



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*"When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is
in the country one amuses other people." - Jack, Act 1*

12 JANUARY 2009 - W!LD RICE will stage a radical and absolutely '*WILD*' interpretation of Oscar Wilde's ***THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST***, at the Drama Centre Theatre from 25 March to 11 April 2009. Wilde's most enduringly popular play remains one of the most performed comedies around the world and boasts some of the funniest lines in the English language.

In keeping with the company's mission and excellent track record of staging the world's favourite theatre classics for today's audiences, internationally acclaimed theatre and film director Glen Goei puts a provocative spin on Wilde's comic masterpiece by casting an all-male ensemble - revealing new insights into Wilde's comedy about courtship, hidden identities, and the foibles and affections of high society.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST will feature a sensational international cast. Singapore's most acclaimed actors including Ivan Heng, Hossan Leong, Chua En Lai, Brendon Fernandez and Crispian Chan will be joined on stage by Daniel York from the UK, and Gavin Yap and Zahim Albakri from Kuala Lumpur.

Putting paid to Wilde's credo that "style, not sincerity, is the vital thing", the company will be dressed to the nines by Frederick Lee, and accompanied live by the internationally acclaimed T'ang Quartet. ***THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST*** promises to be an exhilarating evening of wit, laughter, romance and one of the most talked-about theatrical events of 2009. Don't miss it on any account.

SYNOPSIS:

"Oh, I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man.

I shouldn't know what to talk to him about." - Cecily, Act 2

Two dashing Romeos bend the truth to spice up their lives. Jack has invented a brother, Ernest, whom he uses as an excuse to escape his dull country life, and to visit the ravishing Gwendolyn. His best friend Algernon also decides to take the name 'Ernest' to court Jack's beautiful ward, Cecily in the country.

Things get messy when everyone ends up together in country and their deceptions are discovered... threatening to spoil their romantic pursuits.

SOME BACKGROUND ABOUT OSCAR WILDE AND THE PLAY:

"My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree." - Algernon, Act 2

Oscar Wilde, celebrated playwright and literary provocateur, was born in Dublin on October 16, 1854. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford before settling in London. During his days at Dublin and Oxford, he developed a set of attitudes and postures for which he would eventually become famous. Chief among these were his flamboyant style of dress, his contempt for conventional values, and his belief in aestheticism—a movement that embraced the principle of art for the sake of beauty and beauty alone.

During the late 1880s, Wilde wrote reviews, edited a women's magazine, and published a volume of poetry and one of children's stories. In 1891, his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, appeared and was attacked as scandalous and immoral. In that same year, he met Lord Alfred Douglas, who would eventually become his lover, and Wilde finally hit his literary stride. Over the next few years, he wrote four plays: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Lady Windermere's Fan and *A Woman of No Importance* enjoyed successful runs in the West End in 1892 and 1893, respectively. *An Ideal Husband* opened in January 1895, but it was ***The Importance of Being Earnest***, which opened a month later, that is regarded by many as Oscar Wilde's masterpiece. Its first performance at the St. James's Theatre on February 14, 1895 came at the height of Wilde's success as a popular dramatist, and the play remains Wilde's most enduringly popular play.

The Importance of Being Earnest was an early experiment in Victorian melodrama. Part satire, part comedy of manners, and part intellectual farce, this play seems to have nothing at stake because the world it presents is so blatantly and ostentatiously artificial. Below the surface of the light, brittle comedy, however, is a serious subtext that takes aim at self-righteous moralism and hypocrisy, the very aspects of Victorian society that would, in part, bring about Wilde's downfall.

On February 28, 1895, two weeks after ***The Importance of Being Earnest's*** opening night, Lord Alfred's belligerent, homophobic father, the Marquess of Queensberry, attempted to enter the theatre, intending to throw vegetables at the playwright when he took his bow at the end of the show. Wilde was tipped off and Queensberry was refused admission. Nonetheless, Queensberry's hostility to Wilde was soon to trigger the latter's legal travails and eventual imprisonment. Wilde's notoriety caused the play, despite its success, to be closed after only 83 performances. He never wrote another play.

"The truth is rarely pure and never simple." - Algernon, Act 1



FAST FACTS

Title	:	The Importance of Being Earnest
Playwright	:	Oscar Wilde
Directed by	:	Glen Goei
Set Design	:	Ivan Heng
Lighting Design	:	Mac Chan
Costume Design	:	Frederick Lee
Hair Design	:	Ashley Lim
Sound Design	:	Shah Tahir
Make-Up	:	M.A.C
Producer	:	Tony Trickett
Cast	:	Daniel York as John Worthing Brendon Fernandez as Algernon Moncrief Ivan Heng as Lady Bracknell Hossan Leong as Miss Prism Chua En Lai as Gwendolen Fairfax Gavin Yap as Cecily Cardew Zahim Albakri as Rev. Canon Chasuble Crispian Chan as Lane/Merriman
Musicians	:	T'ang Quartet - Ang Chek Meng - Leslie Tan - Lionel Tan - Ng Yu Ying
Venue	:	Drama Centre Theatre @ National Library
Dates	:	Wednesday 25 March – Saturday 11 April 2009
Tickets	:	Available through SISTIC: SISTIC Hotline 6348 5555 www.sistic.com.sg SISTIC Authorised Agents
Prices	:	\$34, \$44, \$49, \$59 (8.00pm Previews 25 & 26 March) \$39, \$49, \$54, \$64 (8.00pm Tues, Wed, Thurs & Sun) (3.00pm Sat & Sun) \$44, \$54, \$59, \$69 (8.00pm Fri & Sat)

Prices exclude \$3 SISTIC handling fee



Early Bird : **9 February – 4 March 2009**
20% Discount for OCBC Credit/Debit Cardmembers
15% Discount for General Public

Press Contact : Sirius Art
Mary Bernadette Lee, PR Assoc Manager
T: 6324 8720
mary@siriusart.com.sg

Aryanti Kamar, PR Manager
T: 6324 8721
aryanti@siriusart.com.sg

*I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married
should know either everything or nothing.* - Lady Bracknell, Act 1

BIOGRAPHIES

DIRECTOR – GLEN GOEI

Glen Goei began his professional theatre career starring opposite Sir Anthony Hopkins in the Tony award-winning play *M. Butterfly*, which ran for a year in London's West End. For his performance, Glen was nominated for the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Newcomer in 1990. On leaving the production, he set up Mu-Lan Arts, the first Asian theatre company in the United Kingdom. Productions in the first 7 years of his artistic directorship include *Madame Mao's Memories*, *Porcelain* (London Fringe Awards – Best Play, Best Production), *The Magic Fundoshi* (Best Comedy) and *Three Japanese Women*.



His work in Singapore includes *Into the Woods* (1994), *Kampong Amber* (Singapore Arts Festival headline event 1994) and *Land of a Thousand Dreams* (1995). Most recently, Glen directed the hit production *The Revenge of the Dim Sum Dollies* at the Esplanade Theatre, *Blithe Spirit* and *Boeing Boeing*. He also directed *Godspell*, a charity fundraiser for his alma mater Anglo Chinese School.

Glen was awarded the National Youth Council Award (Excellence) for his achievements in the arts from Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1994. Glen then went on to write, direct and produce his first feature *Forever Fever* which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 1999, and has been shown in over 30 countries worldwide.

Glen has been the Creative Director for The National Day Parade for 2003 to 2006. His most recent theatre productions have been *The Magic Fundoshi* (2006) and *The Dim Sum Dollies: Little Shop of Horrors* (2006).

PRODUCER – TONY TRICKETT

Born in Liverpool, Tony moved to Singapore from the UK in 1997. Prior to joining WILD RICE, he worked as a management consultant, specialising in leadership coaching and team-development for multinational companies in London and subsequently in South East Asia.



Tony acted as consultant in the establishment of WILD RICE and became a Director of the company in 2001. In August 2002, Tony was appointed as Executive Director, responsible for the overall management of the company. His portfolio encompasses finance, administration, marketing, fund-raising and sponsorship.

Tony is the Producer for all WILD RICE productions. Shows include: *Boeing Boeing*, *Oi! Sleeping Beauty!!*, *The Magic Fundoshi*, *Jack & The Bean-Sprout!*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Asian Boys Vol. 3*, Eleanor Wong's *The Campaign to Confer the Public Service Star on JBJ*, *Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs* and the 20th Anniversary production of *Beauty World*. Tony also produced the 2006 and 2008 OCBC Singapore Theatre Festivals, which he conceived together with Artistic Director Ivan Heng.

CAST OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

DANIEL YORK – John Worthing

Daniel York is of mixed Singapore/British parentage and grew up in the UK. Theatre work includes: for the RSC – *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Country Wife*, *Moby Dick*. In London - *Une Tempete* (Gate Theatre), *Branded* (Kevin Spacey's Old Vic), *Hamlet* (opposite Alan Rickman), *Turnadot* (Hampstead). For Mu-lan theatre company- *Porcelain*, *The Magic Fundoshi*, *Take Away*, *Sun Is Shining*, adapted and directed *Daughter of the River*. Also: *Measure for Measure* (Manchester), *Nativity* (Birmingham), *Romeo & Juliet* and *Tartuffe* (Basingstoke), *In The Bag* (Edinburgh), *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (Leicester). In the USA: *The Birds* (National Tour), *Sun Is Shining* (off Broadway). In China: *King Lear* (Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre). Television credits include: *The Bill*, *Supper at Emmaus*, *Chambers*, *A Fish Named Tao*, *Casualty*, *Waking The Dead* as well as the feature films *Peggy Su!*, *Rogue Trader*, *The Beach*, *Doom* and the to be released *Act of Grace* (opposite his wife – London based Singaporean actress Jennifer Lim, best known for her iconic role in *Hostel*, *Eden's Burning*. Previously in Singapore – *The Magic Fundoshi*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *Balls!* (SRT), *Hot Dogs & Eternal Triangles* (THEATREWORKs), and on television – *Under One Roof*.



BRENDON FERNANDEZ – Algernon Moncrief

Brendon is delighted to be in another WILD RICE production!

His other productions with the company include *Apocalypse: Live!* (part of the OCBC Singapore Theatre Festival 2008), *Boeing Boeing* (2005) and *Landmarks: Asian Boys Vol. 2* (2004).

Brendon has also performed in such plays as *The King Lear Project: A Trilogy* (part of both the Kunsten Festival des Arts in Brussels and the Singapore Arts Festival, 2008), *Everything But the Brain* (2005), *Bent* (2003), *Shakespeare's R&J* (2001) and *Rent* (2001).

He was also the male lead for the short film *Not Here*, which premiered at the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival in March this year, the largest showcase for Asian cinema in the U.S.

When he is not acting, Brendon is an Academic Associate at Republic Polytechnic's Centre for Culture and Communications. When he's not doing that either, Brendon is happiest playing World of Warcraft (*Resto Shaman LFG*).

Brendon Fernandez is managed by Fly Entertainment.



IVAN HENG – Lady Bracknell

In a pioneering theatre career over two decades, Ivan’s theatre productions have been performed in more than 20 cities throughout Europe, Asia, North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Ivan’s experiences as director and actor at international theatre festivals have been a source of strength and inspiration for the Singapore Theatre Festival. These include: Melbourne International Arts Festival, New Zealand International Arts Festival, Hong Kong City Festival, ICA International Festival of the Chinese Diaspora (London), Chinese Karakters Festival (Netherlands) and Re:Map Festival (Copenhagen).



Recent directing credits include: *Generation/s*, a Singapore-Russia collaboration for Spotlight Singapore in Moscow, the 20th Anniversary revival of *Beauty World*, and the first productions of Alfian Sa’at’s *Happy Endings: Asian Boys Vol.3* and Eleanor Wong’s *The Campaign to Confer the Public Service Star on JBJ*.

Ivan has a law degree from the National University of Singapore and trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (Glasgow). He is the Founder and Artistic Director of WILD RICE.

HOSSAN LEONG – Miss Prism

Hossan Leong is one of Singapore’s most popular and successful television and theatre actors, working constantly and earning an impressive array of awards and reviews.

Hossan made his directorial debut in Sydney in 2003, directing Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Flower Drum Song* for AHA! Productions. He produced, directed and starred in *Best Served Cold*, a murder-mystery dinner theatre piece for the 2004 World Gourmet Summit.



He conceived, produced and directed *On This Island*, a musical revue, for the APAO Congress 2006. He has since directed and produced many such corporate musical revues for the LJ Hooker Conference, NS 40 (MINDEF) and the STMicroelectronics 20th Anniversary Dinner.

Hossan is also a stand-up comedian. He performs regularly with the *Dim Sum Dollies*. He is a much sought-after host for dinners, launches and corporate events.

Hossan presents The Morning Jam on Power 98, weekdays from 7 to 10 am. Corporate clients such as the National Heritage Board, the Ministry of Education, MINDEF and the Singapore Institute of Management have engaged his skills in Presentation/Drama techniques and he has also conducted National Education workshops for Nexus.

For a full list of Hossan’s work, you can visit www.paulcarrconsultancy.com.

CHUA EN LAI – Gwendolen Fairfax

Enlai returned to Singapore after growing up in New Zealand and has treaded the boards of over 35 theatre productions. This will mark his seventh collaboration with WILD RICE. Credits include: *Connect the Dots* (Hong Kong), *Oi! Sleeping Beauty!!*, *Aladdin*, *The Visit of the Tai Tai*, *Landmarks: Asian Boys Vol.2* and *Cinderel-Lah!*.

On television, Enlai plays newsreader *B.B. See* and many other characters on Channel 5's madcap comedy-sketch show *The Noose*. Credits include: *Sayang Sayang*, *Parental Guidance*, *Heartland Getaways* and *Global Picnic*.

His work has been recognized with a Best Actor award at the Life! Theatre Awards (*Shopping & F***ing*), a Best Group Acting win at the BOH Cameronian Arts Awards (*Separation 40*) and the Actor of the Year 2008 award by Elle Magazine.

Enlai is managed by Fly Entertainment.



GAVIN YAP - Cecily Cardew

Gavin began his acting career in Malaysia at the age of 8, beginning with commercials before moving on to television and film work. Gavin has appeared in a variety of theatre productions including *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Fastest Clock In The Universe* and has received award nominations for both his acting and writing.

He served as Director in Residence for the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre for 2 years and in 2006, was awarded the National Arts Award for Directing. His work as a director includes Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* and Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*. Gavin is also the author for the popular Sunday Times column, 'What's The Point?', and currently voice directs for animation.

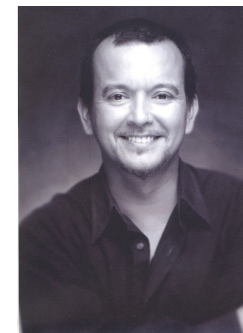


ZAHIM ALBAKRI – Rev. Canon Chasuble

An award-winning actor and theatre director, Zahim Albakri is the Artistic Director of Dramalab and a founding member of Instant Café Theatre.

He has appeared in a number of acclaimed television, theatre and film productions. Zahim received the Best Actor award at Anugerah Skrin 1999 for his role in the TV drama *Odissi* and at the 2004 BOH Cameronian Arts Awards he received the Best Solo Performance award for his work in *The Smell of Language*.

For theatre, he has directed *Tarap Man*, *P.Ramlee The Musical*, *Puteri Gunung Ledang The Musical*, *Gold Rain And Hailstones*, *Separation 40*, *The Storyteller*, *A Flight Delayed* and *Spilt Gravy On Rice*. He has received the Best Director award at BOH Cameronian Arts Awards 2002 and

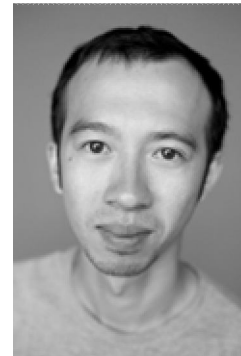


2005, and in 2006 and 2007 with co-director Adlin Aman Ramlie for *Puteri Gunung Ledang The Musical* and *P.Ramlee The Musical* respectively. He also received the Anugerah Seni Negara (National Arts Award) for Theatre Directing in 2006. His latest venture is as Artistic Director of a new Arts Centre, PJ Live Arts.

CRISPIAN CHAN – Lane/Merriman

Australian-born actor Crispian Chan recently graduated from Singapore’s LASALLE College of Arts as part of the first cohort of Actors from the BA(Hons) Acting programme.

Prior to his studies in Singapore, he worked extensively in Perth’s Theatre and Radio scene; performing in a number of productions for the Perth International Arts Festival, Black Swan Theatre Company and Barking Gecko Theatre Company. In 2003, he won ‘Best Newcomer’ at the WA Actors Equity Awards.



In Singapore, he has mainly made his mark on TV; including *9 Lives* on Arts Central and a number of local and international TVCs.

As part of the 2008 Singapore Arts Festival, he traveled to Brussels with *The King Lear Project* to perform at the Kunstendes Arts Festival '08.

T’ANG QUARTET

- NG Yu-ying - *1st Violin*
- ANG Chek-Meng - *2nd Violin*
- Lionel TAN - *Viola*
- Leslie TAN - *Cello*



T’ANG is an acronym of the players’ surnames.

T’ang Quartet, Singapore’s premier western classical chamber music group, redefines chamber music through its vibrant and dynamic performances, adventurous approach to programming, slick and chic stage presentation.

The T’ang Quartet has performed to critical acclaim internationally at chamber festivals in Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Central America and Asia. Following the critical success of its London debut at Wigmore Hall in 2005, The T’ang Quartet was invited to record for BBC’s World International Recital Series in Jan 2006.

In June 2007, T’ang Quartet premiered *Optical Identity*, a collaborative production with Theatre Cryptic (Scotland) that was commissioned by the Singapore Arts Festival. The European premiere took place at the Edinburgh International Festival in August, and the production then traveled to the Alicante International Contemporary Music Festival (Spain) in September, and toured Scotland in October and November 2007.

T’ang Quartet was invited to perform with Azerbaijan composer Franghiz Ali Zadeh’s *Mugam Sayagi* at a UNESCO award Ceremony in Paris on 3 April 2008, where she was awarded the honorary title of UNESCO Artist for Peace.



In 2008, T'ang Quartet was presented with the Artistic Excellence Award (Classical) by the Composers and Authors Society of Singapore (COMPASS). T'ang Quartet's debut album *The Art of War* received a rave review on *The Strad* in 2005. It was described as “*sensational*”, where “*their technique is beyond criticism, balance is perfect and the engineering has a presence so vibrant and energizing as to capture the attention on its own.*”

The T'ang Quartet has recorded the soundtrack for film directed by Ng Khee Jin – *Feet Unbound* – retracing the Long March taken by teenage girls. The T'ang Quartet is now Quartet-in-Residence at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at the National University of Singapore and was on the faculty at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute from 2001 to 2005.
