

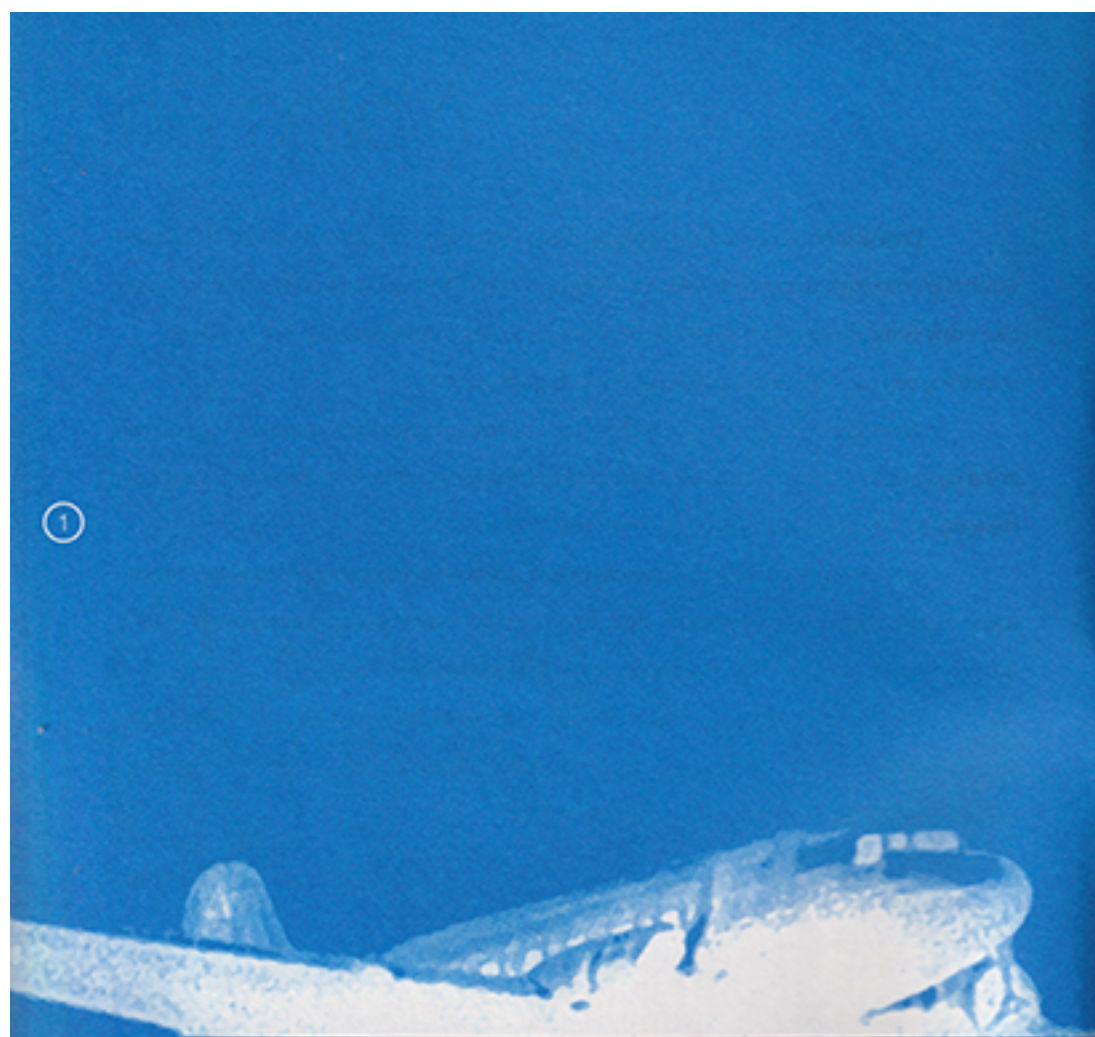
THEATREWORKS
P R E S E N T S

MEEINIA AND ME

CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY
spell #7

RESIDENT ARTIST OF TheatreWorks '98
3-6, 10-13, 17-20 MARCH '98
THE BLACK BOX

R(18)





Notes on *Meena and Me*

Original prints of classic Indian films are hard to come by in Singapore. Our copy of *Pakeezah*, which is an important presence in *Meena and Me* is a bootleg from Dubai of predictably poor quality. Like many pirate copies which are filmed off a cinema screen, people are cut in half or look at something you can't see and subtitles begin and end 'off-screen'.

When transcribing text from the film, our task was to make sense of the half lines we had. In the performance, this translates into highly dramatic speech of rather indeterminate grammar and meaning. At the same time, we wouldn't have it any other way.

This sense of 'not getting the whole picture', of working at the margins to fill the gaps is a kind of metaphor for the performance itself. For us, it is about dramatising our responses to the film and the culture in which it is embedded, rather than the film itself.


For you, the audience, maybe that's a tip. Don't try to 'get the whole picture'. In this age of reproduction, translation and cross-cultural complexity, there is no 'original print'.

Just sit back, relax and have a pleasant flight.

Paul Roe and Kaylene Tan

Directors

Spell#7



Associate Artistic Director, TheatreWorks
message

It is always exciting when young groups take artistic challenges to experiment with new techniques, push the limits of convention, and who have the confidence to just go and do it. It is even more so to be with such a group. We are truly happy to have on board spell#7 as our resident artist for 1999.

Casey Lim

spell#7
message

Our past shows have been hasty pieces created out of Paul's living room - it was a great learning experience, but there is only so much you can do when your resources are limited. When Keng Son asked us to be Resident Artists at Theatreworks, we jumped at the opportunity. Since our residency in January, we've grown from a two-person show without a home to one with administrative, technical support and space to think and create. So, thanks Theatreworks.



Written, directed & designed by spel#7: Kaylene Tan & Paul Rae

Performed by Kumar
Janice Koh
Karl Suriya
Netty Montenegro
Enlai Chua as Help

Music Azmy Hassan
Heder Ariffin

Lighting Dorothy Png

Choreography Clare Norton

Puppets Jeremy Hiah

Stage Manager Keef Siew
Asst. Stage Manager Joyce Yao

Production Manager Jodie Koh

Publicity photographs Georges Cardona

Graphics & Publicity design Hanin Zainomum

Thanks Anéres (Singapore) Pte Ltd
Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital
Ben Davies
Boom Boom Room
Ian Tan
Royal Thai Indian Restaurant
Stephen Hazell and NIE
The Substation

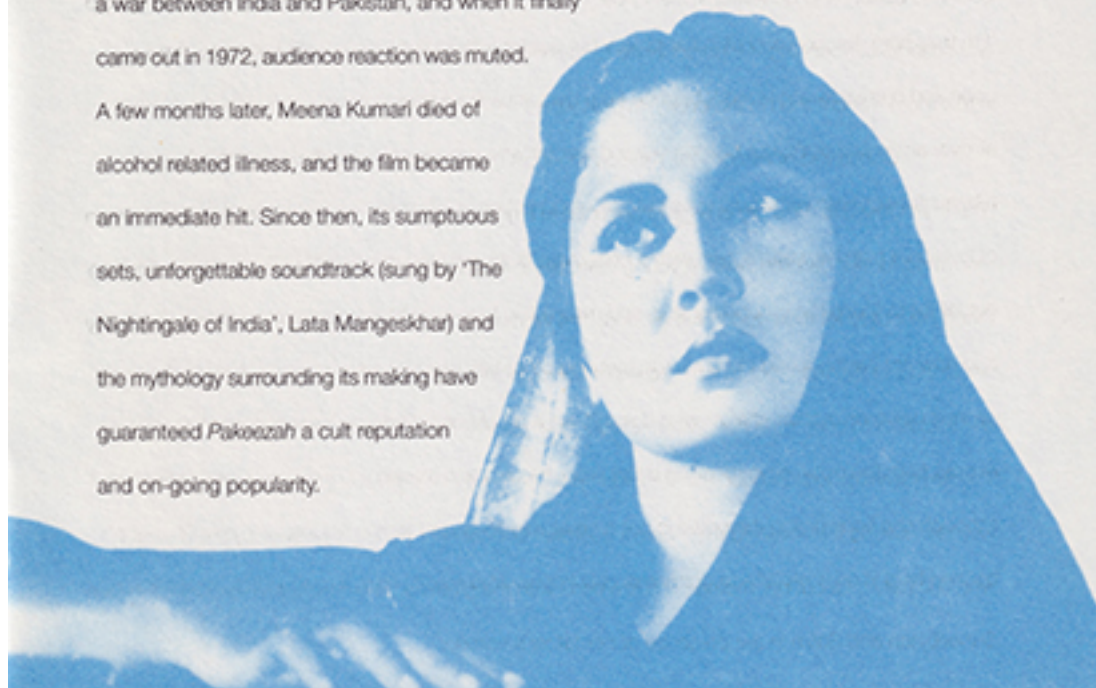
Meena Kumari and Pakeezah

Born the daughter of a Parsee actor, Meena Kumari arrived on the Indian film scene just as the glamorous style of the forties was being supplanted by the histrionic style of the fifties. Her luminous beauty and quivering, melancholic performance style combined with a whirlwind of gossip and scandal surrounding her personal life to make of her a tragic heroine par excellence. Nowhere is this more evident than in the event/film *Pakeezah*.

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Conceived of as early as 1958 by Meena's then husband Kamal Amrohi, *Pakeezah* (The Pure One) tells the story of a girl abandoned in a graveyard who grows up to become a courtesan renowned for her dancing skills. A young man falls in love with her feet on a train, and leaves a note telling her not to let them touch the ground. The woman, Saheebjaan (Meena Kumari) is haunted by her fantasy of the man, but when a series of coincidences lead them back into each other's arms, she is unable to overcome her unrespectable past identity, and runs from the marriage ceremony. The film climaxes with Saheebjaan dancing on broken glass at the wedding of Salim to another woman. Just as it is revealed that Salim's guardian is in fact her father, he is shot by the patriarch who originally cast out her mother. The film ends with the grotesque spectacle of a wedding between Saheebjaan and Salim in the presence of her father's corpse.

About 50% of the film had been shot by the early sixties, when Meena and Amrohi divorced, and the film was shelved. At the end of the decade, the project was taken up once more, although by this time Meena had garnered a reputation as a man-eating alcoholic. As shooting progressed, Meena was increasingly unable to perform, and stand-ins were used for all shots apart from close-ups of her by now visibly ageing face. The release of the film was delayed by a war between India and Pakistan, and when it finally came out in 1972, audience reaction was muted. A few months later, Meena Kumari died of alcohol related illness, and the film became an immediate hit. Since then, its sumptuous sets, unforgettable soundtrack (sung by 'The Nightingale of India', Lata Mangeshkar) and the mythology surrounding its making have guaranteed *Pakeezah* a cult reputation and on-going popularity.



Scene 10: Help Explains the Show.

Once upon a time long ago in a far off land and also right here tonight before your very eyes a woman dances and waits for her man she's been weeping and 'are you truly here' she says 'I'm truly here' he says and all is happiness but not for long in the far off one for the dark forces of pride and patriarchy are at work begone from here says the patriarch the poor woman flees weeping all over again and dying but bearing first a daughter who grows up to be played by the same actress a beautiful alcoholic with liquid eyes but I digress her hair is in a mess and so instead there is a look of love on a train between a man with a neat moustache and the dainty feet of the dancing girl do not let them touch the ground he says and meanwhile here tonight the woman and man in the here and now are having a wild old time with feet and other bits and he being a pilot all is talk of flight and general upwards motion after all who doesn't like a bit of transcendence now and then the lovely actress from the olden days meaning a few years before I and maybe you were born certainly doesn't although she finds hitting the bottle is not a great way to fly and feeling her life leak out of her she's booked herself on a jetplane to goodness only knows where and I have a few qualms myself you see

my own attempts at levitation have not been 100 percent up to scratch as it were there's a sense of foreboding here which the dizzy lovers would do well to heed meanwhile the bygone woman of the past is having a few transport related adventures of her own involving a big train and her own failing limbs stuck on the track someone has accident and it's her but fate has saved her she's reunited with the neat-moustachioed man once more and it's a happy time doomed not to last as the sadness of the actress reliving these moments will testify back in the present things are getting a bit complex with the intervention of a third party all dressed up the colour of the sky but colour symbolism is new age hippy shit so don't go trying to read stuff into it we just saw it in the project shop and had to buy it and now at this point we are poised on the cusp as it were of a fusion where the old and the new and the real and the bluff will commingle where we'll all do a favour for the actress formerly beautiful who incidently is the subject of some debate some saying 'pathetic slut' and others 'she stands' on her own two feet and that can't be bad for someone in her position' and what better way to find out than to judge for yourself we live in a free country after all by watching the following dramatic presentation in the meantime the man doing the spectacle you will have noticed is not the help houdini he thought he was since he's needed breath so thank goodness there was no water around and he's wearing a life jacket otherwise this would have turned into a snuff show no I am not help houdini nor was meant to be to paraphrase ts eliot and will not get the girl aw fuck!

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TheatreWorks (Singapore) Limited

TheatreWorks is an independent Singaporean theatre company that develops and nurture 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 of 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 the successful juxtaposition of Western and Eastern performance traditions, refreshing interdisciplinary interpretations and unconventional approach, and its commitment to cross-cultural collaboration and international touring.

As a pioneering theatre company, TheatreWorks realises

its responsibility in nurturing and providing opportunities for theatre practitioners. Through the years, TheatreWorks has provided platforms for talents like Lim Kay Siu, Lok Meng Chue, Lim Yu-Beng, Rani Moorthy and Casey Lim, to evolve their talents from acting to directing, writing and production design work. This year, spell #7 is the Resident Artist with the Company. The Company provides the infrastructural and creative support in order for them to create.

TheatreWorks has training programmes such as the Writer's Laboratory which serve to encourage and nurture new writing. 1998 saw the return of the 24-hr Playwriting Competition, this time held in the zoo, and the launch of The Singapore Dramatist Awards, a national award that recognises good playwriting in all Singapore's official languages. Other programmes include The Director's Laboratory that nurtures young directors, and the Springboard programme, a theatre skills training programme conducted by theatre practitioners from the United Kingdom. As part of its mission, TheatreWorks also has a Theatre-in-Education programmes for schools, public lectures and consultancy services on the aspects of theatre productions.

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Promotions for Meena & Me

Keep your ticket stubs for Special privileges at The Boom Boom Room & The Royal Thai Indian Restaurant! Valid till end April 1999.

The Royal Thai Indian Restaurant
20% off all food & beverages

The Boom Boom Room
Tues & Weds - 20% discount on all drinks
Thurs - Cover charge at \$12 (Normal \$17) for 2 standard drinks
Fri, Sat & eve of public hols - Cover charge at \$17 (Normal \$23) for 2 standard drinks

spell#7 by numbers:

- 1.5 years old
- 2 person company: Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan
- 3 attacks in *I Got Stung*, 2nd show for New Criteria 6 @ The Substation, May 98
- 3 dolls in *Live from the Valley of the Dolls* @ The Black Box for gtg...play till dawn
- 3 adjectives that describe the spell#7 style: hectic, fun and keenly-felt
- 5 performers in *Meena and Me*
- 6th show, *Meena and Me*
- 7 bus route was featured in *Walk with me and be Perfect*, 4th show @ Chijmes, Jul 98
- 7 steps to making your own Latin lover, demonstrated in *apocalypso!* 1st show @ The Substation, Dec 97
- 7th show, *Bud* @ Zouk for Arts Festival Fringe 99, June
- 8rvs in total upstairs and downstairs in *Meena and Me*
- 10 years to make *Pakeezah*, film that inspired *Meena and Me*
- 12 pots of night fragrant orchids in *vespertine 24/seven*, installation @ The Substation, May 98
- 13 scenes in *Meena*: introduction, system, acts of love, Kumar's wild card, foot scene, puppets, levitation, dancedancedance, trolley acts of love2, help explains the show, final film scene, the end
- 78 roses on the set of *Meena and Me*

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For more details and application forms please contact Auntie Muse at 338 4077 or email: tworks@singnet.com.sg

Be a
Friendly, Affectionate,
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Coming Up! *Pan Island Expressway* by Theatreworks

Coming next to a theatre near you...

Do you dare take the driver's seat on the *Pan Island Expressway* with us in the month of May?

A play about a small island with an expressway right through its heart.

Written by Chong Tze Chien,

winner of the 1998 Singapore Dramatist Award (Amateur Category)

Directed by Casey Lim.

Bud
by spell#7

For the Arts Festival Fringe 99

"Now dig this. I was in the room that night and it was, like, beyond compare. The walls of pictures, the waves of sound, the colour and action: it was a zone man, and I was living it, and then, just like that, sudden as a heart attack, I felt it. A blooming of love. It was Bud. Bud did some magic that night, no lie."

One girl recounted: "I grabbed his hand. He grinned and said, 'Cut me loose' so I cut him loose. It was heavenly."

Bud is an ambient show for hectic times. It draws on the performance poems of Sam Shepard and on sightings of the elusive BUD to tell 100 stories of love and loss drifting around the garden city.

Performance, video, dance and a live mixed soundscape meld in the disorientating space of Zouk club to create a hypnotic theatrical experience.

date 11 - 12 June 99 place Zouk time 9.30 pm



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