

Singapore Theatre Festival welcomes **60,000** audience members over 6 editions

44 New Plays. 37 Playwrights.



2 August 2018 – The Singapore Theatre Festival, presented by leading local theatre company WILD RICE, concluded its most ambitious edition yet, with eight brand-new plays featuring bold and provocative commentary on Singapore and the world today. This year saw a host of firsts for the Festival, including the collaboration between two Festival Co-Artistic Directors, veteran theatre-makers Ivan Heng and Alfian Sa'at; and the launch of a new WILD & Free programme, which set aside 500 free tickets for students and youths.

Now in its sixth edition, the Festival aims to develop and present new local plays, and to inspire reflection and conversations about Singapore, theatre and the times we live in.

Heng, also the Founding Artistic Director of WILD RICE, elaborates: "The past three weeks have been an exhilarating reminder of the power and possibilities of theatre: that bold, thought-provoking plays like these can show us who we are, what we have done, and where we have yet to go. With each edition, our Festival grows stronger and our conversations become richer and, this year, I am thrilled to share that the Festival has achieved a key milestone of receiving its 60,000th audience member."

Still the only arts event in Singapore that focuses on presenting fully realised productions of new local writing, this year's line-up explored a diverse range of social themes and hot-button topics that affect the everyday lives of Singaporeans but which are rarely discussed.

Headlining the Festival was former Straits Times journalist Tan Tarn How's heavily anticipated commentary on media freedom and self-censorship, *Press Gang*. Other world premieres featured promising productions by new and established playwrights, including Thomas Lim's *Supervision*, Ruth Tang's *Building A Character*, the double-bill of *G.F.E* and *招: When The Cold Wind Blows* by Chong Woon Wong and Neo Hai Bin, 三木 SANMU's *One Metre Square: Voices From Sungei Road*, Pam Oei's *Faghag* and a full-fledged presentation of Alfian's *An Actress Prepares*.

Finishing his first year as both the Festival's Co-Artistic Director and Dramaturg, Alfian, also Resident Playwright at WILD RICE, reflects:



"Producing new work and investing in original writing is always a challenge and a risk – there is no blueprint beyond the script, no guarantee of success. This year, we put a spotlight on giving voices to everyday people from all walks of life – particularly those who go unheard or ignored in Singapore – by challenging the boundaries of traditional theatre-making, including performances in vernacular languages like Hokkien and Cantonese."

In line with the company's commitment to making theatre accessible for all, this year's Festival also saw the launch of WILD RICE's WILD & Free youth programme, in which 500 free tickets were snapped up by youths and students in two hours. Some performances were also interpreted in Singapore Sign Language for the deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Heng comments: "When we started the Festival, we wanted to not only present the best of contemporary theatre-making, but also make theatre accessible to all members of the wider public. The overwhelming response to the WILD & Free programme is proof that there is a hunger and excitement for local theatre among our youths, and we look forward to providing the next generation of Singapore audiences with more opportunities to experience the magic of theatre for themselves."

Since its inception in 2006, the Singapore Theatre Festival has collaborated with local theatre companies and artists to present 41 productions, including 27 world premieres, of new and original works by 37 established, emerging and undiscovered playwrights.

PRESS GANG

"Some who have worked in the mainstream media might contend that this is as close to the truth about Singapore journalism as you'll get... It depicts the journalistic landscape as no previous Singapore play has."

- The Business Times

"Press Gang is ultimately more honest about the national news media, than the national news media is about itself."

- South China Morning Post

Playwright: Tan Tarn How

Director: Ivan Heng

Cast: Benjamin Chow, Shane Mardjuki, Oniatta Effendi, Rei Poh, T. Sasitharan, Amanda Tee and Yap Yi Kai

SUPERVISION

"Teoh is masterful as the cantankerous, sharp-witted Teck... Umi, who plays Yanti with a winning openness of spirit, have a remarkable camaraderie that lays the groundwork for a heart-wrenching ending scene... Janice plays Jenny with just enough pathos to be sympathetic..."

- The Straits Times

"To find a production that hits all the right notes thematically and performatively under two hours is a rarity... And as impossible as it sounds, Supervision does just that."

- Centre 42

Playwright: Thomas Lim

Director: Glen Goei

Cast: Janice Koh, Patrick Teoh and Umi Kalthum Ismail

招: WHEN THE COLD WIND BLOWS

G.F.E. knows how to tell a simple yet striking story about a man realising that all his life, he's been looking for love in all the wrong places, and highlights the Singaporean male's fundamental inability or fear of accessing their emotional core as they obscure it under layers of faux masculinity and chutzpah...

- Bakchormeeboy.com

Playwright: Chong Woon Yong

Director: Ric Liu

Cast: Chong Woon Yong

Despite its minimal set, 招 manages to surprise the audience at several points in the show; the first one thrusts the audience into full attention within seconds of lights coming up on stage.

- Popsoken

Playwright: Neo Hai Bin

Director: Thong Pei Qin

Cast: Joshua Lim and Joel Low

G.F.E



BUILDING A CHARACTER

"Frank, funny and fabulous... It is a powerful illustration of how an unsupportive environment can destroy self-confidence – and also how depression operates."

- The Straits Times

"Throughout the performance, Sangeetha lures the audiences into her history and imagination... What remains evident is that Sangeetha is in control. She decides which stories to revisit, what sensations to evoke, when to reiterate something..."

- Popsoken



Playwright: Ruth Tang

Director: Teo Mei Ann

Cast: Rebekah Sangeetha Dorai

AN ACTRESS PREPARES

"Alfian Sa'at's breezy script is well-paced and sharply perceptive, delving into the actress' history and family background, and peppering the show with delightful anecdotes of her growing up, going for auditions and becoming part of the Singapore theatre community."

– The Straits Times

"An Actress Prepares is as much a show about Siti as it is a love letter to local theatre...It's a play that inspires hope through personal strength and transformation, and one that leaves us reeling..."

– Bakchormeeboy.com

Playwright: Alfian Sa'at
Director: Aidli 'Alin' Mosbit
Cast: Siti Khalijah Zainal Playwright: Alfian Sa'at



FAGHAG

"Faghag is part sketch comedy, part musical revue, full of eye-popping colours and rapid costume changes...It was a bravura performance from Oei at her flamboyant best as stand-up comic, singer and dress-up diva."

- The Straits Times

"A polished performance brimming with real emotion, Faghag is the fine origin story of a modern superhero, and all it takes to recognize Pam as Singapore's reigning faghag in our eyes."

- Bakchormeeboy.com



Playwright: Pam Oei
Director: Ivan Heng
Cast: Pam Oei, Julian Wong

"Veteran theatre practitioner Zelda Tatiana Ng, succeeded in presenting a balanced range of views and emotions, from angry dissatisfaction to wistful resignation towards the loss of the vendors' livelihood."

- The Straits Times

"For fans and regulars of the market, you will be delighted to see actors portray real life vendors like Mr Koh, Mr Chua and Liang Po Po. For us, it was poignant watching all that had happened since last February replay on stage."

– Save Sungei Road Market

Playwright: 三木 SANMU
Director: Zelda Tatiana Ng
Cast: Ong Kian Sin, Tan Beng Tian,
Michael Tan, Tay Kong Hui, Yong Ser Pin

ONE METRE SQUARE: VOICES FROM SUNGEI ROAD



SINGAPORE THEATRE FESTIVAL 2018 BY NUMBERS:

12,000+

Audience Members

*Presented by more than 200
Artists, Crew, Staff and volunteers*

8

**New Plays
Playwrights
Thought-provoking talkbacks**

3

**'Late Night Fix' Sessions
'Art & Life' Events
'Weekend Brunch' Activities**

