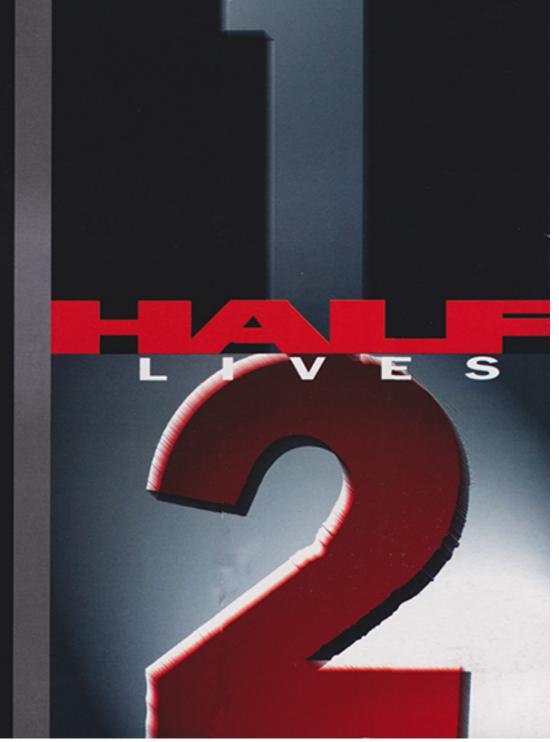
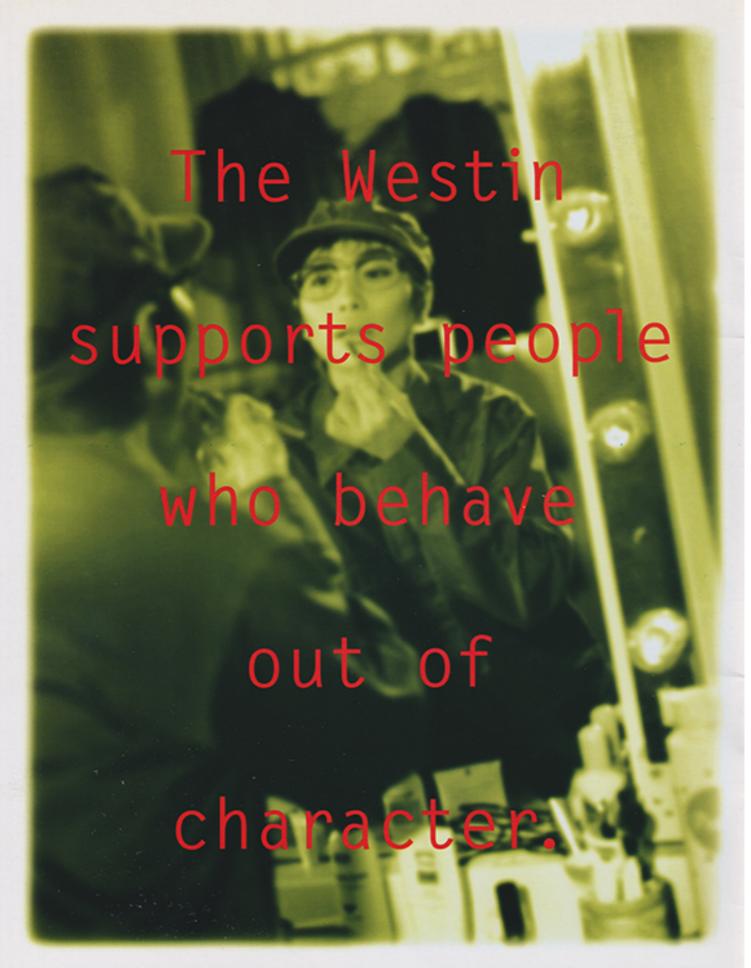
presents the asian premiere of a new play by chay yew. directed by lim kay siu december 4-14 1997 the drama centr





Bankers, doctors, lawyers. It seems that everyone prefers to act these days. And no one gives them more of a chance than TheatreWorks. And of course, The Westin. This year sees TheatreWorks' most ambitious projects take centrestage. Here at The Westin, we're



happy to lend our support to productions like "Workhorse Afloat", "Lao Jiu" and a watershed collaboration between Singapore and Japan with "Lear". In fact, as a Patron of the Arts for the 6th year running, you could say we positively encourage such schizophrenic behaviour.

THE PRODUCTION LIST

Written by Chay Yew

Directed By Lim Kay Siu Lim Kay Siu as Man Neo Swee Lin as Woman Wong Phin Wei as Son

Ryun Yu as Guy

Lighting Designer Kuo Jian Hong

Sound Designer Tan Choon Ping

Assistant Director/ Costume Stylist Jeremiah Choy

Publicity Flyer/ Poster Design Work Advertising

> Programme Design Eugene Tan

Artistic Director Ong Keng Sen

> General Manager Tay Tong

Business Manager/ Administrator Michele Lim

Publicity/ Print Executives Leslie Lee Su-Lin Ngiam Technical Manager Tay Huey Meng

Stage Managers Jean Yue Ian Tan

Production Assistants Elvan Ong Valerie Oliverio

Lighting Operator Valerie Oliverio

Sound Operator Mervyn Quek

Stage Crew Jacky Heng Annabelle Ling Dennis Tan

Half Lives was originally produced by East West Players, Los Angeles, California, Tim Dang, Artistic Director

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PLAYWRIGHT'S MESSAGE









"The genesis of my career in theatre unwittingly began when I was a roly-poly child, dressed in striped pajamas, watching the wayang in the local pasar malam with my grandmother. There, between my rapid jaunts back stage to watch actors painting their faces and musicians playing their instruments, I stood bedazzled by the death-defying somersaults, breathtaking sword plays, and the mesmerising renditions of arias by the opera stars. There, this wide-eyed child was immediately transported to a different world in a different space and time, while still fiercely clutching onto his grandmother's warm hands. Later, my theatrical world would further blossom with my mother's frequent company to the Cathay Theatre for the glorious Technicolor revivals of Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals.

Stories were also regaled theatrically in the noisy classrooms of Anglo Chinese School. There, a world of complex humanity and morality, a world of colourful histories and stories, were passionately painted by a slew of dedicated teachers. Mrs Margaret Ng, Mrs Evelyn Wee, Mrs Ronnie Goh, Miss Christina Cheong, one by one, opened a magical door beyond the classroom, paved by the fiery emotions and soliloquies of William Shakespeare, the muscular witticisms and words of Oscar Wilde, the simple and unforgettable comedies of Sunday Costs Five Pesos or Abu Hassan Pays His Debts; all brought to stirring life in the school's Drama Festivals or the Teachers' Day celebrations, thrilling and enlightening teen audiences and setting fire to their vivid imaginations. It was in that school that I would meet Mr Ong Keng Sen who would later be my collaborator, my fellow artist, and friend. (This school would borne another alumnus critical to my career, Glen Goei, who directed and produced my play, Porcelain, that was given a run at London's Royal Court Theatre.)

My first play writing assignment was given to me by TheatreWorks through the sheer faith, belief and commitment of directors, Mr Lim Slauw Chong and Mr Ong. This theatre commissioned and produced my first play, As If He Hears, and gave me the necessary confidence and encouragement to persevere in a career in performance arts. This was a gift I would never forget nor ever repay.

Years and several plays later, TheatreWorks would once again play in an integral moment of my career. That was my play, A Language Of Their Own, that was presented at the New York Shakespeare Festival by one of the most prestigious theatre companies in the United States; the play was directed by Mr Ong. Despite the play's critical success and enthusiastic audience reception, the only lasting image of that production I have is of Mr Ong and I standing outside the theatre, two men who have come a long way from the stages of Anglo-Chinese School and its countless Drama Festivals, and the numerous late night rehearsals at TheatreWorks. We stood there in a cold spring morning, thinking, "We're here, we're finally here."

We wouldn't have been there if not for the wayangs, the school's drama festivals, and the Singapore theatre companies that ignited in us our passions for the theatre. Therefore, let me urge you to help us fuel the creative fires of our emerging and established local playwrights, directors and actors by continuing the tradition of supporting our local theatres. Let our Singaporean stories, unique and familiar, be told, again and again, through drama, music, dance and performance. Let our expressions, feelings and voices be heard, not only in Singapore but beyond. Let our local artists' talents take full flight by encouraging and supporting them. Let our theatres be filled and echo the wondrous words and songs of our myriad Singapore lives. Let our children celebrate the rich and varied histories of our diverse peoples, and imagine the impossible dreams of our future. Let us reflect, represent and preserve our funny, sad, daring and exciting stories on stage for our children and parents. If you don't, the consequence will be silence.



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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE





"Working with Chay Yew has been challenging and infuriating. My last project with him was at The New York Shakespeare Festival/ Joseph Papp Public Theatre. The image of him at his computer generating new drafts of scenes while I was rehearsing – this can be daunting to any director! My other memories of him negate that – warm toasty discussions in late night cafes about the work A Language of Their Own. Chay is a playwright who gets involved down to the discussion with set designer, talks about the lights and even the colour of the costume! I remember numerous meetings where we were summoned to George Wolfe's (the Artistic Director of The Public) office like school kids summoned to the Principal's room. Press angles, music composition meetings – Chay was everywhere. The actors which included the Hollywood actor BD Wong soon got used to us as the pair of evil twins who did everything in concert.

This continues on to Half Lives. I remember the seaside hotel where Half Lives was written. I was reaching the end of my stint in the United States, visiting Los Angeles from New York. I remember Chay taking walks by the sea to be inspired. I remember tar pits in the centre of LA and Chay explaining the initial plot of the play to me. I can still hear the sounds of the ocean as we sat on the terrace discussing Hollywood and Hotel New World, the building that collapsed in Singapore.

The telephone calls that we had to discuss the script were endless. In particular we were very concerned about the father's psychological journey in the play. Why did he....do the things that he did? But what is particularly exciting about this draft in Singapore is the addition of the narrator Guy. Like spontaneous combustion, both Chay and I thought of similar devices. I felt that the play needed more of a film device to play out some of the woman's fantasies which Chay had begun with. Chay wanted to work on the humour element of the play. So Guy was born.

When Chay and Kay Siu agreed to collaborate together, I was glad. The combination of experienced playwright and new director has in the past led to exciting results. I hope this evening will be no different. Kay Siu has been the Artistic Associate of TheatreWorks for 1997 and it is fitting that he closes his time with us with this production.

Finally I would like to welcome Chay Yew home to Singapore with this production. Artists are not always embraced by their countries. We have not been able to see many of Chay's works in Singapore. Perhaps this would change with time. I remember a recent gathering of intellectuals for the ASEAN-Japan Multinational Cultural Mission where it was said that the best South East Asian artists are working more and more overseas, in America, in Europe, Australia and Japan. Let's treasure our artists more as we move into 2000 and beyond. There aren't that many around in Singapore."

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE











"The term 'Half Lives' conjures up for me images of living half a life in the light and half in the shadows; half in reality and half in fantasy; living in between honour and compromise; being on the boderline of faith and despair; living in mundanity between success and failure; achieving a dream and finding it empty; conflicts of love and individuality; dreams and compromise.

Identity – the image that we all have in our minds of ourselves, and how we struggle to achieve or maintain that.

How do we go about constructing full lives?

Chay Yew's play Half Lives looks at these issues through the story of one family: an Asian American father, a Singaporean mother, and their son, born in America. The play weaves their three stories through a narrative of a film presentation, made by an Asian American young man.

The complexities of issues, character and family are all in the writing, and I hope we have managed to tell it clearly, and in an interesting way.

In the play, every character faces many moments that lead to the decision to make a compromise. For myself, after my brother could not play the father; after we tried to cast the part in Singapore, America and England; the moment came when I was faced with the decision to act as the father as well as direct the play.

I would like to thank my fellow actors: Phin, my wife Swee Lin, and Ryun for working so creatively. Also Jeremiah, who designed the costumes and helped me so much in visualising the play; and Alec who provided much needed constructive feedback in our early rehearsals — since I am also acting in this production.

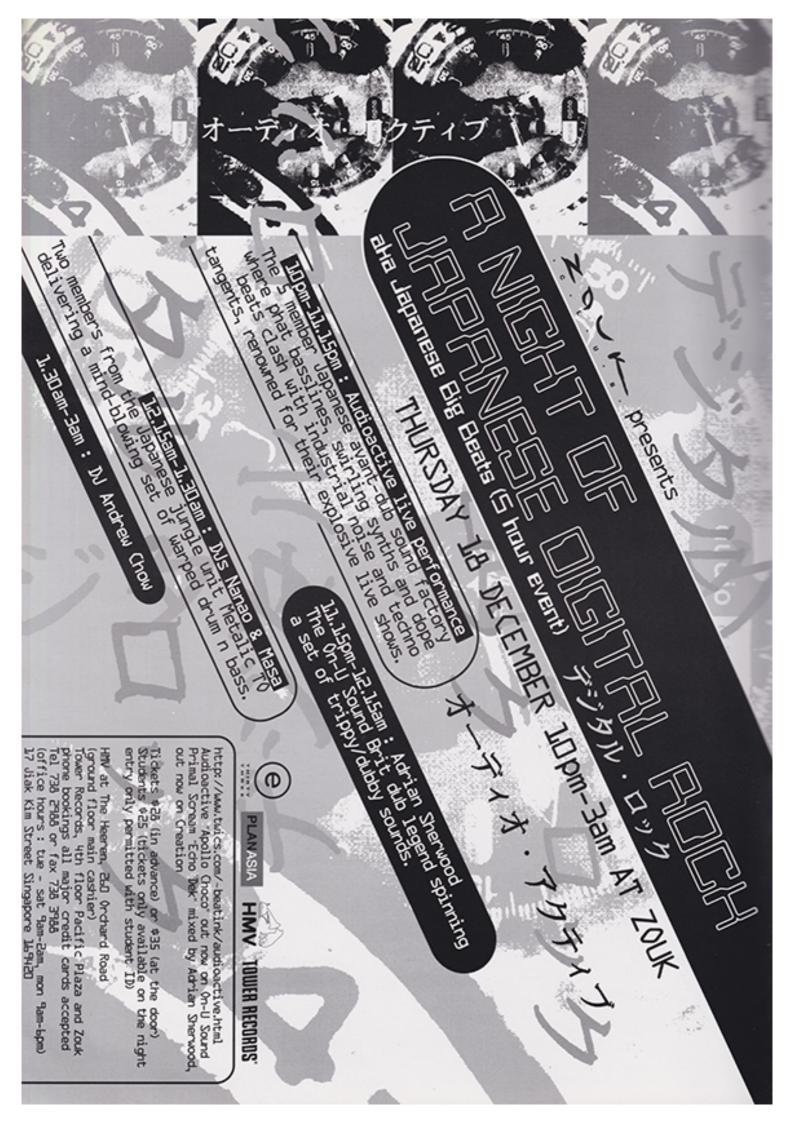
Thanks also to TT, Meng, Leslie, Justin and Jian Hong who provided their expertise so

expertly and decisively. And last but not least, Jean and Ian, stage managers who have had to direct

and act too!"

Lim Kay Siu

November 1997



ABOUT ONG KENG SEN

Ong Keng Sen's interest in intercultural and interdisciplinary work has resulted in the first Asian laboratory focusing on Southeast Asian traditional and contemporary artists. This research and development project was established in 1996 to explore Asian traditional arts progressing into the new millenium. In particular, Keng Sen is interested in the cultural negotiation which exist at frontiers of such performance work. This resulted in the six-country cutting-edge production of Lear which premiered in Tokyo in September 1997. This production was lauded by critics and audience in its 12-performance run for its juxtaposition of many different cultures and traditions into a contemporary performance which "harnessed and harmonised contrasting theatrical styles yet retaining each of their special characteristics". Presently, Keng Sen has started research on the next Laboratory for 1998. This will focus on India, Korea and Myanmar.

Keng Sen works often with oral interviews from archives. He creates a piece from scratch through ground research, working hand in hand with a writer. He studied extensively Southeast Asian and Asian performance in post-graduate studies in New York University. His thesis was in reconnection and rejuvination of self, identity and contemporary performance from deep involvement with tradition. Since 1993, all his projects have been collaborations with librettist, musicians, choreographers and film makers, often from other cultures and countries. His work has primarily been in the field of epic performance through the fusion of many artforms.

ABOUT CHAY YEW

Some of playwright Chay Yew's plays include Porcelain (London Fringe Award for Best Play), A Language Of Their Own (George and Elisabeth Marton Playwriting Award, GLADD Media Award for Best Play), Half Lives and As If He Hears.

He recently adapted and directed *The Courage To Stand Alone*, letters taken from the Chinese political dissident Wei Jingsheng, for the Mark Taper Forum. His plays have been presented at the New York Shakespeare Festival, Royal Court Theatre (London), Studio Theatre, Intiman Theatre, East West Players, The Group Theatre, Dallas Theatre Center and TheatreWorks (Singapore), amongst others.

Next year, his new plays, A Beautiful Country will be produced by Cornerstone Theatre in Los Angeles, and Red will be presented by Intiman Theatre in Seattle and the Manhattan Theatre Club. He is presently working on an adaptation of Jenni Livingston's documentary film, Paris Is Burning, for En Garde Arts and New York Shakespeare Festival. He is also working on a children's book, The Black Crow, with illustrator Christopher Komuro. Chay Yew's work has recently been published by Grove Atlantic.

As a director, his last production was Two At The Too with Alec Mapa and Sandra Tsing Loh at Taper, Too. His next directing projects are Closet Land by Radha Bharadwaj and Big Hunk O' Burnin' Love by Prince Gomolvilas, both at East West Players, and an international collaboration entitled Home at Northwest Asian American Theatre in Seattle. A member of New Dramatists and the Dramatists Guild, Chay Yew is also the Director of the Asian Theatre Workshop at the Taper, and the Resident Director of East West Players.

ABOUT LIM KAY SIU

Kay Siu made his debut as TheatreWorks' Artistic Associate with Ballroom Dancing (which he also wrote) in March 1997. Since then, he has also acted in Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror (May) and Lao Jiu (July).

Since appearing in one of TheatreWorks' first productions, Fanshen in 1985, Kay Siu has appeared in many memorable TheatreWorks plays. These include the first run of Army Daze (1986), The Maids (1986), The Elephant Man (1986), the first production of Beauty World (1988), To My Heart With Smiles (1989), Mad Forest (1990), Fried Rice Paradise (1990), Scorpion Orchid (1993) and the first production of Lao Jiu in 1993, which was also invited to the 42nd Festival of Perth in Western Australia in 1994.

Thereafter, Kay Siu enrolled in a one-year course in Directing at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. It was in London that Kay Siu directed the award-winning *The Journey West*, a play written and starring Ivan Heng. The play won the Critic's Choice Award in Time Out Magazine and has toured Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong.

THE FLYING CIRCUS PROJECT

In 1996, TheatreWorks' Artistic Director, Ong Keng Sen successfully launched The Flying Circus Project. As part of the New Asia drive, Ong established a seven-year research and performance programme to take traditional Asian artforms into the 21st century. This would mean cultural preservation in an enlightened manner through the reinvention of tradition. Tradition and modernity is part of a continuum rather than two separate dichotomies.

The Flying Circus Project demonstrates the innovation and confidence of Asian artists who harness skills and artistry of the region into a new artform to welcome the next millennium. The Flying Circus Project nurtures an Asian world view but at the same time maintains the many different identities of the diverse Asian cultures. The search for a New Asia on stage is the search for a complex harmony which thrives on difference: different traditions, different languages, different aesthetics, different culture.

Ilustration by Vincent Leow When land bound animals begin to fly Reaching for the unknown As unexpected transformation **Rooted but Free** The same animal but different Man's quest for flight continues Circus The antithesis of museum Raw, exciting, dizzying, robust Dangerous, magic The sacred and the profane co-exist Theatre of the people Hanuman, monkey, leaps into flight"

Taking Asian Arts Into The Next Millennium. The Search for New Asia On Stage. Leading Asian Creativity.

1996 Southeast Asian Laboratory

The first year of the project saw over fifty masters in traditional arts and practitioners of modern dance, theatre and music coming together to share their skills and experiences in their individual fields. These masters and practitioners were personally handpicked and chosen by Ong from countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore. A Japanese Noh master and Beijing opera artist from China were also invited to conduct workshops. A total of 232 workshops and classes were conducted over a period of six weeks from November to December 1996.

1997_{ear}

1997 saw the staging of the critically acclaimed Lear, directed by Ong Keng Sen and written by Rio Kishida. The reinvention of Shakespeare's King Lear focused on Lear's daughter, patriarchy and the tension between new and old Asia. Lear was staged in Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka over a period of 3 weeks, playing a total of 12 performances. Lear was produced by the Japan Foundation Asia Centre, which also partially funded the first year of The Flying Circus Project. Lear received favourable reviews from the critics and theatre practitioners from Japan and Asia.

1998 Japan, India, Myanmar, Korea, Singapore

In 1998, The Flying Circus Project will focus on

- The learning of traditional skills in music, dance and theatre from traditional masters.
- 2. The reinvention into contemporary performance.

The 1998 programme which will be held from mid November to mid December, will bring together 50 masters/performers/participants from Japan, India, Myanmar, Korea and Singapore for workshops and classes. The performers will be encouraged to develop creative strategies and to regenerate traditional arts in contemporary performances.

In conjunction with the Research and Development, TheatreWorks will present a Festival of Performances by master artists. The Festival by Masters from India, Korea and Myanmar in Fort Canning Park will be curated by Ong Keng Sen.

1999 Othello

It is intended that the six weeks from 1998 will build a common vision which will result in the production of an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othella* in 1999. At the moment, Othello will be performed by an Indian traditional performer in Kathakali, Kuttiyatum of Chhau, lago by a Japanese Noh actor Desdemona by a Korean performer and music from Myanmar. Ideally, certain scenes will be echoed with traditional Burmese string puppets.

2000 And Beyond

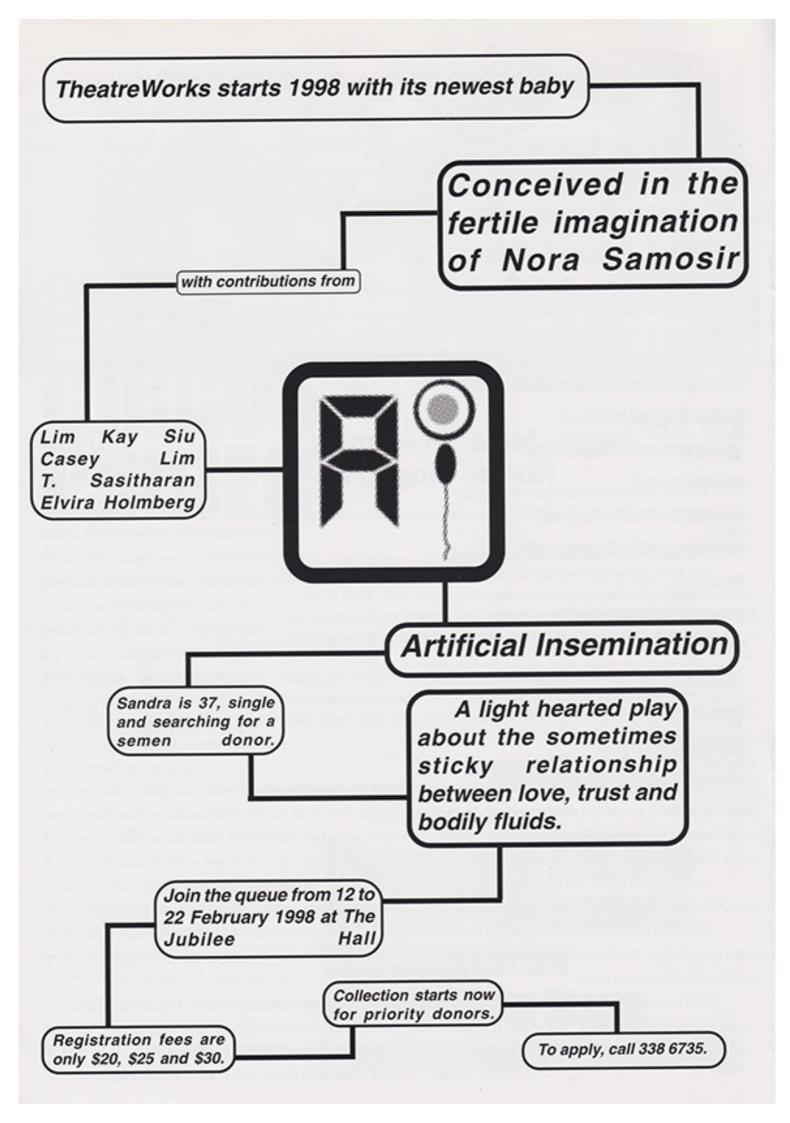
TheatreWorks plans to embark on the third and final phase of *The Flying Circus Project* in the year 2000, with a Laboratory gathering the finest artists and performers from the Phillipines, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet and Papua New Guinea. This will be followed by a production of *Julius Caesar* in 2001. The entire project will culminate in 2002 with a presentation of the three plays as *The Asian Shakespeare Trilogy*, heralding a new age in cross-cultural Asian theatre

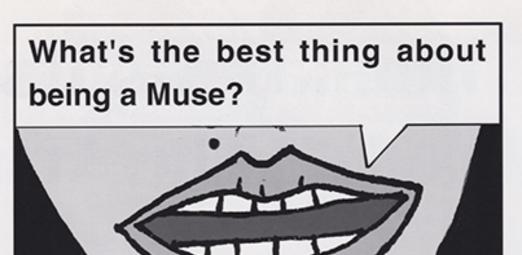
As the project grows, the productions will be available for touring. For example, Lear could tour in 1998, and in the year 2000, both Lear and Othello will be available for touring. Similarly, selected artists from earlier Labs will be invited back

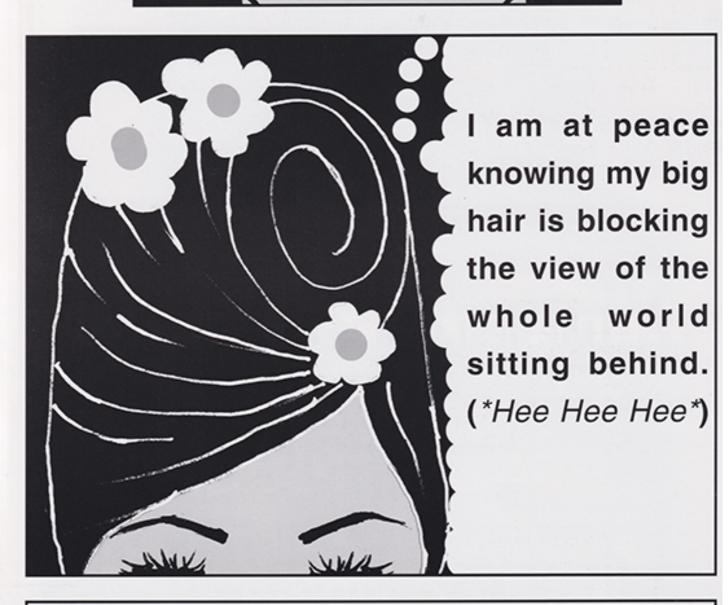
The Flying Circus Project is unique and powerful in that it is purely on intra-Asian exchange. It is from a completely
Asian perspective. Furthermore, the reinvention of tradition into the contemporary focuses on the living, organic nature or
tradition in relation to the times.

With this mission in mind, TheatreWorks is presently looking for enlightened corporations to support this project on a year-to-year or long term basis. The project will give corporations around-the-world mileage for their sponsorship. For more information on how you can help, please call TheatreWorks' General Manager, Tay Tong at 338 4077.

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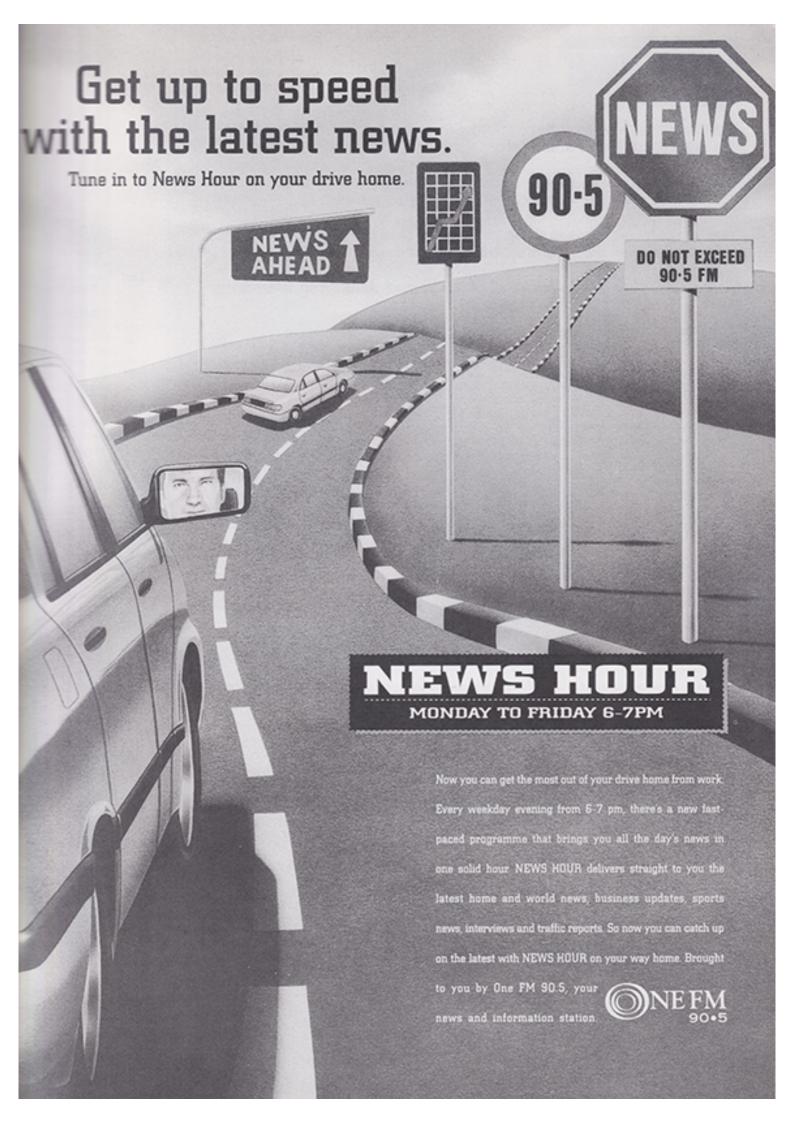
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TheatreWorks is an independent Singaporean theatre company which develops and nurtures professional theatre skills.

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 by and dedicated to sharing The Magic Of Theatre.

TheatreWorks (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 unconventional approach.

TheatreWorks has produced critically acclaimed works 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. 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 play was awarded the Critics Award for Best Acting and was nominated as one of the Best Productions in the Festival.

With a varied programme, TheatreWorks' repertoire spans from popular entertainment plays like Beauty World, Private Parts and Lao Jiu 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 now forging a new path with their new, cutting edge 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 pioneering 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 productions and student attachment programmes.

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 for the 21st century. The first phase of this seven-year project was devoted to Southeast Asian traditional arts. It brought together fifty artists from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan. The second phase of the Project will be held in 1998.

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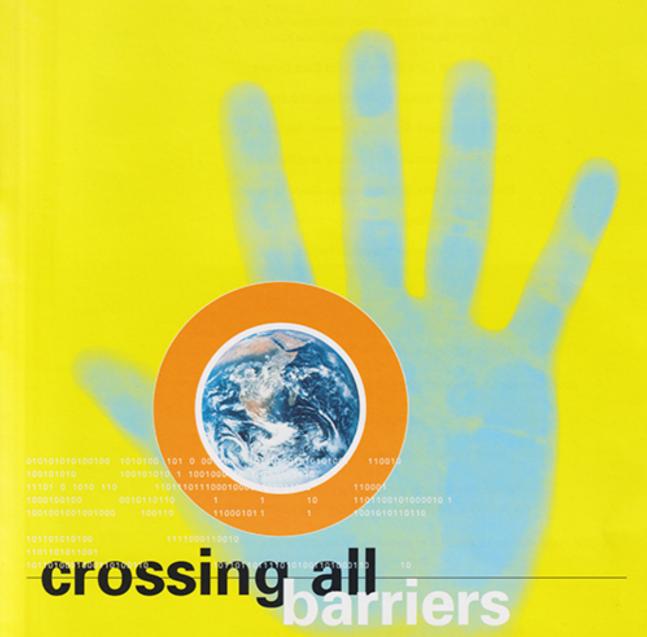
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