



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WILD RICE'S SINGAPORE THEATRE FESTIVAL: A RUNAWAY SMASH HIT!

8 New Plays. 9 Playwrights. 8 Directors. 4 Companies. 20,000+ Audience Members.

28 July 2016 – The fifth Singapore Theatre Festival, presented by WILD RICE, ended on a high note on Sunday. Over four weeks, it welcomed more than 20,000 audience members, making it the most successful and well-attended festival the company has staged to date. With 95% of tickets snapped up, 73 out of 81 performances were completely sold out.

The Festival featured a diverse line-up of eight new plays by some of Singapore's most exciting playwrights – established, emerging and undiscovered. *HOTEL*, the critically acclaimed epic co-written by Alfian Sa'at and Marcia Vanderstraaten, served as the cornerstone of the entire programme. It shared the limelight with world premieres (Thomas Lim's *Grandmother Tongue*), works by first-time playwrights (Helmi Yusof's *My Mother Buys Condoms* and Nessa Anwar's *Riders Know When It's Gonna Rain*) and revivals (Alfian Sa'at's *GRC (Geng Rebut Cabinet)*, Johnny Jon Jon's *Hawa* and Kenneth Chia and Mark Ng's *Let's Get Back Together*).

"We set out to programme a diverse, challenging and thought-provoking season, with a focus on new and emerging playwrights and directors. We are thrilled that every single show resonated in such varied and profound ways with our audiences," says Ivan Heng, Festival Director and Artistic Director of WILD RICE. "From their feedback, we could tell how important it was for them to encounter and experience these stories as a community."

The Festival programme gave voice to people from all walks of life, including those who are minorities or living in the margins in Singapore. The eight featured plays boldly explored hot-button topics such as race, religion, politics, gender, sexuality and ageism.

"A remarkable feature of this year's Festival was that every single play was performed in more than one language," explains Alfian, Festival Dramaturg and Resident Playwright of WILD RICE. "It's a promising sign that Singapore theatre is evolving from a static multiculturalism, where we have 'English theatre', 'Malay theatre' or 'Chinese theatre', to a dynamic interculturalism, where there is cross-cultural interaction and exchange within a single play."

WILD RICE forged ahead with its most ambitious Festival yet, despite the fact that there was no title sponsor.

"New plays are vital in sustaining a vibrant theatre scene," says Tony Trickett, Festival Producer and Executive Director of WILD RICE. "We dug into the company's reserves to support our playwrights with the very best talents and resources we could afford, knowing it would be an investment in the future of Singapore theatre."

More than a thousand people flocked to the FEST!VITIES that took place in and around the Festival. These events, including the thought-provoking *Art & Life Sessions* and late-night cabarets, were free of charge, and created an opportunity for the general public to deepen their experience of the plays, as well as engage with leading academics, activists and artists.



In *Songs of Protest*, 14 of Singapore's finest singer-songwriters – including iNCH Chua, Ugly In The Morning and ShiGGa Shay – performed original anthems to standing ovations from a 300-strong crowd.

For months leading up to the Festival, close to 200 people – eight directors, nine playwrights, four theatre companies, 52 performers and 103 designers, production staff and stage crew – worked tirelessly to bring the eight very different plays to the stage.

But the achievements of the 2016 Singapore Theatre Festival go beyond the statistical.

“The legacy of the Festival is the development of our artists and audiences, as well as these eight new and original plays that are now part of our theatre and literary canon,” says Heng. “With their contemporary perspectives and distinctive voices, these soul-searching plays are a testament to Singapore’s diversity and creativity. I believe that each of these productions and everyone involved in them will go down in history as having challenged, influenced and shaped our theatre scene in the years to come.”

Visit <http://www.singaporetheatrefestival.com> for more information.

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FAST FACTS

Established in 2006, the Singapore Theatre Festival is an event dedicated to celebrating contemporary Singaporean theatre through the development and presentation of new writing. Since its inception, the Festival has presented 25 productions, including 17 world premieres, of new and original works by Singapore's best and most promising playwrights.

Festival Director:	Ivan Heng
Festival Dramaturg:	Alfian Sa'at
Festival Producer:	Tony Trickett
Venue:	LASALLE College of the Arts
Dates:	30 June – 24 July 2016

SINGAPORE THEATRE FESTIVAL: BY THE NUMBERS

Shows:	8 (2 World Premieres & 6 Revivals)
Playwrights:	9
Directors:	8
Performances:	81 (of which 73 were sold out)
Audience Attendance:	20,000+ (95%)
Designers:	41
Production & Technical Crew:	62
Performers:	52
Forums & Meet The Artists Sessions:	8
Playwriting Workshops:	2

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APPENDIX I RAVE REVIEWS FOR THE FESTIVAL'S 8 PLAYS!

HOTEL

“Singapore theatre has never seen anything like this and *HOTEL* is a five-star production that lives up to its lofty ambition... *HOTEL* celebrates Singapore in a very unique way through the everyday lives of ordinary people instead of famous historical figures. Don't be put off by its length; once you check in, you'll probably forget the time and enjoy the stay.”

- *The Business Times*

“*HOTEL* isn't just theatre. It's an act of healing... It brings back the past – not in a teacherly way, but in the fashion of a loved one coming to us with a photo album and filling in our forgotten names and faces, joining up the dots of our family trees. We're overwhelmed by a sense of recognition: remembering what we once knew... It reminds us of the richness and diversity of this island's past... Yes, it's a four and a half hour commitment. But you'll be getting a hundred years of memories. I'd say that's more than a fair exchange.”

- *The Online Citizen*

“Like any top-notch hotel, this epic has everything you could want... Exceptionally fearless and outstandingly original, WILD RICE's *HOTEL* will unquestionably go down in history as a Singapore theatre classic.”

- *Pospoken*

“There are few theatre companies that attempt to tell a country's entire history and succeed at being simultaneously accurate, entertaining and emotionally gripping. WILD RICE has always pushed political and artistic boundaries, but *HOTEL* is almost certainly one of the absolute best they've produced so far.”

- *Bakchormeeboy*

“*HOTEL* mourns what we have lost, but celebrates what we've held on to and ponders what we may yet become. And theatre, like history, flourishes where there are a spectrum of views. Some of the best theatre experiences I've had were enriched by fierce, excited debate after, where friends and colleagues pointed out moments and shared insights that I'd missed from my narrow vantage point. *HOTEL*, I'd argue, does the same for Singapore history.”

- *Corrie Tan*

HOTEL Fast Facts

Venue:	The Singapore Airlines Theatre
Show Dates:	30 June – 24 July 2016
Advisory:	16 and above (Some Mature Content)
Playwrights:	Alfian Sa'at & Marcia Vanderstraaten
Directors:	Ivan Heng & Glen Goei
Cast:	Ben Cutler, Brendon Fernandez, Ghafir Akbar, Sharda Harrison, Ivan Heng, Jo Kukathas, Dwayne Lau, Lee Chee



Presented By:

Keng, Moo Siew Keh, Pam Oei, Siti Khalijah Zainal, Julie Wee,
Yap Yi Kai & Lina Yu
WILD RICE



RIDERS KNOW WHEN IT'S GONNA RAIN

“One of the best scenes involves Raimi Safari and Riduan Zalani polishing a Vespa. The care bestowed on the bike while the friends banter and sing is the tender heart of this play worn on its tough leather sleeve.”

- *The Straits Times*

“Heart swollen to the point of breaking and bursting like a dam. Too many thoughts and feelings for a quick update to encompass. Besides being beautiful and poignant and clever, also such important writing which brought me back to my 20s growing up in the minority subcultures of Singapore which more needs to be written about. If you can possibly watch this, you should.”

- *Pooja Nansi*

“*Riders* is both chatty exposé and cautionary tale – an ode to the world of riding and a warning against the dangers of doing so recklessly. It may not always cruise along at a perfect speed but this is one road trip to remember.”

- *Crystalwords*

Riders Know When It's Gonna Rain Fast Facts

Venue:	Creative Cube
Show Dates:	30 June – 3 July 2016
Rating:	R18 (Mature Content)
Playwright:	Nessa Anwar
Director:	Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit
Cast:	Nessa Anwar, Norisham Osman, Raimi Safari & Riduan Zalani
Presented By:	WILD RICE

HAWA

“*Hawa* is a breath-taking, beautiful and practical illustration of clashing cultures.”

- *The Straits Times*

“*Hawa* is an interesting look at religion, unafraid to ask difficult questions and come to its own conclusions about them. For the non-Muslim theatregoers, it also acts as brilliant exposure to Islamic culture and rituals, and is held together by a tragic central relationship that provides foundation for the script to bounce its ideas and questions off of... *Hawa* is one of the rare plays that takes a look at LGBT relationships facing the brunt of religion, and rarer still in an Islamic context. Kudos to Hatch Theatrics for producing such an insightful play.”

- *Bakchormeeboy*

“*Hawa* is striking in its portrayal of a fiercely independent Muslim woman, one who is unafraid to question her religious expectations and challenge the status quo... *Riders* and *Hawa* are important additions to the local theatrical canon, presenting alternative voices that one rarely gets a chance to engage with. These are flawed but deeply human characters whose stories deserve to be told.”

- *Crystalwords*

***Hawa* Fast Facts**

Venue:	Creative Cube
Show Dates:	30 June – 3 July 2016
Rating:	R18 (Mature Content)
Playwright:	Johnny Jon Jon
Director:	Faizal Abdullah
Cast:	Koh Wan Ching, Al-Matin Yatim & Saiful Amri
Presented By:	Hatch Theatrics

GEYLANG

“...to dismiss this play as nothing more than a student production would be to underestimate how entertaining, funny, self-aware and richly realised it and its characters are.”

- *TODAY*

“Rodney Oliveiro’s *Geylang* is bound to blow your mind, featuring strikingly different characters such as a pair of star-crossed lovers, a single mother, a gang leader and even a civil servant.”

- *Asia361*

“There is no doubt that the young cast gave a lot of themselves. The group’s collective will to entertain – even at considerable sacrifices to personal dignity – commands a kind of respect... the acting is energetic but raw, but Yazid Jalil and Elizabeth Loh deserve special mention for the conviction of their performances...”

- *The Straits Times*

***Geylang* Fast Facts**

Venue:	Flexible Performance Space
Show Dates:	30 June – 3 July 2016
Rating:	R18 (Mature Content)
Playwright & Director:	Rodney Oliveiro
Cast:	Jane Chia, Matthew Fam, Farez Najid, Gabriele Goh, Lim Jun Jie Jey, Loh An Lin, Elizabeth Loh, Nur Hamidah binte Abdul Rahim, Perry Felix Shen, Faith Sim, Siti Zuraidah binte Abdul Rahim, Leonard Tan & Yazid Jalil
Presented By:	WILD RICE

GRANDMOTHER TONGUE

“The sold-out success of the play is based on its content and cast... Rei Poh is brilliant in multiple turns... Tan Shou Chen is strong in his low-key role as the grandson... a foil to Jalyn Han’s superb enactment of the grandmother. Giggles are audible as she fusses over her grandson or feeds him or battles him over wasting food... there are sobs when she quietly deteriorates into death.”

- *The Straits Times*

“...the regular sniffles from the audience meant that the play struck a close chord with many... captures many facets of what it means to be a senior citizen in Singapore today – painting a very vivid picture of an 84-year-old woman getting alienated from a rapidly changing Singapore... Actors... are simply excellent... a play which does more showing than telling – but speaks volumes nonetheless.”

- *The Business Times*

“...an eloquent evocation of the linguistic, cultural and emotional ghetto of an elderly woman who is cut off from a society which regards her native tongue as substandard... *Grandmother Tongue* captures this ambiguity well, the sense that many of us are stranded in a linguistic no man’s land, able to speak a coloniser’s language well, but unable to communicate in, literally, our grandmothers’ tongues.”

- *Ong Sor Fern*

“故事情节立足于社会现实，再现了本地华人隔代语言习惯的差距。祖孙两辈的交流，通过熟悉的生活场景呈现，亲切动人，令观众在欢笑和感伤的交替中，产生共鸣。The story is firmly rooted in social reality, and depicts the inter-generational differences in the linguistic traditions of the Chinese. Through familiar scenes of everyday life, the interactions between grandparent and grandchild are tender and touching, forging a connection with audiences through their laughter and empathy.”

- *Lianhe Zaobao*

***Grandmother Tongue* Fast Facts**

Venue:	Creative Cube
Show Dates:	6 – 10 July 2016
Advisory:	16 (Some Mature Content & Coarse Language)
Playwright & Director:	Thomas Lim
Cast:	Jalyn Han, Tan Shou Chen & Rei Poh
Presented By:	WILD RICE



LET'S GET BACK TOGETHER

"There are also stories of acceptance, love and friendship from those who do not identify as queer, stories that are all the more powerful for being true. The characters mature on stage, coming to terms with their own identities, and so do their families and friends. A wistful hope lingers that this might one day be true for the country as a whole and that, one day, the unfamiliar part of this performance will be the cliché."

- *The Straits Times*

"It's quite a task to not only interview over 50 people but to also compile their voices into a play. Kudos especially to the ensemble of six actors in *Let's Get Back Together* who draw us into the interviewees' stories with such heart... particularly Ruzaini Mazani, Zachary Ibrahim and Jo Tan, who deserve a mention for how they sensitively portrayed different characters."

- *The Business Times*

"It's a masterful show of stagecraft that underscores the theme that no matter how different we are, we're all still human."

- *Yahoo! Singapore*

"*LGBT* is refreshingly honest and down to earth... Thanks to some very capable members of the ensemble, *LGBT* brings across exactly the message it is going for – a cry for understanding of what it means to be queer in 21st century Singapore and the obstacles preventing queers from living a 'normal' life."

- *Bakchormeeboy*

Let's Get Back Together Fast Facts

Venue:	Flexible Performance Space
Show Dates:	7 – 10 July 2016
Rating:	R18 (Homosexual Content)
Playwrights:	Kenneth Chia & Mark Ng (in collaboration with Kimberly Arriola)
Director:	Mark Ng
Cast:	Ezzat Alkaff, Ann Lek, Ruzaini Mazani, Eleanor Tan, Jo Tan & Zachary Ibrahim
Presented By:	Red Pill Productions

MY MOTHER BUYS CONDOMS

“The thought of seniors sharing an intimate moment is enough to make most people turn away in embarrassment. Never mind the fact that we have a rapidly ageing population – silver-haired friskiness is a topic shrouded in cultural taboos. Arts writer Helmi Yusof’s remarkably assured debut play, presented as part of the Singapore Theatre Festival and directed by Ivan Heng, makes a powerful case against such narrow-mindedness.”

- *TODAY*

“... a scintillatingly original Singapore work which tackles ageism and sex – a subject that is often talked about in hushed, gossipy tones... It’s the small gestures that make the play, so kudos to director Ivan Heng. After the mild foreplay, the play’s climax hits the right spot before coming to a satisfying end.”

- *The Business Times*

“*My Mother Buys Condoms* will have teens and 20 somethings squirming in their seats. Those over 30 should smile in relief that there is life in senior citizenry... Lok’s transformation from dowdy retiree to woman in her prime is delightful to watch, as is Panicker’s bumblingly sweet courtship. Nora’s role is equally well played by Elnie, and as important to the heart of the story.”

- *The Straits Times*

“*My Mother Buys Condoms* is a portrait of our country’s culture wars: a battle for two competing visions of the nation. Wilfred and Nora stand for a closed, conservative society, ruled by a Confucian-Protestant-Islamic code of propriety. Maggie and Gwen, on the other hand, point the way forward for a more liberal Singapore – one in which citizens may deviate from traditionally prescribed roles, so as to achieve their own definitions of happiness, prosperity and progress. This individualism isn’t necessarily anti-family.”

- *The Online Citizen*

***My Mother Buys Condoms* Fast Facts**

Venue:	Creative Cube
Show Dates:	14 – 24 July 2016
Advisory:	16 (Mature Content & Coarse Language)
Playwright:	Helmi Yusof
Director:	Ivan Heng
Cast:	Lok Meng Chue, Remesh Panicker, Elnie S. Mashari, Joshua Lim & Seong Hui Xuan
Presented By:	WILD RICE

GRC (GENG REBUT CABINET)

“The jokes in the hilarious script are spot-on and witty enough to rival anything on *The Daily Show* and the cast of five – with Samsudin’s comic flair and timing making him a standout – does a great job of tickling the crowd endlessly; as Sa’at makes one nudge-nudge-wink-wink reference after another... But *GRC* is also more than just a laugh-out-loud political farce as Sa’at forces the audience to think about the complex nature of race dynamics by turning the status quo inside out. It’s rare we see a sacred cow being slaughtered this openly and honestly.”

- *The Business Times*

“*GRC* is far more than a comedy about race. The fact is, it’s also a tragedy about politics... Though we start off all light-hearted and chuckling, by the end, a cloud of despair has descended upon us.”

- *The Online Citizen*

“Alfian Sa’at has written a triumphant piece that cleverly subverts our expectations and offers the (primarily Chinese) audience a glimpse through another’s eyes. The script is witty and fast-paced, and takes potshots at our state of affairs with a knowing wink (or maybe a giant slap in the face), touching on everything from education to military opportunities. It’s a keenly observant script that leaves just about no policy uncriticised, and the topsy-turvy world works to win our empathy.”

- *Bakchormeeboy*

“... the cast should be lauded for their robust performances. The comical moments are buoyant and entertaining as the actors pick up on each other’s cues quickly, while the tense moments are played with emotional truth...”

- *Isaac Tan*

GRC (Geng Rebut Cabinet) Fast Facts

Venue:	Flexible Performance Space
Show Dates:	14 – 24 July 2016
Advisory:	16 and above (Some Mature Content)
Playwright:	Alfian Sa’at
Director:	Mohd Fared Jainal
Cast:	Serene Chen, Khairudin Samsudin, Dalifah Shahril, Farah Ong & Fir Rahman
Presented By:	Teater Ekamatra

**APPENDIX II
THE FEST!VITIES**

THE FESTIVAL CLUB

Over 700 people flocked to LASALLE College of the Arts to partake in Festival Club events. They laughed, cheered and rocked the house along with some of Singapore’s finest drag performers, musicians and stand-up comedians.

DRAG ATTACK!

9 July (Saturday), 10.15pm, Lowercase Café

Performers: Becca D’Bus, Ashley Fifty, Mona Kee Kee, Papa Cherry, Taylor Jin & Vyla Virus



Becca d’Bus takes the lead in *Drag Attack!*
(Back row, L-R: Ashley Fifty, Papa Cherry, Vyla Virus, Taylor Jin & Mona Kee Kee)



Mona Kee Kee thrills the crowd!

SONGS OF PROTEST

16 July (Saturday), 10.30pm, Singapore Airlines Theatre (tickets priced at \$20)

Performers: Andrew Marko, Art Fazil, Benjamin Chow, CECEY, Fakkah Fuzz, iNCH Chua, Joshua Chiang, Lim Kay Siu & Neo Swee Lin, Michaela Therese, Sezairi, ShiGGa Shay, The Observatory, Ugly In The Morning, Vandetta & X' Ho



Pam Oei and her rock band, Ugly In The Morning, bring the house down!



Benjamin Chow combines poetry and prose in an electrifying spoken-word performance



With guitar and harmonica in hand, Joshua Chiang could be Singapore's own Bob Dylan!

STAND UP FOR SINGAPORE

23 July (Saturday), 10.15pm, Lowercase Café

Performers: Fakkah Fuzz, Jacky, Qamarul, Sam See & Deonn Yang



Fakkah Fuzz finds the lighter side to living in Singapore



Audience members having a laugh as they Stand Up for Singapore!

THE ART & LIFE SESSIONS

Over 300 people joined us for The Art & Life Sessions, a series of free lively forums about the urgent issues of the day. They engaged with a host of artists, activists and academics, including Kok Heng Leun (Artistic Director of Drama Box and Nominated Member of Parliament); playwright Tan Tarn How (*Fear of Writing*); Daniel Goh (Non-Constituency Member of Parliament, Workers' Party); graphic artist Sonny Liew (*The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*) and independent filmmaker Tan Pin Pin (*To Singapore, With Love*).



Throwing the discussion open to the floor!



To participate in our free Art & Life Sessions,
audiences packed Lowercase Café for three Sunday afternoons in a row

ART & LIFE #01: ONE DIVIDED PEOPLE?

10 July (Sunday), 5.30pm, Lowercase Café

Speakers: Vanessa Ho, Kok Heng Leun, Prashant Somosundram & Tan Tarn How

Moderator: Alfian Sa'at



(L-R) Kok Heng Leun, Prashant Somosundram, Vanessa Ho, Alfian Sa'at, Tan Tarn How

ART & LIFE #02: REGARDFUL OF RACE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

17 July (Sunday), 5.30pm, Lowercase Café

Speakers: Alfian Sa'at, Daniel Goh, Braema Mathi & Mohamed Imran Mohamed Taib

Moderator: Janice Koh



(L-R) Alfian Sa'at, Daniel Goh, & Mohamed Imran Mohamed Taib, Braema Mathi, Janice Koh

ART & LIFE #03: HISTORY, HIS STORY, WHOSE STORY?

24 July (Sunday), 5.30pm, Lowercase Café

Speakers: Sonny Liew, Jason Soo, Tan Pin Pin & Thum Ping Tjin

Moderator: Alfian Sa'at



(L-R) Thum Ping Tjin, Alfian Sa'at, Tan Pin Pin, Sonny Liew, Jason Soo

APPENDIX III THE SINGAPORE THEATRE FESTIVAL

Presented by WILD RICE, the Singapore Theatre Festival is an event dedicated to celebrating contemporary Singaporean theatre through the development and presentation of new and original local writing. The Festival takes place in the months of July and August, when Singapore celebrates National Day; it is in this context that theatre artists and the public are encouraged to engage in a conversation about theatre, Singapore and the world.

In four editions since 2006, the Festival has collaborated with local theatre companies and artists to present 25 productions, including 17 world premieres, of new local writing. The Festival prides itself on having collaborated with undiscovered, emerging and established playwrights, including Alfian Sa'at, Eleanor Wong, Huzir Sulaiman, Chong Tze Chien, Ovidia Yu and Joel Tan. In 2013, the Festival launched 'In The Spotlight' to present a season dedicated to the works of a single local playwright. It remains the only festival in Singapore that focuses on presenting fully realised productions of new local writing.

The Aims of the Festival

- To develop, produce and promote Singapore theatre, with a focus on new works;
- To re-appraise Singapore's existing repertoire of plays with today's audiences, thereby creating the country's own classics;
- To present the best of contemporary Singapore theatre-making; and
- To engage audiences and artists in a conversation about theatre, Singapore and the world.

Since 2006, the Festival has:

- Enriched the social, cultural and intellectual life of Singapore;
- Raised the levels of awareness and appreciation for Singapore theatre;
- Encouraged the creation of distinctive homegrown work;
- Enhanced the international image of Singapore as a vibrant creative city; and
- Created a literary and artistic legacy for future generations of Singaporeans.



PRAISE FOR THE SINGAPORE THEATRE FESTIVAL

“It was a year in which ambitious, heartfelt local productions outshone lacklustre, lumbering art imports... the main event in the world of the arts this year was arguably W!LD RICE’s inaugural Singapore Theatre Festival in August.”

- *SPH The Straits Times, Life!*

“Statistics compact the inaugural Singapore Theatre Festival to three weeks, nine plays and 11,500 sold tickets. But the expanded version is more interesting: as many as 200 people showing up for the various forums held to discuss topics raised by the plays... the issues being debated island-wide; and the demonstration that the arts are an integral part of an urban society, not to be relegated to suburbia.”

- *The Business Times*

“The challenge for playwrights has always been to find a fresh language to talk about society in all its complexity, against the homogenising rhetoric of top-down social engineering. I think great strides have been made in the writing, and I see audiences flocking to watch socio-political plays not simply to taste forbidden fruit, but to feed the soul.”

- *Clarissa Oon*

APPENDIX IV THE SPONSORS

The Singapore Theatre Festival is made possible by the kind support of the following sponsors and partners:



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