:** Rewritten from his Master of Arts thesis in Women's Studies for Thammasat University, Chanan Yodhong's *Nay Nai Samai Ratchakan Thi Hok* (literally, *Men-in-Waiting During the Reign of King Rama VI*)—with the attention-grabbing tagline "When women were not welcomed in the royal court, who replaced Nang Nai (ladies-in-waiting)"—was published by Matichon Publishing House in March 2013, and, of course, created a considerable amount of controversy since its official launch at the National Book Expo. Is this book your main source of inspiration for *Nay Nai*?

**A:** Indeed, the book has significantly influenced this work. Also, I've been interested in how our community of performing artists is highly LGBT, to begin with. And that's not only in Bangkok, but upcountry I also find young boys dressed up like girls performing in ceremonies and not to their parents' objection.

I read the book and instantly found it fascinating. What I've been working on, Khon [masked dance theatre], is directly

relevant to what King Rama VI did. Thanks in part to his educational background in the UK, he reorganised the production process of Khon—for example, the writing of Khon's production script. From reading this book, I find these men being trained not only as actors and dancers, but also soldiers and athletes. In other words, they became "gentlemen", in the western sense.

With some doubt on the book's authenticity, I met with the writer and found that it was his thesis based on his long study of primary and secondary sources of documents as well as personal interviews [the bibliography is 23 pages long]. Chanan himself coined the term *Nay Nai*.

For me, *Nay Nai* represents a major change in the male-female power in the Siamese court during the reign of King Rama VI. Afterwards, *Nang Nai* (ladies-in-waiting) replaced them and shortly afterwards we became a democratic country. What's also fascinating for me is that these *Nay Nai* was honoured more highly than their female counterparts in the previous reigns. Moreover, dance, music and theatre masters in this reign were bestowed with prestigious titles like never before. By strong contrast, dance, music and theatre artists nowadays are frequently viewed with the *Ten Kin Ram Kin* ("dancing to make ends meet") attitude.

**Q:** Is that partly because performing arts, after the change to democracy, is under the supervision of a government agency, not the absolute monarch?

**A:** That's right and it's also because there's no longer direct relationship between the king—main patron of performing arts in addition to prolific playwright, director and actor—and his artists.

**Q:** Then, how do you turn this intriguing anecdote of our history into a stage performance?

**A:** I'm connecting it to the worldwide phenomenon of reality TV show in which contestants are being trained with various skills. For example, those in "The Voice Thailand" study how to sing different kinds of songs, and those in "The Comedian Thailand" study Thai country music singing, *Likay* (folk dance theatre) as well as *Khon*. And so I wonder what it would be like if we go through the similar kind of training to those of *Nay Nai* a century ago in the framework of reality TV show. Apart from camaraderie, there's, inevitably, a high level of competition among them. Reality TV contestants become winners purely subjectively by SMS votes, and that's not necessarily based on their skills. Likewise, the men-in-waiting were promoted by winning the heart of the sole jury, the king that is.

In the performance, I'm using two games played by *Nay Nai* to train physical strength and energy, as documented by Chanan in his book. And as I notice that their games focus more on physicality, I've added a game which trains the contestants intellectually. In the last game, we'll perform a play.

In these four games, I'm exploring four different types of their relationship—based on object, body, experience and spirit. To elaborate, in the first layer, if I say that the Eiffel Tower is beautiful, you'd understand how if you were there. For the body, it's from how your bodies share the same space or contact each other's. For the experience, it's our shared experience of, for example, getting into a fight with this certain group of people. Lastly, and the most complicated, is how they, after the previous three stages, create their own world—whether it's reality or not. And so we'll perform *Mit Thae* (literally, "True Friends"), King Rama VI's adaptation of Arnold Golsworthy and E.B. Norman's play *My Friend Jarlet*, but not in the spoken drama style the way it's written.

**Q:** Why did you particularly pick this play?

**A:** It's one of King Rama VI's favourite plays—he performed a lead female role Mary and even named his favourite dog "Jarlet", whose monument can be seen in his Sanam Chan Palace in Nakhon Pathom province, west of Bangkok. I think the tightly knitted relationship among *Nay Nai* is similar to that of the characters in this play. In their days, they had their own space, in which they engaged in social, political and cultural activities altogether, and this, in a sense, is like an imaginary world of theatre.

**Q:** And this is also like how contestants in some reality TV shows spend a few weeks or even months under the same roof—sharing bathrooms, bedrooms, swimming pools while competing with one another.

**A:** Exactly. And competition is always present in all these games and each audience member goes through his own thinking process and in the end gets to vote for his favourite, although he doesn't have to press any button or send an SMS.

**Q:** This subject matter is a very sensitive one in Singapore. Are you sure you won't get into any trouble?

**A:** We've closely followed the guidelines of the Singaporean government in making this performance suitable for all audiences. Of course, for those who have seen my company's works, you'd know that we will never stage just an entertaining game show. It has many different layers than what meets the eyes and each audience would view it with different lenses.

**Q:** How does *Nay Nai* fit into the repertoire of Pichet Klunchun Dance Company and how has it benefited the development of your company members?

**A:** It's a step forward for us, but it's not a clear development, in terms of dance techniques, as that in last year's *Tam Kai*. The significance lies in how we've been shaping



up this work, based on three aforementioned elements—the play *Mit Thae*, the book *Nay Nai Samai Ratchakan Thi Hok* and the reality TV show format. Usually, our company's works would fit in either dance or theatre framework, but *Nay Nai* doesn't.

**Q:** Does that mean the audience should read Chanan's book before watching your *Nay Nai*? The English translation is not yet available although I'm sure it's forthcoming.

**A:** That's not necessary. And even though those who've read the book will instantly recognise some characters, I think their relationship is more important. I'm more interested in how these male bodies went through different types of training. Because of this, we started our first month of rehearsal by inviting a Thai boxing trainer to our studio while we're, dramaturgically, exploring the issue of masculinity.

**Q:** Speaking of which, many young and beautiful women are now practicing Thai boxing in gyms despite the fact that historically they're barred from this ancient sport.

**A:** Yes, it's a major trend now. It helps them lose weight and firm their bodies. It's also an evidence that our society is more open.

**Q:** What else did you and your dancers train in preparation for *Nay Nai*?

**A:** After Thai boxing, we did wrestling, with more freedom than what we see in the actual competition, of course. We also practiced more classical Thai dance and spent much time in pole dancing.

**Q:** I know that pole dancing is no longer exclusively related to Patpong but I still can't see how it would fit into the context of *Nay Nai*.

**A:** We refer to pole dancing as *Ten Sao*, which is, interestingly enough, exactly the same as that of a physical training exercise for any Khon dancer and so we've adapted its

elements to fit our work. Plus, pole dancing works well here symbolically.

**Q:** Wouldn't the combination of Thai boxing, wrestling and pole dancing training affect your classical Thai dancer's body?

**A:** It does considerably and we're well aware of these changes in our bodies. However, we're no longer aiming at achieving the perfect body of a classical dancer. Instead, we want to perfect the way in which we lead our classical dance into sheer comprehension of something else in the contemporary milieu. Even one with the perfect body can lose it once he's away from practice for a few months. Also, I believe that if a contemporary dance artist restricts himself only to one form of dance, his body will develop a language that he will never be able to deconstruct.

**Q:** For the final part, you're also experimenting with computer technology—this is your first time. Can you elaborate how this fits into your production concept?

**A:** King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi professor Priyakorn Pusawiro, who's been watching our company's works for a few years, approached me with the idea as she used to apply her skills to many theatre productions during her graduate studies in Germany. I've already been interested in this technology for a few years, but haven't found any Thai scientists who've worked with artists. She then came on board as the computer engineering team leader.

We started by attaching the lighting censoring system to such a set prop as the four poles. Later, we pushed the envelope further by discussing the idea with the costume designer. The question is how we can create the world of theatre for this final part, with the absence of performance. The answer is that we have to create a fantastical—not realistic—world which is totally different from that of the audience. We've decided that our costumes be made of transparent plastic through which the

performers' bodies are visible then we line the small fluorescent light tubes along the structure of these costumes. The effect is like that of deep sea water fish, and that's clearly another world.

**Q:** Does this also affect your physical movements?

**A:** When we first rehearsed the play, we interpreted it the same way they did with spoken plays during the reign of King Rama VI, focusing on hand gestures which illustrate the dialogues. When we put on these plastic costumes, though, it's like we're mummified. And so I reconsidered the different techniques of dance, theatre as well as physical theatre, and, in order to create this unique world, tried to find a way that wouldn't fit into any of them.

What I did was, first, asking my dancers to physicalise each of their memorised dialogues into a set of movements. Then, I asked them to show me only one representative movement for each line, no matter how long, while speaking the line in mind and ridding any relevant emotions in their facial expressions. As a result, they're thinking, but without emotions; they're moving, but one movement has no relationship whatsoever to the next—they've become odd characters living in their unique world, similarly to that of those men-in-waiting.

This crazy idea of mine turned out to be a highly challenging task for our company whose most members were trained solely in dance, and never in theatre. Two cast members of *Nay Nai*, given such a direction, ended up like robots performing *tableaux vivants*. I suddenly realised that their classical Thai dance training has taken verbal communication skills out of them—in the classical performance they only listen to the songs and recitatives and their bodies respond accordingly. And so, tackling this has turned out to be another technical development for our dance company.

**Q:** Given its historical relevance, which makes it even more sensitive, would the staging of *Nay Nai* be possible in Thailand?

**A:** We recently had an open rehearsal of *Nay Nai* at our Chang Theatre. Audiences laughed their heads off from the beginning to the end and I think it's because of the high volume of physical comedy. For example, four mature adults like us engaging in a kid's game like *Ti Chap*—a wrestling-like game in which members of two teams try to capture members of the opposing team by crossing into the other zone while voicing "Ti" as long as we can in one breath—is truly hilarious. At first, though, some audiences were not sure how to take it—like I said, it's neither dance nor theatre.

Chanan was also there and he expressed his thanks, saying, "I'd been with these people for a few years and I'm very happy to see them come alive." Two other audiences voiced the same opinion, separately—that they felt much pity for these men-in-waiting. I concur: despite their high social status, they were restricted in their own world. I wish they had had more freedom, the same way their contemporary counterparts do.

Given the fact that each member of audience will always perceive this work differently, I'm sure that the actual production in Thailand is very possible.

*Pawit Mahasarinand is the president of the Thailand Center of International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC). He has taught theatre and film criticism at Chulalongkorn University since 1992, and written dance and theatre reviews for The Nation newspaper since 2001.*



# PICHET KLUNCHUN DANCE COMPANY



Pichet Klunchun Dance Company was founded by Pichet Klunchun, an independent solo dance artist and international choreographer who has expertise in Thai classical dance and contemporary dance.

Pichet bridges traditional Thai Classical Dance language with contemporary sensibility, while keeping the heart and wisdom of the convention. He trained in Thai Classical Mask Dance, Khon, from age 16 with Chaiyot Khummanee, one of the best Khon masters in Thailand. He has earned domestic notoriety for his efforts in contemporising khon. He has participated lately in several intercultural performing arts programmes as a Thai representative and as an international dancer-choreographer in Asia and Europe. Pichet has been collaborating with TheatreWorks since the late 1990s on various projects including *The Global Soul*, *Search: Hamlet* and the *Flying Circus Project*.

On 9 December 2008, Pichet received the 'Routes' ECF Princess Margriet Award for Cultural Diversity from the European Cultural Foundation. The purpose of the award is to honour artists and thinkers in

the field of cultural diversity for helping to combat fear and disrespect of 'the other'.

In 2012, Pichet received another award from the French Ministry of Culture "Chevalier of the French Arts and Literature Order" for his contribution to the influence of Culture in France, in Thailand and all over the world.

This year, Pichet was awarded the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Award by the Asian Cultural Council which focuses on cultural exchanges between the United States and Asian countries.

With his international working experiences and desire to establish a professional standard, Pichet founded Pichet Klunchun Dance Company to create pure art performance and to train a number of young blood professional dancers with strong Thai classical dance backgrounds.

Since 2008, Pichet Klunchun Dance Company has continuously presented its work in world-class dance festival in America, Europe and Asia with previous productions such as *Nijinsky Siam*, *Chui Chai*, *Black and White* and *Tam Kai*.

# DANCERS & CREATIVE TEAM

## Sunon Wachirawarakarn

### Dancer

Sunon Wachirawarakarn has BA in Communication Arts. He has been working in theatre since graduation. He started training as a dancer with Pichet Klunchun since 2004 and is one of the main dancers of the company's group performances of *Chui Chai*, *Nijinsky Siam*, *Black and White* and *Tam Kai*. He has been touring with the company to Europe, America and Asia. In 2011, Sunon received a scholarship from the Asia Cultural Council to spend 6 months in USA for cultural exposure. After returning home in 2012, he presented his first solo piece *Home* at Chang Theatre.

## Porramet Maneerat, Padung Jumpan

### Dancers

Porramet and Padung have been working with Pichet Klunchun Dance Company as full time dancers since 2010. They are both main dancers of the company's group performances *Chui Chai*, *Nijinsky Siam*, *Black and White* and *Tam Kai*. They have been touring with the company in Europe, America and Asia until now.

## Orada Lelanuj

### Dramaturg

Orada received her BA in Communication and Theatre from St. Olaf College, her MA in Theatre Arts from Miami University, and her PhD in Fine Arts from Texas Tech University, USA. A playwright, actor, dramaturg and producer, Orada is an active member of Bangkok-based theatre company Crescent Moon Theatre. She is also a part-time university professor and a literary translator.

## Alberta Wileo

### Lighting Designer

Alberta began his design work in 2002 for a LASALLE dance graduation show when he was still a student at LASALLE College of the Arts majoring in Technical Theatre.

Alberta has designed for many professional performing companies in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, India and the USA. He is also the permanent designer for the Indonesian Arts Festival 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from 2003 to 2013, supported by the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore. His last design with TheatreWorks was for *Four Plays: ABCD* in 2013.

## Piyaporn Bhongse-tong

### Costume Designer

Piyaporn Bhongse-tong graduated from Dramatic Arts, Chulalongkorn University and continued her study at London College of Fashion before starting her career as a fashion designer for Flynowiii, a Thai fashion brand. She had also worked as a costume designer in a few collaboration projects and had a chance to design for the female leading role in *Black and White* by Pichet Klunchun. She is currently working as a head designer at Flynowiii and continues exploring the relation between fashion, arts and performance.

## ESIC Lab (EDUTAINMENT & SOCIO-INTERACTION COMPUTING Lab)

Led by Dr Priyakorn Pusawiro and Dr Jaturon Harnsomburana at the Computer Engineering Department, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand, ESIC has been created in response to design the embedded system, digital media technologies and interactive software into museum, exhibition, stage performance and dramatisation.

The ESIC researchers - Touchai, Waranthorn, Tossawat, Warawat - aim to develop the digital technologies and hardware-software co-design in the form of electronic signals, basic circuit, sensors, micro-controllers and Human Computer Interaction. The team explores how interactive computing can enable new forms of interactivity and Physical Computing between digital media and human beings, in particular Arts and Sciences applications.

# CREDITS

<b>Choreographer/Director</b>	Pichet Klunchun
<b>Performers</b>	Pichet Klunchun, Sunon Wachirawarakarn, Porramet Maneerat, Padung Jumpan
<b>Dramaturg</b>	Orada Lelanuj
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Alberta Wileo
<b>Costume Designer</b>	Piyaporn Bhongse-tong
<b>Producers</b>	Tay Tong, Sojirat Singholka
<b>Production Managers</b>	Grace Low, Wayla Amatathamachad
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Victoria Lim
<b>Lighting Operator</b>	Ian Tan
<b>Sound Operator</b>	Aldon Chua
<b>Staging and Lighting</b>	Stevie Kwek, Wang Xiangbin, Fairi, Zul Awab
<b>Publicity / Ticketing</b>	Mervyn Quek
<b>Engagement</b>	Brendan Tan
<b>Administrator</b>	Ong Soomei
<b>Additional Crew</b>	Celestine Wong, Greg Swyny, Hyder Abiden, Izaak, Lee Kong-Shen, Mohd Anuar

**Computer Engineer (for costumes and props)**  
Edutainment & Socio-Interaction Computing (ESIC) LAB Computer Engineering Department  
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi Thailand, <http://esic.cpe.kmutt.ac.th>

<b>Team Leader</b>	Dr. Priyakorn Pusawiro
<b>Programming Consultant</b>	Dr. Jaturon Harnsomburana
<b>Electronics Consultant</b>	Asst. Prof. Surapont Toomnark
<b>Design Engineer</b>	Touchai Thawai, Waranthorn Khayanying
<b>Computer Engineer</b>	Tossawat Mokdara
<b>Programmer</b>	Warrawat Kajitwitshayanukul
<b>Developer</b>	Apiwat Rungsawangasukon and Students of class CPE352/454/673 Interactive Computing and its Application in Arts and Sciences

Special thanks to Chaninart Sangrawee for the creation of the 2D animation video

## Songs used in *Nay Nai*

*Loke Nee Kue Lakorn* (karaoke reading) translating to *All the world's a stage*

<b>Music/Lyrics</b>	Paiboon Budkhun
<b>Singer</b>	Suthep Wongkamhaeng (singing version)
<b>Piano</b>	Kantakan Sankhavanija (piano version)

<i>Up Up Up</i>	Kittipong Tamsuay KAZZ
-----------------	------------------------



# FROM IDENTITY TO MONDIALISATION: THEATREWORKS 25



*From Identity To Mondialisation: TheatreWorks 25*, celebrates TheatreWorks and offers a glimpse into the journey that Singapore's longest established theatre company has taken since it was set up in 1985. This very first edition showcases stunning visual history of the company, featuring photography from many of TheatreWorks' groundbreaking performances and quotes and anecdotes from members of the company, past and present.

The 300-page book focuses on the company's approach into worlds-creating with friends all over the world, beyond cultural and ethnic identity. As opposed to globalization (one world), the company has preferred an approach of multiplicity and plurality.

It attempts to journey beyond identity politics and nationalisation into open spaces of idealism. The art of TheatreWorks continues to prioritise an expanding process of human relationships rather than the unitotality of globalisation.

*From Identity To Mondialisation: TheatreWorks 25* is now retailing at S\$90 at the following:

- Books Kinokuniya
- Times The Bookshop
- Select Books
- 72-11 Mohamed Sultan Road,  
home of TheatreWorks

To purchase a copy, contact us at [tworks@singnet.com.sg](mailto:tworks@singnet.com.sg)

# COMING UP...

**THEATREWORKS**  
presents



Retrospective by Xavier Le Roy

## ► **Retrospective** by Xavier Le Roy

In collaboration with Aaron Khek, Bernice Lee, Chan Sze Wei, Joavien Ng, Kai Eng, Loo Zihan, Max Chen, Melinda Lee, Mohd Fared Jainal, Norisham Osman, Scarlet Yu, Wiing Liu

*Retrospective* is a dance performance created by French dancer / choreographer, Xavier Le Roy, together with 12 Singaporean dance-makers. Working with Singaporean dance-makers to create each of their own narratives, Xavier develops choreographies that explore how we use, consume and produce time.

**25 July – 2 August 2014**  
(no performance on 28 July 2014)  
2 – 9pm, 72-13

Tickets from \$15

Tickets are available through  
[retrospective.peatix.com](http://retrospective.peatix.com)

## ► **SoftMachine** by Choy Ka Fai

*SoftMachine* investigates the contemporary status of dance through a research that spans across Asia. The research inspires a new series of choreographic experiments and creations.

From 2012, Choy Ka Fai travelled to 13 cities in 5 countries to meet and interview

Asian contemporary dance-makers. Through these encounters, he has collected an independent archive of video interviews with 88 choreographers, dancers and curators.

After three years of research, experiments and documentation, *SoftMachine* will present a series of 4 documentary performances in collaboration with Rianto (Indonesia), Surjit Nongmeikapam (India), Xiao Ke x Zi Han (China) and Yuya Tsukahara (Japan).

This performance series is an intimate collaboration with the individual choreographer, where from our individual point of views; interprets and speculates about the choreographic minds of the present future.

**29 October – 1 November 2014, 72-13**  
Tickets from \$15, on sale from  
1 September 2014



SoftMachine by Choy Ka Fai

#### TheatreWorks Board of Directors

Caroline Lim  
Heman Chong  
Justin Hill  
Kalyani Kausikan  
Lim Kay Tong  
Monica Alsagoff  
Ong Keng Sen  
Sharon Lim (Chairperson)  
Stephane Benoist  
Tay Tong

#### TheatreWorks Team

**Artistic Director (on leave of absence):**  
Ong Keng Sen  
**Managing Director:** Tay Tong  
**Project Manager:** Mervyn Quek  
**Engagement Executive:** Brendan Tan  
**Project Executive:** Lyra Tan  
**Administrator:** Ong Soo Mei  
**Finance & Accounts:** Rosalyn Zaldua  
**Engagement Interns:**  
Brendan Ong, Cara Ann Lee  
**Production Intern:** Natalie Lim  
**Project Intern:** Clarice Handoko  
**TheatreWorks Ambassador Coordinator:**  
Sara Lee

TheatreWorks is a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant for the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2016.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

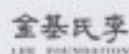
With Support From



New Media Partner



Engagement Programme  
Patrons



Kuo Pao Kun  
Foundation

a.r.t.s.fund

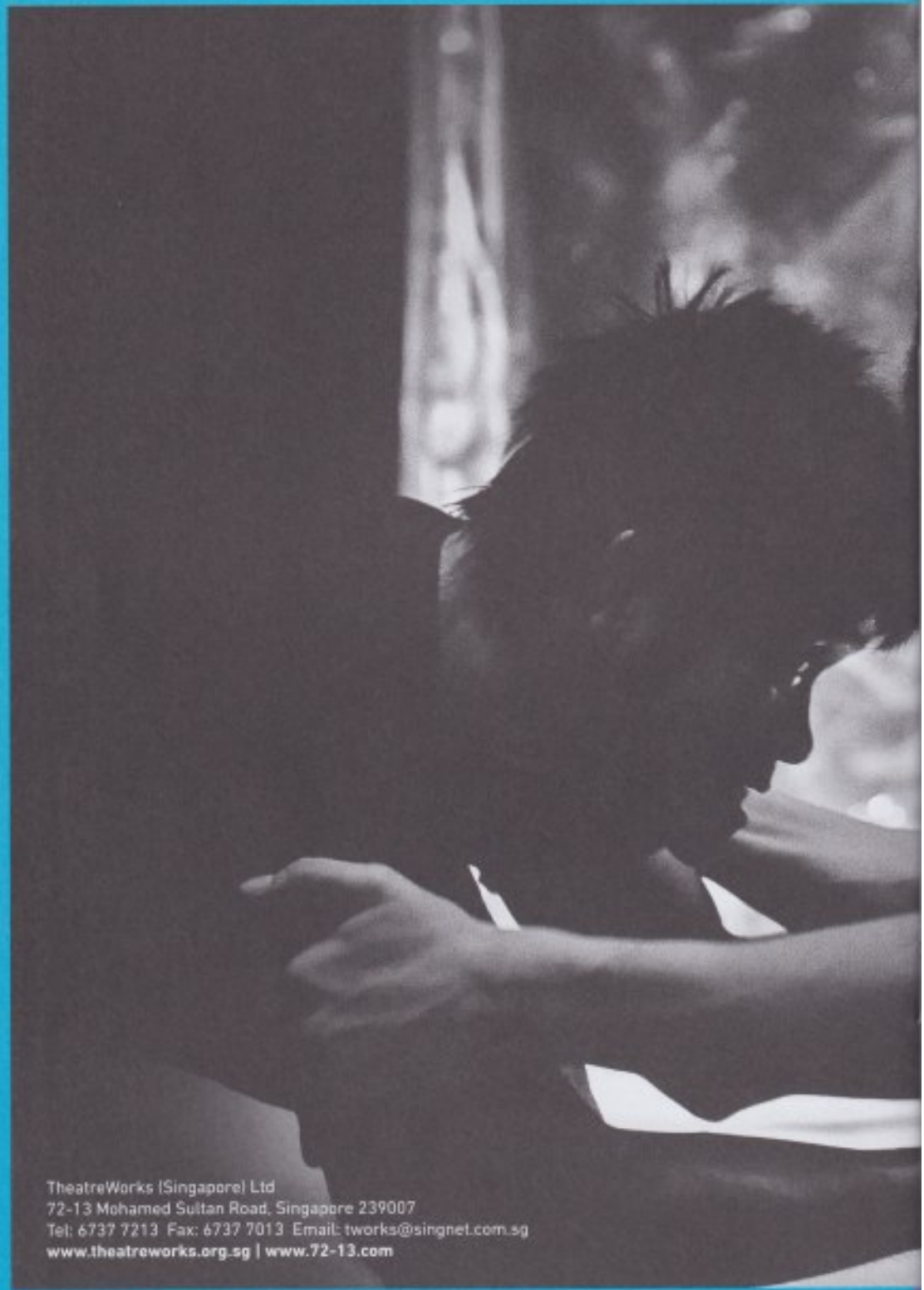
TheatreWorks would like to thank the following:

- Members of the press and the media
- All volunteers and those who have made *Nay Nai* possible



Like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/theatreworks.sg>





TheatreWorks (Singapore) Ltd  
72-13 Mohamed Sultan Road, Singapore 239007  
Tel: 6737 7213 Fax: 6737 7013 Email: [tworks@singnet.com.sg](mailto:tworks@singnet.com.sg)  
[www.theatreworks.org.sg](http://www.theatreworks.org.sg) | [www.72-13.com](http://www.72-13.com)