



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **EMILY TAKES ON THE ESPLANADE!**

**18 October 2010** – W!LD RICE will stage a brand new production of Stella Kon’s *EMILY OF EMERALD HILL* with Ivan Heng as the irrepressible matriarch, from 3 March to 13 March 2011 at the Esplanade Theatre.

Heng first took on the title role of *EMILY OF EMERALD HILL* in W!LD RICE’s debut production in 1999. Over a span of 10 years, he has revisited the role no less than 7 times in 98 performances worldwide. Both critics and audiences have fallen under the spell of his tour-de-force.

***“I believe that Stella Kon has written a true classic that will stand the test of time. The idea was always for me to revisit the role every 10 years. I expect that my life experience and Singapore as we know it today will inform this new incarnation of Emily” - Ivan Heng***

As the play unfolds, Emily grows from an innocent young girl to a headstrong matriarch. Heng too hopes to continue playing Emily in years to come. Taking on the tradition of female impersonation in *Wayang Peranakan*, Heng himself a Peranakan, was and is still the only male actor who has played Emily in the play’s 28 year history.

As a fitting finale to 10 W!LD YEARS, a season celebrating W!LD RICE’s 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, he will once again don the kebaya and take on the Singaporean classic at the grand Esplanade Theatre.

### **THE DYNAMIC DUO’S MUCH-ANTICIPATED COLLABORATION**

***“When Glen Goei and Ivan Heng come together in the name of Art, any play can be expected to deliver wit and sensitivity.” - 8DAYS, Singapore***

Glen Goei and Ivan have been mates, rivals, best friends and collaborators for more than 35 years. As internationally-acclaimed award-winning actors and directors, their luminous careers share stunningly similar trajectories.

- Both discovered their love for theatre at Anglo Chinese School
- Both trained as actors in the United Kingdom
- Both played Song Li Ling, the transvestite spy, in *M. Butterfly* on the international stage
- Both lived and worked in London where they helmed award-winning theatre companies
- Both returned home to Singapore in the late 90s to contribute and make a difference to the arts scene.
- Both are leading forces in Singapore’s burgeoning creative landscape and have directed some of the most memorable and critically acclaimed theatre productions of the past decade
- Both were called upon to direct Singapore’s National Day Parade
- Both have been Creative Directors for major international events including the Singapore Pavilion at the World Expo Japan (Glen) and the Opening & Closing Ceremonies of the Youth Olympic Games (Ivan)

In 2002, Ivan invited Glen to join W!LD RICE as his Associate Artistic Director and the rest, as they say, is history.



Glen first directed Ivan in the Award winning production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* which was played to sell out houses at the Drama Centre theatre in 2009. **EMILY OF EMERALD HILL** reunites the two in an exciting new collaboration that will inject fresh insights into one of Singapore's most well-loved plays.

This production is dedicated to their mothers, their "Emily's", to whom they are greatly indebted to and inspired by.

**PRAISE FOR IVAN AS EMILY OF EMERALD HILL**

*"The standing ovation is rare in Melbourne, and reserved for the very best performances. This production has moved Australian audiences in such a profound way, and it's very deserving."*

**Melbourne Festival, Australia**

*"Having seen how EMILY OF EMERALD HILL can be brought to life by WILD RICE persuades me of this play's legitimacy as a Singapore classic. This production fully captures the magic that theatre is capable."*

**Quarterly Literary Review of Singapore**

*"Heng is entertaining and a performer who enjoys his audience – and this high energy enjoyment is infectious!"*

**SPH The Business Times, Singapore**

*"It's a great great piece of theatre. It's been a long time since I was this affected by the theatre. The whole thing wasn't at all sensationalised. Rather, Emily was very sensitively portrayed, and totally believable."*

**Radio Three Hong Kong, Hong Kong**

*"An eye-opener is Heng's version of Emily!"*

**The Straits Times Life!, Singapore**

*"Heng's excellence was so all-round that it's hard to get specific - you might as well just take a random handful of pages from your dictionary and give him all the complimentary adjectives."*

**The Flying Inkpot, Singapore**

*"This was a more intellectual 'Emily', but it was impossible not to be moved."*

**The Edge**

*"The show left audiences rolling in the aisles and crying in the dark. Don't miss it!"*

**www.artsee.net**

*"This Emily is a real gem! From the first swagger up the stage, there was no mistaking that Heng was Emily."*

**New Straits Times, Malaysia**

*"Playing to a full house in practically every show, Heng gave a flawless portrayal of his character, and kept the show going with his frenetic energy and compelling performance."*

**The Star, Malaysia**



## PRODUCTION HISTORY

Written by Stella Kon, **EMILY OF EMERALD HILL** is a one-woman play about a Nyonya matriarch who dominates her family, yet in the end finds that she loses what she loves most. The play won the First Prize in the National Play-Writing Competition 1983. Since then it has been presented more than a hundred times, by eight different performers – 7 women and 1 man - in Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Hawaii and Edinburgh. An unknown number of students and amateurs have also performed the play in private and school productions. It has been translated into Chinese and Japanese and broadcast over Radio Iceland. A film version is under negotiation

In 1999, Ivan Heng became the first male actor to play Emily, in a production directed by Krishen Jit.

- 06 – 17 October 1999, Dramalab Actors Studio, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 20 – 25 January 2000, Star Alliance City Festival, Fringe Club, Hong Kong
- 25 April – 10 May 2001, Jubilee Hall, Singapore
- 26 August – 16 September 2002, Jubilee Hall, Singapore
- 28 February 2002, Adelaide Arts Mart, Australia
- 29 October – 02 November 2002, Melbourne International Arts Festival, Victorian Arts Centre, Australia
- 19 – 23 November 2002, CINARS, Montreal, Canada

To date, Ivan Heng has performed a total of 98 performances as Emily.

## SYNOPSIS

*“Before my breasts were grown, I learned that a woman is nothing in this world that men have made...”*

Born in 1940s Singapore, Emily is an abandoned girl child. But by dint of her native wit and cunning, becomes the matriarch of a distinguished household and Singapore society’s “hostess with the mostest”. But at what cost?

As a fitting finale to W!LD RICE’s 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season of smash hits, Ivan Heng and Glen Goei, two of Singapore’s leading creative artists have been inspired to create a brand new production.

With beautiful sets, gorgeous costumes and stunning multimedia projections, this show will inject fresh insights into Singapore’s most well-loved play, and offer a glimpse of the decadent glory days of the Singaporean Peranakan community.

Emily will be at the Esplanade Theatre for 14 performances only. Joyous, funny, moving and powerful, this tour de force promises to be an unforgettable theatrical event. Don’t miss it on any account!



#### FAST FACTS

Title	:	Emily of Emerald Hill
Playwright	:	Stella Kon
Director	:	Glen Goei
Cast	:	Ivan Heng
Set Design	:	Christopher Chua
Lighting Design	:	Mac Chan
Multimedia Design	:	Brian Gothong Tan
Costume Design	:	Frederick Lee
Hair Design	:	Ashley Lim
Make-Up	:	Beno Lim (M.A.C)
Producer	:	Tony Trickett
Venue	:	Esplanade Theatre
Dates	:	3 March – 13 March 2011
Ticketing Agent	:	SISTIC.com Pte Ltd SISTIC Hotline (65) 6348 5555 SISTIC Website <a href="http://www.sistic.com.sg">www.sistic.com.sg</a> SISTIC Authorised Agents
Ticket Prices	:	S\$29 to S\$99 (excluding SISTIC charge)
Priority Booking	:	15 November – 12 December 2010 20% Discount for OCBC Credit & Debit Cards
Early Bird	:	13 December 2010 – 12 January 2011 20% Discount for OCBC Credit & Debit Cards 15% Discount for General Public
Press Contact	:	Sirius Art Pte Ltd Aryanti Kamar, Assoc. PR Director (65) 6324 8721 <a href="mailto:aryanti@siriusart.com.sg">aryanti@siriusart.com.sg</a>

# WILD RICE

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**BIOGRAPHIES**

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**GLEN GOEI – Director**

Glen has been a key player in Singapore's local and international rise to prominence in the arts over the last 20 years. This started with his Olivier Award nominated performance in the title role of *M. Butterfly* opposite Anthony Hopkins in London's West End. It grew through his multi-award winning tenure as Artistic Director of Mu-Lan Arts with productions which garnered acclaim in London, Singapore and worldwide. It reached another level with the development of his film career with his self-written, directed and produced picture *Forever Fever* (aka *That's The Way I Like It*) - the first Singapore film to have achieved a worldwide commercial film release.

Glen's work in and for Singapore has been at the forefront of the country's development. At the national level, he received the National Youth Award in 1994 for his contribution to the arts, was Creative Director of the National Day Parade for three years and produced and directed numerous events including music videos and commercials. Internationally, he was Creative Director for the Singapore Pavilion at the World Expo Nagoya, Japan 2005, the Opening Show for the Arts House, Singapore 2004, and directed the Opening Ceremony of the International Olympic Committee conference in 2006.

Underpinning this has been his constant and substantial contribution to the theatre, principally as Associate Artistic Director of W!LD RICE. Here, his productions have included hits such as *Boeing Boeing*, *The Magic Fundoshi*, *Blithe Spirit* and his internationally lauded 2009 interpretation of *The Importance of Being Earnest* which recently won Production of the Year at the 10<sup>th</sup> LIFE! Theatre, and for Dream Academy, *The Revenge of The Dim Sum Dollies*®, *The History of Singapore* and *The Little Shop of Horrors*.

He returned to the cinema in 2009 with *The Blue Mansion* (Best Film and Best Director Awards, SPH Singapore Entertainment Awards), a major film featuring a cast comprising the cream of Singapore and Malaysia's acting talent and an international production team.

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**STELLA KON – Playwright**

Both Stella's parents were born in Emerald Hill Road, Singapore's old Peranakan heartland, and her ancestors include Tan Tock Seng and Dr Lim Boon Keng. Stella has been writing since childhood, and her first play was produced when she was in Standard Three. In 1977 she was awarded first prize in the Ministry of Culture's National Playwriting Competition with *The Bridge*, and again in 1982 for *Trial*. In 1984 she drew on her family heritage to write **EMILY OF EMERALD HILL**, which won the same award. She has written other plays, stories and novels including *The Scholar and The Dragon 1986* and *Eston - Singapore Literature Merit Prize, 1994*.

Stella is the Chairperson of Musical Theatre Limited, an arts charity under MITA which seeks to promote the appreciation, production and creation of original new musicals. Since 2005, the writing of musicals has become her favourite literary genre – because “musicals are collaborative, complex, challenging, demanding, and enormously rewarding in final expression.” She has written several musicals including *Exodus* and *Blue Willow House* with Kenneth Lyen, *Victorian Days* with Chester Tan, and *Lost in Transit*, *Peter And Pierre* and *Merlion Rising* with Desmond Moey.

Stella was born in Edinburgh and lived for many years in Malaysia; she now lives in Singapore. Although she wrote **EMILY OF EMERALD HILL**, she regrets that she does not speak the Peranakan dialect or cook the traditional dishes. She has two sons and six grandchildren living in Britain and Australia, whom she visits whenever possible. She wishes she had more time to write, which is what she most enjoys.

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## IVAN HENG – Emily

Ivan Heng is one of Singapore's most prominent and dynamic creative personalities, and the founder and artistic director of WILD RICE, Singapore's leading professional theatre company.

In a pioneering career spanning more than 2 decades, Ivan directed and acted in many landmark Singapore theatre productions, which have been performed in more than 20 cities throughout Europe, Asia, America, Australia, New Zealand and Russia.

In 1990, Ivan was the first recipient of the prestigious BAT Arts Scholarship to train at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (Glasgow). He graduated as top student, winning the *Royal Lyceum Theatre Award* for his portrayal of Shakespeare's Richard III. In 1993, he moved to London where he worked in film, television and radio, and founded the Tripitaka Theatre Company. The company's intercultural works prompted TIME OUT London to proclaim, "Ivan Heng is part of the future of theatre". In 1998, after touring extensively throughout Europe, Ivan returned to Singapore to contribute to Singapore's nascent arts scene.

In 2000, with his portrayal of **EMILY OF EMERALD HILL**, Ivan founded WILD RICE. Under his leadership, the company is today at the vanguard of creating theatre with a distinctive Singaporean voice and point of view, including the OCBC Singapore Theatre Festival, which was appraised as "the main event in the world of the arts" (SPH The Straits Times 2006), and the "Blockbuster Event of the Year" (Today, 2008).

As Creative Director of Singapore's National Day Parade 2009, Ivan's theatrical vision radically reimagined and updated the event, and it reached out to a record-breaking live-television audience.

Most recently, Ivan was the Creative Director of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the inaugural Youth Olympic Games, Singapore 2010. For its creativity, ambition and technical perfection, it was ranked among the top three opening ceremonies by International Olympic Committee.

Ivan's awards for excellence in theatre include the *Edinburgh Fringe First*, *Scottish Daily Express New Names of '93 Award*, *Edinburgh Spirit of the Fringe 1995*, *Singapore Young Artist Award 1996*, the *Singapore Youth Award 1998*, *The Straits Times Life! Theatre Award for Best Director 2002*, and the inaugural *Singapore Tatler Leadership Award for Culture (2006)*.

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## CHRISTOPHER CHUA – Set Design

德/dé/Teck/ trained at the Central Saint Martins College Of Art and Design, United Kingdom in BA (Hons) Theatre: Design for Performance between 2006 – 2009.

During his stay in London, he has assisted in *The Masque Of The Red Death* by Edgar Allan Poe (Punchdrunk/Battersea Art Centre), *This Is That* by Eugène Ionesco (Peut-être Theatre) & *Isaac* (Short film). As a Designer/Director, his credits include *Merger and Accusations* (Singapore Playhouse London, 2008), *The Coffin Is Too Big For The Hole* (College Project, CSM, 2008), *The Hour We Knew Nothing Of Each Other* (College Project, CSM, 2009).

Upon returning to Singapore in 2009, his design credits include *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Toy Factory, 2010), *Maha Moggallana - A Story of Filial Piety* (Toy Factory, 2010), *White Soliloquy* (Toy Factory, 2010), *Take Heart* (Temasek Polytechnic, 2010), *Closer* (Pangdemonium, 2011), **EMILY OF EMERALD HILL** (WILD RICE, 2011) & *881* (Toy Factory, 2011). Besides designing, he makes models, props, and also technical manage.

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**MAC CHAN – Lighting Design**

Mac has worked as a Lighting Designer for Malaysian and international theatre since 1993. Over the years, he had travelled with his lighting design work staged in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and South Africa. A three-time winner of Best Lighting Design at the BOH Cameronian Arts Awards of 2002, 2003 and 2004, he received an honorary mention at the 2002 Singapore Life! Theatre Awards for his lighting design works in Singapore. He also received the Malaysian National Arts Awards for Best Lighting Designer in 2006.

His lighting designs for W!LD RICE include **EMILY OF EMERALD HILL**, *The Woman in a Tree on the Hill*, *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole and No Parking on Odd Days*, *Oi! Sleeping!!*, *Jack & The Bean-Sprout!*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Happy Endings: Asian Boys Vol. 3* and has worked on a successful 2<sup>nd</sup> run of the smash hit *The Campaign to Confer the Public Service Star on JBJ* in September 2007, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and NDP '09.

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**BRIAN GOTHONG TAN – Multimedia Design**

Brian Gothong Tan is one of the leading creatives in Singapore and is best known for his cutting-edge and highly engaging works in theatre, film and installation art. He graduated from the highly renowned California Institute of the Arts in 2005 under the prestigious Shell-NAC Scholarship. His works have been featured in numerous productions which have toured successfully in many countries like Italy, USA and the United Kingdom. His eclectic - and strange - use of multimedia in theatre earned him the "Best Use of Multimedia" award in the 2005 Life! Theatre Awards, as well as "Best Multimedia Design" in 2008.

His film project with Ekachai Uekrongtham, *Pleasure Factory*, in which he was the Director of Photography and editor, was screened in Cannes Film Festival 2007 under the *Un Certain Regard* section. He has just finished directing his first feature film, *Invisible Children*, in 2008 which is currently touring the international film festival circuit before opening in Singapore in 2009. He was also the Director of Film and Visual Effects for Singapore's National Day Parade 2009 and the world's first Youth Olympic Games Opening and Closing ceremonies in 2010.

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**FREDERICK LEE – Costume Design**

Frederick Lee's couture fashion-as-performance art theatricality has made him one of Singapore's most sought-after designers. His designs often act as windows into the future, not only because of his innovative use of non-traditional materials, but also because his extraordinary and often challenging ideals push the envelope on fashion design as we know it today.

Named 'Designer Of The Year' at the Singapore Fashion Awards 2004, Straits Times LIFE! Theatre Awards Best Costume Designer 2004 and 2010, Cleo Fashion Awards Designer of the Year 2006 and his successful couture boutique – Frederick Bridal was named "The Best of Singapore" 3 years consecutively since 2006 by the Singapore Tatler. He was the costume designer for NDP 2008 and 2009, the Shanghai World Expo 2010, and the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Youth Olympic Games 2010. Frederick often shares his precious time supporting friends in the theatre with his creative designs which have appeared in numerous concerts, musicals and both television and theatre productions such as *Bent*, *Cabaret*, *The President Charity Show*, *Miss Singapore Universe*, *Revenge of the Dim Sum Dollies®*, *Dim Sum Dollies® Singapore's Most Wanted*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Dim Sum Dollies® in The History Of Singapore*, *If There's Seasons...*, *Kumar The Queen*, *Sleepless Town*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *Broadway Beng! Jiak Liu Lian*.

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**ASHLEY LIM – Hair Design**

Ashley started his hairstyling career in 1986 and set up Ashley Salon in 1999, in order to further pursue his dedication towards the art of hairdressing, especially with theatrical work. Ashley became involved with theatrical work in 1987 and has since, worked with almost 150 productions of local and international standards. Many of these productions were participants of festivals, some of which became nominees and/or winners of art awards.

Ashley has gained a wide range and depth of experience working with all the leading professional theatrical companies of Singapore. He had the opportunities to create hair designs from a diversity of different cultures and periodic eras. His skill is extensive, culminating from more than 2 decades of hairdressing experience. He is privileged to have been widely recognised by the local theatre community as a veteran in his artistry. Ashley is particularly thrilled to have participated in *Broadway Beng! Jiak Liu Lian* (Dream Academy), *Beauty & The Beast* (W!LD RICE), *Victor/Victoria* (Zebra Crossing) and *The Monster Show* (Universal Studios Singapore), just to name a few. Apart from theatre, Ashley also extends his work to TV shows and advertorial works for leading local fashion magazines providing contemporary hair designs for bridal and fashion projects.

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**BENO LIM (M.A.C) – Make-Up Design**

With 18 years of make-up experience, Beno is heavily involved in Backstage for Theatre, Runways, and Editorials. His stint with M.A.C over the last 8 years has widened his portfolio with him working closely with Fashion Designers, Theatre Play Producers and Directors, Celebrities and other top notch events.

Recently returning from a 10-day stint at Milan for the Spring Summer 2010 Fashion Week, Beno comes to the foray with sharp make-up artistry skills in-sync with the latest trend and a pair of instinctive eyes for beauty.

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**TONY TRICKETT – Producer**

Born in Liverpool, Tony moved to Singapore from the UK in 1997. Prior to joining W!LD RICE, he worked as a management consultant, specializing 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 W!LD 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 W!LD RICE productions. Shows include *Boeing Boeing*, *Oi! Sleeping Beauty!!*, *The Magic Fundoshi*, *Jack & The Bean-Sprout!*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Asian Boys Vol. 3*, *The Campaign to Confer the Public Service Star on JBJ*, *Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (which recently won Best Production of the Year at the 10th Life! Theatre Awards 2010), *Own Time Own Target*, *Beauty & The Beast* 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.

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