Ma:moment 翼懣妈妈

20 - 22 August 2004 24 - 28 August 2004 8pm Open Field at Sago Lane (Opp Maxwell Food Centre)



At 50, Mei Ling returns to Chinatown and recalls days with mother at the wayang, market, cinema and eating cha siew rice.

That night, she dreams the dreams of Precious Pig. Sweet Nothing, Ghost Mother and Phantom Foetus.

Sometimes, she is still not sure she's woken up.



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

When I was 8, my mother used to bring me to a cinema at Queenstown (it is now also a church). It was the late 70s and weepy Taiwanese melodramas were at the height of its popularity. I remember crying buckets in the dark with my mother. We would bawl ourselves silly, fighting over a packet of tissue paper and teasing each other afterwards at our 'goldfish eyes'.

It was also a time of innocence and intimacy for me. A time of just my mother and me.

Growing up has made me forgetful. And I don't even remember the name of the cinema my mother and I used to frequent. Sure, things change and people move on but when forgetfulness set in, what will happen to the relationships forged and experiences encountered?

My mother died four years ago and I worry that I will begin to forget what she looks like, how she smells like, how does it feel like to hold her, the sound of her voice calling out for me. Sure, things change and people pass on, but will we still remember the moments shared?

You are now sitting on the site of Chinatown's infamous death houses at Sago Lane. The Cantonese dubbed it Sei Yan Kai, literally street of dead people. I am sure many of you don't even remember that it ever existed, neither did I until this production. People of my generation don't, and we can't.

Demolished in 1961, it used to house the terminally ill and many immigrant workers who had no family in Singapore and who were too old and frail to work. They all checked in to these houses to wait for their deaths. Sometimes I wonder who will remember them.

When we forget, nothingness takes its place. It is a state of being that plagues our urban existence and a condition that I fear most. Hence, Ma: Moment is my way of facing up to this fear. And it has taught me to make the most of the moments experienced and trust that they have made some kind of impact on me. And even if I don't remember them, I believe that they have somehow transformed me.

I am fortunate that I need not face this fear alone. I have friends who are just as forgetful. Paul and Kaylene, thank you once again for your words, your patience and your love. It is a friendship and partnership I choose not to forget. This moment will be forever. Meng Chue, Noorlinah and Fu Kuen, my partners in crime. Your friendship and trust over the years have been a source of strength for me and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for being there. Much love to you all. George, I still stand by my prediction that big things will

be in store for you. Thank you for your quiet strength and for knowing what is best for the show. Mark, Josh and Shing, what a ride it has been! Can we do it again soon? You guys have been instrumental in making this vision into a reality. Thank you! Yubes, I sleep better every night knowing that you are at the lighting helm. Thank you for making everyone and everything look beautiful. Jean, thank you for always supporting me, for always being there for me and for all the madness in balancing budgets. I will miss you terribly when you go. But I will always remember the moments. Cheers! Melvin, Scott, Rafi, Daniel, Abhi and Kim, thank you for making my life so much easier. Eileen, thank you for all the hard work and cuckoo schedules to get the publicity out. Good that you are always on my tail. Chee Wai, thank you for your patience and speedy reaction to things. I am always at ease knowing that you are there doing this. TT and KS, again thank you for trusting me to do my thing. And you, for coming and braving the Hungry Ghost Festival to share this moment with me. Thank you.

I dedicate this performance to my mother.

LOW KEE HONG

Kee Hong joined TheatreWorks (Singapore) as its Associate Artistic Director in September 2002. Since his appointment, Kee Hong has introduced a whole new genre of creative works that recalibrates the bounds between art, science and 'live' performance. This process began with a new laboratory called the DAVINCIPROJECT. From the notes, discoveries and wild ideas hot-housed in the DAVINCIPROJECT emerged collaborations like pulse.i am alive (April 2003) and Balance: space * time * movement (August 2003) that played to critical acclaim. For Balance, Kee Hong was awarded the Best Director and Best Set Design awards at the 4th Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. It also picked up the award for Best Original Script.

A seasoned performer on the international arts festival circuit, he has toured extensively to Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, Australia and Indonesia.

He also serves as dramaturg and Associate Director on several regional projects including the Continuum Asia Project / Mekong Diaries (Laos), the Flying Circus Project and the DVD series on Southeast Asian Performing Arts and Artists.

Kee Hong sits on the programme advisory committee of the Singapore Arts Festival and is a proud member of the Association of Singapore Actors (ASA).

KAYLENE TAN & PAUL RAE

Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan are co-artistic directors of arts group spell#7 (www.spell7.net), a Singapore-based performance company with a strong interest in multi-media and inter-disciplinary work. Paul combines his work as co-artistic director of spell#7 with academic research into performance theory and contemporary Southeast Asian performance. Kaylene performs, writes and designs. In 2003 she produced The Year of Living Digitally, spell#7's new media arts festival. Following Pulse (2003) and Balance (2003), Ma: Moment marks their third collaboration with Low Kee Hong. In March this year, they won Best Script for Balance at the 4th Life! Theatre Awards.

MARK WEE

Mark Wee is an architect currently practicing at DP Architects. His working relationship with TheatreWorks began earlier in 1995 when he designed some of the company's publicity materials (Pop Friction & SPH Festival of New Writing) under the design collective Inc, before entering Cornell University to pursue architecture studies in which he graduated in 2001.

Mark has always been interested in a multi-disciplinary approach to design and collaboration. His diverse portfolio over the last 10 years covers guerilla art installation works, is This Your Kennel?, St Bruno & The Fish Market and Rampaging Friends in Rome at the Cornell School of Architecture (1999), communication material design for the Cornell Fashion League (1999), set/lighting/communication design for Cornell Asian American Playhouse's production of Tea (2000), 2 limited private t-shirt label lines inc (1996) and Kueh (2003), advertising/copywriting/marketing for Snapple (1995), and occasional arts critic for Pacnet (2003). He is also a freelance illustrator and aspiring toymaker, currently collaborating with an artist friend on a childlike storybook. Mark is pleased to have recently completed a small church, his first building, and is currently working on a boutique hotel and luxury chi-chi condo in Singapore.

He was one of the 9 invited participants of the DAVINCIPROJECT Version 1.0 initiated by Kee Hong in 2002.

ONG KER-SHING & JOSHUA COMAROFF

Ong Ker-Shing and Joshua Comaroff have been working together since they met at design school in Boston in 1997. In 2002, they co-founded Lekker, an environmental design company working principally in Singapore and Shanghai. Josh and Shing enjoy working on widely diverse projects so far, they've designed a restaurant, a wall, a book, two landscapes, two apartments, a house, four logos, a skyscraper, paper cut-outs, t-shirts, mixed-use developments, rubber stamps, stationery and business cards made of cloth and elephant dung. They are currently undertaking research, funded by Harvard University, into architectural innovations in the low-end housing of Shanghai's old neighborhoods. This is their first foray into set design. Examples of their other work can be found at www.lekkerdesign.com.

GEORGE CHUA

George Chua is a multi-disciplinary artist. He is a sound artist, experimental musician and performer/dancer. His sound work ranges from digital processing of acoustic events to exploration of micro sounds. His physical work includes experimental forms of body movement and dance. For the past few years he has been focusing on sound and new compositional possibilities for music experimentation.

Apart from his own solo works, George also composes and performs music for theatre and film. Over the years, he has collaborated with artists from a diverse range of disciplines both local and foreign, finding a curious interest in exploring the "crevices" of inter-disciplinary dialogue. George was one of the four artists/group selected for the workshop presentation phase of Esplanade's artist development programme SPARKS 1 for his multi-channel electro-acoustic work The Atlas: Invisible Cities. This is a work-in-progress and currently he is looking for opportunities of staging it in an outdoor space for the next stage of the work.

An associate artist of The Substation since 2002, George was also awarded an honourable mention for music for the TheatreWorks production Balance at this year's 4th Strait Times Life! Theatre Awards,

LIM YU-BENG

Although better known as an actor (he recently won Best Supporting Actor at the annual Life! Theatre Awards), within theatre circles Yu-Beng is also known as a lighting designer. He is currently designing The Merry Widow for Singapore Lyric Opera, and In The Realm Of The Senses for Toy Factory's October production, and has just completed Dim Sum Dollies for Dream Academy. Recent designs include Marriage of Incornenience for TheatreWorks, Fireface for Toy Factory (for which he received Honourable Mention at the 2003 Life! Theatre Awards) and Up North, Down South for Checkpoint Theatre. For TheatreWorks, he designed Comrade Mayor, Machine, P.L.E., Beauty World 1998 (President's Star. Charity), Us in Singapore, Lao Jiu which toured the Perth Theatre Festival, Broken Birds and Wills and Secession. He designed Mee Pok Man and Comic Potential for Fiction Farm, and Madam To Sup-Neung for Brink Productions. He also co-designed the lights for Under the Bed and set and lights for Light in the Village.

As Technical Manager of TheatreWorks from 1990 to 1994, Yu-Beng supervised the mounting of all the company's work in that time. In 1994 he was awarded a British Council Fellowship for his work in Singaporean theatre.

LOK MENG CHUE

Meng Chue has been involved from the beginning (from 1985 to 1995) in nearly all of TheatreWorks' productions. These include numerous performances on stage, both locally and overseas, and backstage as director, stage/production management, and offstage as workshop coordinator and administrator. She assisted Ong Keng Sen, TheatreWorks' Artistic Director in his amportant early projects like Springboard at the Black Box, The Writers' Lab, The Directors' Lab and The Flying Circus Project, which culminated in the international tour of Lear, which she was also Assistant Director of

After a hiatus of 5 years from the stage, she returned to performance in Keng Sen's production of the late Kuo Pao Kun's The Spirits Play both in Singapore (2000) and Japan (2001). In 2002, she once-again assisted Keng Sen in his production of Search:Hamlet (Denmark) which premiered at the

Kronborg Castle in Elsinore and Copenhagen for the Asia-Europe Forum. 2003 saw her managing TheatreWorks' Continuum Asia Project (CAP), a one-year project spearheaded by Keng Sen, which focused on people-to-people collaboration. Based on the principle of capacity building, it brought together elders from the Ramayana dance tradition of Laos, youths of the ancient palace town Luang Prabang and Asian artists from various different disciplines. She also assisted Keng Sen in Lim Tzay Chuen, a graduation project of the pioneer class of the Theatre Training & Research Programme.

An associate artistic director of TheatreWorks, her most recent project saw her performing in Ong Keng Sen's Sandakan Threnody, which premiered at the Singapore Arts Festival 2004.

NOORLINAH MOHAMED

A recipient of the Shell-NAC Arts Scholarship 1998, Noorlinah pursued a Master of Arts in Performance Studies at the acclaimed New York University, Tisch School of the Arts. A versatile performer, Noorlinah has performed with companies like TheatreWorks, Action Theatre and The Necessary Stage. Some of her stage experiences include Trojan Women, Longing, Mortal Sins, Lear and Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral. In 1996, she won an acting award from the Experimental Theatre Festival in Cairo for her role in Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral. While in New York, Noorlinah created collaborative performance pieces with performers from Norway, Puerto Rico, Germany, Taiwan as well as Turkey. Since her return from New York, her performance body is more devised and collaborative in nature. Seen in productions such as Under The Last Dust (2000/TNS), Continuum: Beyond The Killing Fields (2001/TheatreWorks), where she filmed and directed video documentaries that formed part of her performance, and most recently Beginning of The End (2002/TNS), Pulse (2003/TheatreWorks) and Revelations (2003/TNS).

Noorlinah is an advocate for the professional development and needs of actors and drama educators in Singapore. In 2002, she co-founded two professional bodies - Association of Singapore Actors and Singapore Drama Educators Association.

TANG FU KUEN

Born and raised in Singapore, Tang Fu Kuen (Deng Fuquan) was a pioneer theatre student at both VJC and NUS. A Raffles-Chevening scholar, he completed his MA in Media and Communications at University of London, Goldsmiths College, in 2003. From 1992-99, he collaborated and acted in TheatreWorks' seminal creations: Lear, Workhorse Alloat, Destinies Of Flowers In The Mirror, The Yang Family, Broken Birds and Longing. With the company, he toured Asia-Pacific and Europe at major festivals and theatres, winning the Critics' Prize for Best Acting in Descendants of the Euroch Admiral at the 1996 Cairo International Experimental Theatre Festival. In 2000, he completed all three cycles of TheatreWorks' bi-annual Flying Circus Project, an inter-Asian performance laboratory for traditional and contemporary artists.

An independent dramaturg, he has supported many multi-disciplinary projects as a consultant, curator and creation assistant. He has worked both locally and abroad in Hong Kong, Japan, Belgium, Germany and France, with agencies such as the UNESCO Headquarters, Goethe Institute, Asia-Europe Foundation, Hong Kong Arts Festival, World Dance Alliance, and Ford Foundation. He is an editorial member of the international journal, Performance Research, and also a dance critic for Straits Times Life!, the (now-defunct) Arts Magazine, and Ballett Internationale.



Prologue (In Cantonese)

When I was eight, my mother brought me here. I knew the rest of the area pretty well - we came all the time for marketing, temple, wayang and the tastiest char siew in the world. But best of all, the cinema.

The Metropole Cinema. It used to be across the road, opposite Maxwell Hawker Centre. The building is still there, but it's a church now. My mother and I loved the weepy melodramas and we used to cry buckets. Going to the movies with my mother was a special treat. An excuse to hold her hand in the dark and cry my little heart out. She would squeeze to comfort me. I squeezed back. It was our secret language.

Then my mother brought me here. To Sago Lane.

I knew the area pretty well, but this part was unfamiliar. It was like the rest of Chinatown, but subdued. Eight-year-old me thought: this place is sulky. The shophouses looked tired and there was a sour smell that made you feel sad in your stomach.

My mum asked: Are you a happy girl, Mei Ling?

It was a funny question.

Yes, mummy, I'm happy. It was a lie, because I wasn't happy right then, but I thought of the char siew we were going to buy for dinner, and how happy I would be when we ate it later, and I kind of borrowed a bit of that future happiness for now, so it was a white lie.

"Yes, you are happy Mei Ling, but are you a happy girl? A happy person?"

She didn't expect an answer.

"When we are very young, we are hoppy, but we don't know it. This is called innocence. But we can't go on being innocent for ever, or the world would stop turning. No one ever made money being innocent." I think she said that, or maybe that's something I learnt later, and put in for effect. "So". She stood me right here, one hand on my shoulder, and pointed, over there, where the pastry shop is now.

"See that house? It's a death house. People die there. Maybe I will die there. Maybe you too. What you see, that dog, those rats: it's the last thing people see before they go inside and die. Sometimes they lie down to die, and they keep breathing for years. But sooner or later, they stop."

Just then, a window swung open, and a face blinked in the sunlight. A woman. "Already dead", I thought. But she wasn't. Not yet. She looked out. My mother carried on talking:

"The sun comes up, and they think of dogs, and the sun goes down they dream of rats. They are old and poor. They eat porridge and shit their beds. They share the room with other people, but when it's their time, everyone turns away in embarrassment. Losing your life is one thing, but losing face also...when you die alone, you have no choice. So Mei Ling, are you a happy girl?"

Sunddenly, the window closed, and the face I thought I saw disappeared.

We all die alone, of course. Other people can be on hand, but your death is your own affair. This and other things I have thought about a lot since that day. I sound like I know a thing or two - don't be fooled.

When my mother walked off, I couldn't move. I stayed right here, at this very spot, staring at the death house, until it got too dark to see. Then I pissed myself, and ran home. My mother beat me, bathed me and put me to bed. I dreamt of dogs, and rats, and char siew rice.

Sometimes, I'm still not sure I've woken up.







TheatreWorks Circle (TWC) is a loyalty programme that aims to cultivate and nurture a theatregoing culture in Singapore. As a non-profit organisation, TheatreWorks is always looking for
creative ways to garner new audiences and retain our ardent supporters - this programme is one
of many such efforts. As part of the circle, you can look forward to constant updates on the
company's happenings with our e-newsletter 'the circular', discounts and personalised service
when you purchase tickets, free programme booklets, invitation to our special events as well as
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of Singapore's leading professional theatre company in its local and international work.

So join us today in this creative journey! For more information in becoming part of the circle, you can either log on to www.theatreworks.org.sg, email tworks@singnet.com.sg or call 6338 4077.

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OTHERS!

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How to be in the Circle.

For a minimum amount of \$150 (or \$100, for students), you can be part of the TheatreWorks Circle. As a member, you'll get to enjoy the following Membership Privileges:

- Four complimentary tickets (worth \$100 - \$150) to any TheatreWorks production within the period of your membership.
- All memberships are valid for a year upon the date of joining.
- 3. Processing will take 2-4 weeks.
- TheatreWorks reserves the right to decline issue of a new card and to withdraw any existing card at any time
- In order to receive the benefits and privileges, the TWC card must be presented before any transaction. Failure to do so will render certain loss of member benefits and privileges.
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- Fundraising productions and productions that are jointly produced are not open to TWC privileges.



CENTRAL SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ARTS GRANT

The Central Singapore Community Arts Grant is administered by the Central Singapore Community Development Council to support the artistic development of outstanding community-based arts groups and talents in Central Singapore District. The grant can be used to support the development and training of the artists and to exhibit, produce or publish their artistic works (theatre, dance, music, literature or visual arts). Individuals with a passionate commitment to their craft and an enthusiastic spirit of community service, particularly in making the arts scene in their housing estates more alive, are encouraged to apply.

For more information, contact:

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Tel: 6370 9901 Fax: 6370 9928

Email: arts@centralsingapore.org.sg Website: www.centralsingapore.org.sg



ABOUT THEATREWORKS

TheatreWorks (Singapore) was established in 1985. It is an international performance company based in Singapore, known for its reinvention of traditional performance through a juxtaposition of cultures, along with its cutting edge productions that set new benchmarks for artistic excellence. Its works reflect a concern with cultural negotiation and artistic exchanges with artists, through a network of traditional and contemporary artists from different disciplines.

This year, TheatreWorks turns 20 - and with its plans to move into its new home at Robertson Quay called the icaa (international centre of asian arts). It will position itself in a landscape of all the Asian arts it has engaged with in the last decade, and go back to its roots of encouraging young Singaporean creativity as well as continue its laboratory activities.

The icaa will be an independent international centre that engages with inter-Asian creativity and networking, a place where individuals from other countries would arrive at to understand the broad perspectives of working with the global Asian urban metropolis, tradition and artists. TheatreWorks will also start SCAN (Singapore Creative Arts Nucleus) which will curate groups of young creative individuals known as scanners, with the icaa being the site for their creativity.

At present, TheatreWorks has two strands: the Singapore Wing and the International Wing - to facilitate its growth both in Singapore and in the international arena.

In Singapore, it continues to support and nurture Singapore artists and develop Singapore arts through its developmental programmes like The Writers' Lab that produces and promotes Singapore writing, creating a theatre that is Singapore and with a Singaporean voice; and the education and outreach programmes that work closely with schools and institutions, bringing the magic of theatre and drama to youths and the general public. Last year, the Singapore Wing embarked on a new development, creating works that redefine the bounds between science, art and 'live' performance. To date, TheatreWorks has created and presented over 165 productions, which are important landmarks in Singapore theatre history.

Internationally, TheatreWorks continues to develop its various productions and programmes that have gained international recognition. Homegrown research and development projects like The Flying Circus Project have turned into internationally known and sought-after laboratory processes. Its progressive outlook results in works that have challenged accepted history through a genre of documentary performances. It continues to do commissions by international festivals and institutions, as well as initiate new creative programmes internationally. For instance, The Continuum Arts Project or CAP, a capacity building programme in Laos that helped revived the Laotian Ramayana.

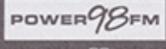
In 1999, TheatreWorks initiated the Arts Network Asia, a network of independent artists and arts activists promoting regional artistic collaborations and exchanges. With funding from the Ford Foundation, it was hosted and managed by TheatreWorks for the first three terms.

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Lok Meng Chue Associate Aristic Director (Singapore Wing)
Low Kee Hong Associate Aristic Director (Singapore Wing)
Jeffrey Tan Associate Aristic Director (Singapore Wing)
Tan Tarin How Associate Aristic Director (Singapore Wing)

Tay Tong Managing Director
Traslin Ong Managir diregipore Wing:
Jean Yue Production Stage Managir
Lennie Lee Sechnical Managir
Eileen A. Chua Marketing Communication Managir
Vivian Lee Assistant to Artific & Managing Directors
Janice Seah Education & Outmach Executive
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PRODUCTION CREDITS

Conceived, Designed + Directed by Low Kee Hong

Written by

Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan

Performed by

Lok Meng Chue

Noorlinah Mohamed

Tang Fu Kuen

Sound by

George Chua

Architectural Installation by

Mark Wee together with-

Ker-Shing Ong & Josh Comaroff (Lekker Design)

Lighting by

Lim Yu-Beng

Video Design by

Low Kee Hong-

Production Stage Manager: Jean Yue

Technical Managers : Melvin Lim, Lennie Lee

Assistant Stage Manager -- Scott Dominic Peterson

Technical Assistant (Staging): Daniel Hoon

Technical Assistant (Sound): Rafi Dean

Lighting Operator: Kimberly Ann Kwa

Video Operator : Abhilash Anselm Memon

Front-of-House Manager ? Sophie Wee *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

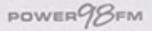
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And all others who have provided support and assistance in one form or another but whose names we were not able to include due to print deadlines.

Box Yon, touted to be the Greta Garbo of Hong Kong cinema, is the face almost synonymous with the iconse representation of the ideal mother.

Featuring Hong Kong B/W film 'Mother's Grief' 可懷的媽媽 written and directed by Kwan Man-Ching, starring Pak Yin (Bai Yan) and Cheung Ying.

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