

THEATREWORKS

# Therese Raquin

An adaptation of a novel by Emile Zola  
Directed by Lok Meng Chue  
Adapted by Ovidia Yu


**The Black Box**

11-14 October 1995

18-21 October 1995

Official Hotel



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With support from the Cultural Section of the French Embassy



## THERESE RAQUIN

### The Story

Therese Raquin was abandoned by her father when she was a young girl and never knew the love or bond of her natural mother. Brought up by her paternal aunt, a widow, under whose repressive regime, Therese grew up to be a shadow of her real self, never revealing or uttering the well of emotions of her natural being.

Her only other companion was her sickly and weak-willed cousin, Camille, who was spoilt and doted on by his possessive mother. Her loveless marriage to Camille seemed to doom her to a "fate worse than death".

Unwittingly, Laurent, another sultor, a charmer and charlatan, in the guise of a friend of the family, walks into their lives and sets off a chain of events which ends in tragedy.

This classic crime of passion examines the thoughts and feelings of a woman taken over the edge by her own physical and emotional desires.

This adaptation of the novel is performed by two women, in a dialogue, alternating between the protagonist and voices of commentator, conscience and confidante.



## ABOUT EMILE ZOLA AND THERESE RAQUIN

Emile Zola was born in Paris in 1840. He was brought up at Aix-en-Provence in an age of struggling poverty after the death of his father in 1847. He was educated at the College Bourbon at Aix and then at the Lycee Saint Louise in Paris. He began writing when he was 20, and his earliest attempts had included much verse (unpublished) and a curious novel of romantic young love in a sordid setting.

Zola's first important novel, *Therese Raquin* was inspired by a story he had seen in a newspaper. The novel first appeared as a serial in *L'Artiste* between August and October 1867 under the title, *Un Marriage d'amour*.

At the age of 26, while writing *Therese Raquin* in the mornings, he was also dashing off a huge, serial thriller, *Les Mysteres de Marseille*, in the afternoons.

The success of *Therese Raquin* resulted in a second printing of the book in early 1868. Subsequently, Zola dramatised the novel and the play has maintained itself in theatrical repertoires in France and many other countries to this day. In recent years, there have been several revivals of the play in London and a notable French film was produced.

However, when the book was first published, it was greeted by the critics with an outcry about its "pornographic" nature. The novel was described by critics as "putrid literature", "a quagmire of slime and blood" and "a sewer". In the preface of the novel's second edition, Zola described the reaction: "certain virtuous people made a grimace of disgust as they picked it (the novel) up with the tongs to throw it into the fire. Even the minor literary reviews held their noses and talked of filth and stench."

This outcry not only gave Zola welcome publicity, but also forced him to clarify his own position in the literary field. In the preface, Zola defended the novel by saying that the aim in writing *Therese Raquin* was to study temperaments and not characters. He described Therese and Laurent as human animals and nothing more. He desired to uncover the animal side of a highly-sexed man and an unsatisfied woman, and then throw them together in a violent drama.

- source: The Introduction and preface of *Therese Raquin*  
Written by Emile Zola, translated by Leonard Tancock  
first published by Penguin Books in 1962



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"Obsessive behaviour and people have always intrigued me. The frightening thing is that we are all capable of being obsessed, but fortunately to varying degrees. It is good to be driven and single-minded but what matters most is how far and to what ends we will allow it to take us. At times there seem to be no rights and wrongs, save for the consequences which each of us have to face in our own way.

I would like to thank Shella and Karen for their commitment in giving Therese a voice and everyone else involved in this production for their patience and understanding."

Lok Meng Chue

## ABOUT LOK MENG CHUE

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 sell out hit, *Army Daze* by Michael Chlang. In 1988, she acted in *Three Children* by Leow Puay Tin. The production toured 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 Travellers' 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 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 original short plays in the 3rd SPH Young Playwrights Series in 1995 and acted in one of them. In June 1995, Meng Chue became a member and Associate Artist of TheatreWorks, and created a new repertoire of three plays about women, the first being *Ang Tau Mul*, a modern woman, followed with *Therese Raquin* and *Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection* in December 1995.



## 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*, *Broken Birds and Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral*.

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 Arts Council, the British Council and the United States Information Service. Hotel accommodation for foreign visitors is sponsored by the Westin Stamford and Westin Plaza, the Writers' Laboratory is sponsored by the Singapore Press Holdings and TheatreWorks' Official Card Sponsor is the UOB Card Centre. These companies 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.

### THEATREWORKS 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/Print Executive: Leslie Lee    Librarian: Mok Wai Yin    Ticketing: Neo Kim Seng    Accounts: Sally Neo



*Theresa Raquin* is an adaptation of a novel by Emile Zola

Director: **Lok Meng Chue**

Adaptation: **Ovidla Yu**

Performers: **Karen Lim and Shella Wyatt**

Production Director/Costumes Designer: **Tay Tong**

Production Manager: **Tan Lay Hoon**

Stage Manager/Lighting Operator: **Liu Shu Bin**

Set/Lighting Designer: **Lok Meng Chue**

Sound Operator: **Doreen Cheng**

Technical Assistant: **Jonathan Gwee**

Make-up Design: **Joseph Ng**

Hair Design: **Ashley Lim**

Publicity Flyer Design: **Alan Seah of Generator Creative and Leslie Lee**

Programme Design: **Jonathan Nah**

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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- Finest Masterpiece Arts Pte Ltd for the use of furniture
- Lee Cheng Heng for the assistance with the lighting



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