

**WILD
RICE**
PRESENTS

Ivan Heng is
**Emily of
Emerald
Hill**

Written by Stella Kon
Directed by Glen Goei



Learning Resource Pack

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ABOUT THE PLAY

Synopsis

Ivan Heng is one of Singapore's most acclaimed actors. Glen Goei is one of Singapore's most celebrated directors. Together, they bring to life one of Singapore theatre's most iconic characters: Emily Gan, an abandoned girl who overcomes all odds to emerge as the matriarch of a distinguished Peranakan household.

Evoking the golden age of Straits-Chinese culture from the 1930s, this new production promises to be the most immersive version of Stella Kon's enduring classic yet. Step into our theatre and become one of Emily's guests in her opulent, meticulously kept mansion...

In this decadent world, fulfilment for a woman can only be found in her roles as a daughter-in-law, wife, mother and home-maker. So what must she do to succeed? And at what cost? Is Emily a woman trapped by tradition, or a feminist ahead of her time?

Creative & Production Team

Written by **Stella Kon**

Directed by **Glen Goei**

Set Designer **Wong Chee Wai**

Lighting Designer **Lim Woan Wen**

Sound Designer **Paul Searles**

Costume Designers **Lai Chan, Frederick Lee & Raymond Wong**

Multimedia Designer **Brian Gothong Tan**

Hair Designer / Stylist **Ashley Lim**

Make-up Designer **The Make Up Room**

Production Manager **Melissa Teoh**

Stage Manager **Justina Khoo**

Producer **Tony Trickett**

Cast

Ivan Heng

Production History

Wild Rice Productions of *Emily of Emerald Hill*

Over two decades, there have been 134 performances of *Emily of Emerald Hill* reaching an audience of more than 30,000.

6th - 17th October 1999
Dramalab, The Actor's Studio
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Directed by **Krishen Jit**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

October 2002
George Fairfax Studio
Melbourne, Australia
Directed by **Krishen Jit**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

20th - 25th January 2000
Fringe Club, Star Alliance Festival
Hong Kong
Directed by **Krishen Jit**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

November 2002
CINARS
Montreal, Canada
Directed by **Krishen Jit**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

25th April - 10th May 2000
Jubilee Hall, Raffles Hotel
Singapore
Directed by **Krishen Jit**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

3rd to 12th March 2011
Esplanade Theatre
Singapore
Directed by **Glen Goei**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

29th August - 16th September 2001
Jubilee Hall, Raffles Hotel
Singapore
Directed by **Krishen Jit**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

4th to 28th September 2019
The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre
@ WILD RICE
Singapore
Directed by **Glen Goei**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

February 2002
Australian Performing Arts Market
Adelaide, Australia
Directed by **Krishen Jit**
Starring **Ivan Heng**

Biographies



Ivan Heng as Emily Gan

Ivan Heng is one of Singapore's most prominent and dynamic creative personalities. In a pioneering career spanning three decades, Ivan has directed, acted and designed many landmark Singapore theatre productions, which have been performed in more than 20 cities around the world.

Ivan founded W!LD RICE in 2000. Under his leadership, the company has reached out to an audience of more than a million people, and is today at the vanguard of creating theatre with a distinctive Singaporean voice.

In 2013, Ivan was awarded the Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest cultural honour. He has a law degree from the National University of Singapore, and trained at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RSAMD).



Stella Kon, Playwright

Stella has written plays, novels and short stories infused with questions about Singapore's national identity. In 1977 and 1982, she won the Ministry of Culture's National Playwriting Competition, and won it again in 1983 with *Emily of Emerald Hill*.

From 2006 to 2019, Stella was the Chairperson of Musical Theatre Ltd. She has written five musicals with composer Desmond Moey. Their latest collaboration, *Lim Boon Keng the Musical*, will be presented by Musical Theatre Ltd at Victoria Theatre in October 2019.

Stella's parents were both born on Emerald Hill Road, Singapore's old Peranakan heartland. Her ancestors include Singapore pioneers Tan Tock Seng and Lim Boon Keng. Stella has two sons and six grandchildren. She has a BA in Philosophy from the University of Singapore in Malaya (1966) and an MA in Creative Writing from Nanyang Technological University (2016).



Glen Goei, Director

Glen's substantial body of work encompasses a wide range of the performing arts, including theatre, film, parades and world expos. Highlights include his Olivier Award-nominated performance in the title role of *M. Butterfly* opposite Anthony Hopkins in London's West End; and his critically acclaimed feature films, *Forever Fever* and *The Blue Mansion*.

Glen has also made significant contributions to Singapore's theatre scene. Since 2002, Glen has served as the Co-Artistic Director of WILD RICE, for which he has directed hits such as *Supervision*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *HOTEL*, *Public Enemy*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Cook a Pot of Curry*, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, *Family Outing*, *Blithe Spirit*, *The Magic Fundoshi*, *Aladdin* and *Boeing Boeing*.

INTERVIEWS AND ARTICLES

Stella of Emerald Hill

By Shawne Wang

*Close to four decades ago, Stella Kon wrote one of the most iconic plays in Singapore theatre history. She chats with us about creating *Emily of Emerald Hill*, what the play means to her, and her life-long love of the theatre.*



Since the 1970s, Stella Kon has built an illustrious career as a writer. Drawing inspiration from Singapore's history and heritage, Stella has written plays, novels, short stories and musicals that explore issues of home and identity.

Of Stella's remarkable canon of work, *Emily of Emerald Hill* is perhaps closest to her heart. Emily Gan, the title character, is a formidable *nyonya* matriarch based on Stella's own grandmother. Stella spent some of her formative years in her family's mansion in Emerald Hill, Singapore's old Peranakan heartland.

Following its KL premiere in 1984, *Emily of Emerald Hill* has become Singapore's best-known and most-performed English-language play. Outside of Singapore and Malaysia, it has been performed in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Auckland, New York,

Hamburg, Munich, Hawaii, Edinburgh, Hong Kong, Beijing and the UK. The play has also been broadcast over Radio Iceland, and translated into Mandarin, Japanese, French and Kannada.

2019 marks the 35th anniversary of *Emily of Emerald Hill*. Ahead of WILD RICE's upcoming production of this classic play at its new theatre in Funan, Stella opens up about all things *Emily* and more.

What first inspired you to write *Emily of Emerald Hill*?

I had already received first prize in the Singapore Playwriting Competition twice - for my plays, *The Bridge* and *Trial*. But neither play got produced. The given reason from producers was that the casts were too big. Perhaps they also found the scripts unmanageable and too *avant garde*.

I was living in Ipoh then. My friend, Ong Su-Ming, suggested that I should write a one-person play - we had seen examples from British Council touring productions, among others. She suggested her illustrious grandmother as a subject, and I said that I had a formidable grandmother of my own. That was how it began.

Take us back to your process of writing *Emily of Emerald Hill*.

I wrote this play over a period of three months, on an early-model no-name computer made in Singapore. I think it had just 32K RAM! As the script itself is like a patchwork quilt of scenes, I printed the separate sections on a dot-matrix printer, punched the pages and kept them in a ring-binder so that I could shuffle them and change their order as necessary.

What was your biggest challenge in writing the play?

My biggest technical problem in writing was figuring out how to integrate the passages where Emily is acting out a scene with other people into her ordinary narration. I had not seen this done before in other plays, and it felt as though I was exploring new ground.

There were logistical challenges too! During the revision period, I moved from Ipoh to London. When I needed to print the final version, I had to borrow my nephew's printer, and plug my computer into his television set to use the TV as a monitor. It was a cumbersome process! I mailed the completed manuscript to my husband in Ipoh. He took it to the photocopy shop to make three copies, one of which he mailed to the Ministry of Culture in Singapore to submit *Emily* for the play-writing competition.



A bevy of Emilys at the Peranakan Museum's 'Emily of Emerald Hill: Singaporean Identity on Stage' exhibition in 2013 | (L-R) Neo Swee Lin, Ivan Heng, Stella Kon, Pearly Chua, Jalyn Han

What was it like for you to watch *Emily of Emerald Hill* for the first time?

I was living in Britain when the play was first performed in Malaysia. I didn't get to see the play until two years later. I was living in Edinburgh at the time. My mother phoned and told me that Emily was coming to Edinburgh. I couldn't believe it at first! True enough, Margaret Chan had been invited to perform Emily at the Edinburgh Festival. So that was when I first saw it. Margaret came to Edinburgh with a crew of five from Singapore. For the set, they had been planning to bring in a rosewood chair inlaid with mother-of-pearl. But it got held up in Customs. So they came to the house I was renting in Edinburgh, and borrowed an antique-looking chair and other pieces to dress the set!

Over the years, *Emily of Emerald Hill* has been staged all over the world. What has struck you about the responses the play has received in different countries and from different audiences?

The audience at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in the UK was the ideal audience for *Emily*. They were well-informed in the arts scene; they were international; they welcomed encountering aspects of a new culture, including phrases of Baba *patois*.

I've also heard from people in India who identified with aspects of the colonial experience that we share with them. Caucasians and Jewish people have said of Emily, "Just like my mother!" In China, people have been fascinated with its portrayal of old feudal customs and values.



Ivan Heng as Emily Gan



Ivan Heng will be reprising the title role in *Emily of Emerald Hill* for WILD RICE's Grand Opening of its new theatre in Funan. What are you most looking forward to in this new production of the play?

I have seen many actors play Emily - and they are all different! This is the wonder of theatre - each actor brings his or her own personality and experience to the same script to create a unique performance; and even the same person's performance can change and evolve over the years, as the actor grows in experience and maturity.

Twenty years ago, Ivan Heng's charismatic personality and theatre skills gave us an outstanding Emily, which thrilled audiences then. With the passage of time, Ivan has scaled ever greater professional heights - and now, ably abetted by Glen Goei, he is creating a new Emily for a new era. I am excited and eager to see Ivan's Bicentennial Emily!

35 years on, what would you say *Emily of Emerald Hill* means to you?

Emily is my daughter who has grown up, gone out into the world, and developed a life of her own! She has made her own friends and taken her own partners - and one of her most outstanding partners is Ivan Heng!

And now, turning from *Emily* - how did you discover your calling as a writer?

When I was a little girl, even before I started school, I would make up little stories and tell them to my mother, and she wrote them down in an exercise book. Her respect and encouragement were a vital ingredient in my becoming a writer.

How did you move into writing for the theatre?

In Raffles Girls' School, when I was about nine years old, our class teacher suggested we write a play to perform at our end-of-term party and outlined a story. I took up the suggestion and wrote *The Fisherman and the King*. During my school days, I wrote two other plays which were produced. One was a rhymed parody of Shakespeare called *Loh Mee Oh and Tzu Lee At*. I forget the other!

What does theatre mean to you?

Theatre is a gift my parents gave me. My mother was a noted actress in Singapore theatre in the 1950s, under the name Kheng Lim. Her story is told in the film, *A Dream of Emerald Hill*. On trips to London and other cities, she was a tireless and insatiable theatre buff. My father, Dr. Lim Kok Ann, accompanied her on these theatre excursions. He loved English poetry and his sense of the rhythms of spoken English influenced my writing. Two seats in WILD RICE's new theatre are dedicated to my parents and their love for the art form!

Stella pays tribute to her parents by naming two seats in WILD RICE's Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre

Have you ever faced writer's block? How did you handle it?

I once worked so hard on a difficult script (*Dragons' Teeth Gate*) that I experienced burn-out and had to go to bed for three weeks! Nowadays, I would stop before it gets that bad. When I have a script problem, or a set of lyrics to write, I sometimes take my notebook and pencil on a long bus ride to some far-flung terminal such as Yio Chu Kang. I find this is quite helpful, what with the enforced sitting-still, the passing scenery, and the lack of other distractions.

What advice would you give to young aspiring playwrights today?

Read lots of scripts and watch as many plays as you can. Work backstage with directors and stage managers to understand the practicalities of theatre production.

Peranakan Trivia

By Peter Lee

Peranakan

Defining a Peranakan is one of the toughest problems in academia. A Malay word meaning 'local-born', Peranakan refers to a Chinese community that has been residing in the Malay Archipelago for generations. The culture is distinguished by the unique assimilation of many aspects of Malay and colonial influences into its own. Males are referred to as *Babas*, females, *Nyonyas*, and old ladies, *Bibiks*.

Customs & Traditions

The backbone of Peranakan Culture is the strict and elaborate observation of Hokkien rites marking major life events (birth, marriage, death), seasons (new year, winter solstice) and holidays, as well as ancestral ceremonies.

The Golden Age

The heyday of the Peranakans was from the late 19th century to the mid-1950s. The most influential community in business and social welfare, the Peranakans were also the favoured partners with the British in trade and relations, hence the term the 'King's Chinese'. Many Babas and Nyonyas adopted the trappings of British civilisation – education, houses in the colonial style, entertaining and popular music, among others.

Weddings

The prelude to the 12-day wedding ritual include such days as *Hari Menyambal* (sambal-cooking day), and *Hari Kupas Bawang* (onion-peeling day), but the big occasions were reserved for the exchange of gifts (*Lap Chai*), the initiation rites (*Cheo Thau*), and the tea ceremony, the first ceremonial meal (*Makan Choon Tok*), and ceaselessly bowing to ancestors and deities. The best brides have strong knees and lots of patience.

Cuisine

The cuisine shows the *Nyonya* at her most eclectic, being a combination of Hokkien, Malay and Portuguese Eurasian traditions.

Residential Enclaves

The early *Babas* settled in the area around Telok Ayer street but soon moved to their seaside villas by Katong and Amber Road and Pasir Panjang Road and to terraced houses in Emerald Hill Road, Blair Road, Joo Chiat and Geylang.

Houses

Many Peranakans lived in ornate terraced houses with several halls. The entrance hall was the most formal reception area. As women of the household were not allowed in this area, peep-holes were often made in partition screen doors or in the boards of the floor above to allow them to view suitors.

Sarong Kebaya

Any nyonya worth her salt needs at least ten items to complete her outfit – embroidered Swiss voile kebaya, finest tulis *sarong* from Pekalongan, hand-beaded slippers (*kasut manek*), silver or gold belt, gold and diamond pin brooches (*kerosang*), gold and diamond bracelets, rings, earrings, hairpins and necklace.

Matriarchs

The classic Peranakan archetype is the fearsome, omnipotent *Bibik* matriarch, ruler of every household, the bane of every daughter-in-law, and protagonist of many *Baba* plays. The most famous matriarch in Singapore was Mrs Lee Choon Guan, the 'Diamond Queen', daughter of Tan Keong Saik, who died in 1978 at the ripe old age of 100.

Teriak

The first test of a well brought-up Peranakan is his or her ability to use the correct forms of address. All elders must be addressed when first encountered and before partaking in meals.

DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

General Discussion Points

1. What do you think are the main themes of the play?
2. What is Emily's relationship like with the different people in her life?

Some of the characters featured in the play are:

Emily's mother,

Emily's husband, Gan Joo Kheong

Emily's mother-in-law and father-in-law,

Emily's eldest son Richard,

Emily's daughter Dorris

Emily's sister-in-law Susie and

Emily's friend Bee Choo

3. How would you describe Emily's personality?
4. Emily got married to her husband, Gan Joo Kheong, when she was 14 years old. In modern Singapore, people tend to get married later in life. Why do you think this is the case?
5. Do you feel yourself relating to any parts of the story told during the performance? Which parts were you most affected or excited by?
6. Think about how the staging of the play - the sets, props, lighting, sound and costumes. What effect did these elements have on your experience?

Themes and Issues: Family & Parenting

Discussion Prompts

1. In the play, Emily tells us a lot about her relationship with Richard, her eldest son. What are your opinions of Emily as a parent?
2. Emily often compares the achievements of Richard, her eldest son, to that of Freddy, her sister-in-law's son. She did this to ensure Richard got the biggest share of the property following the passing of her father-in-law. What are your thoughts on this?
3. Should parents make major life decisions for their children?
4. Consider the view that it is the parent's responsibility to ensure their children are prepared for their future.

Key Ideas

Family

A group of people typically related by blood, marriage or law (i.e. adoption).

Community

A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.

Household

A group of individuals living under one roof.

Care-giver

Someone who provides direct care (typically for children, older people, or those who are ill).

Childhood

The period of being a child. The age span ranging from birth to adolescent.

Marriage

The legally recognised union of two people as partners in a relationship that establishes rights and obligations between them.

Patriarch

A man who is the head of a family.

Matriarch

A woman who is the head of a family.

Nuclear Family

A basic social unit comprising of a father, mother and their children.

Extended Family

A family which extends beyond the nuclear family to include grandparents and other relatives.

Mature

A word used to describe a person having reached a stage of mental or emotional development characteristic of an adult.

Adoption

The action of legally taking another's child and bringing it up as one's own.

Influence

The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.

Family Values

Traditional or cultural values about the structure and norms of families. Parents are often regarded as the ones who are responsible for the transmission of such values.

Articles and Videos

- Jail for man who hit and kicked son over homework errors – Straits Times <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/jail-for-man-who-hit-and-kicked-son-over-homework-errors>
- Commentary: Does caning still have a place in modern-day parenting? – Channel News Asia: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/should-i-cane-my-child-when-does-discipline-work-abuse-punish-11046312>
- CNA Insider: Parents know best, or do they? In today's Asia, the dilemmas of overparenting – Channel News Asia: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/do-parents-know-best-in-asia-today-dilemmas-overparenting-hyper-11726648>
- Singapore parenting must evolve, says DPM Tharman as he warns against helicopter parenting – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/singapore-parenting-must-evolve-says-dpm-tharman-as-he-warns-against-helicopter>
- Commentary: Life Beyond Grades a worthy cause but be careful not to trivialise failure – Channel News Asia: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/life-beyond-grades-movement-psle-did-not-define-me-success-exams-10757004>
- The Big Read: No exams? No problem! Some tuition centres rush in to fill gap, soothe anxious parents – TodayONLINE: <https://www.todayonline.com/big-read/big-read-no-exams-no-problem-tuition-centres-rush-fill-gap-soothe-parents-anxiety>
- Govt has no intention to ban tuition, but parents should take a step back and give children more space: Ong Ye Kung – TodayONLINE: <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/govt-has-no-intention-ban-tuition-parents-should-take-step-back-and-give-children-more>
- Video: When your best is not enough – Channel News Asia: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/when-your-best-is-not-enough-11777032>

Suggested Activities

Discussion: Emily as a Parent

In *Emily of Emerald Hill*, we hear how Emily raised her children, in particular, her eldest son, Richard.

Here are some excerpts from the play:

Pg 21: “Richard come with me. I'll see to everything you need. You don't have to worry about any problems, just let Mother do everything for you. You know how much I love you, and I want you to be happy. And I know you want to make Mother happy too.”

Pg 22: “Richard, you did so well in your Cambridge Exams I have written to a famous college in London for you to study there next year. But of course you will like it in England, you'll get on very well there, nothing to be frightened about. Clever boy, Mother is very proud of you. You will never do anything to make me sad, will you? ... You'll do everything that I want you to do.”

Pg 29 - 30: “Richard! Your mother is here! What is this wonderful job you have, to throw away your education for? Instructor is it? You're a syce in a stableyard ! Is this all you care for all that I've done for you? You forget everything I've given you, you throw away all the sacrifices I've made, you drag down all my hopes into the mud! You trample on your mother's heart, no love, no gratitude, anak cherkeh darah, you suck your mother's blood. I should have hanged myself first, before I have a son like you! If you go on with this scheme, soon you will be without a job, without any prospects. You will have thrown all my hopes down the drain-you will have broken your mother's heart for nothing. But I don't care for myself, Richard, it doesn't matter how I suffer as long as you don't ruin your own future, you understand?”

Extract from *Emily of Emerald Hill* by Stella Kon (SNP Editions, 2000).

1. What do you think of Emily's parenting methods? What were her intentions, and could those intentions be considered right or wrong?
2. How much influence should a parent have on their child's life?
3. What values do you think Emily imparted on her children?

Watch: Overparenting

Watch this short video on CNA Insider and read the accompanying article on Wen Zi Xu's education journey. "Parents know best, or do they? In today's Asia, the dilemmas of overparenting": <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/do-parents-know-best-in-asia-today-dilemmas-overparenting-hyper-11726648>

Discussion Prompts

1. What is the role of a parent?
2. What does the writer mean by 'overparenting'?
3. Do you think your parents 'overparent'?
4. What are the effects of 'overparenting'?

Extension Activity

Watch this contrasting video about nine-year-old Keane and share your thoughts about the choices he and his parents have made. "When your best is 'not enough'": <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/when-your-best-is-not-enough-11777032>

Read: Addressing Your Elders

In Western cultures, people address the brothers and sisters of their parents mostly using 'Uncle' and 'Aunt'. However, in Peranakan culture, there are specific ways to address and differentiate your elders, depending on the position of your parent in your family. Such specialised terms are similar to the proper address in Chinese cultures, with influences from the Malay language.

Read the following article to find out how Peranakan address their elders, "Addressing Your Peranakan Elders": <https://www.peranakanlife.com/news/12/15/addressing-your-peranakan-elders>

Activity: Family Tree

In Singapore, many of us live only with our immediate family members. We often only meet our extended family at major holidays and events. Get the class to draw their family trees. How detailed can they get? How do they address each member of their family? How far back can they trace their family roots?

Activity: Parenting Styles - Old vs New

A few decades ago, it was common for Singaporean parents to discipline their children physically, typically through the use of a cane. However, in recent years, the practice of caning children has divided parents. While some believe that it is okay to do so, others have frowned upon the practice and instead favoured softer approaches to disciplining their children.

There have been cases reported in the media where parents have used a disproportionate amount of force to discipline their children, such as in this article:

“Jail for man who hit and kicked son over homework errors”:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/jail-for-man-who-hit-and-kicked-son-over-homework-errors>

ChannelNews Asia also has a commentary on this issue:

“Commentary: Does caning still have a place in modern-day parenting?”:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/should-i-cane-my-child-when-does-discipline-work-abuse-punish-11046312>

Get the class to take a look at the following list of approaches parents use to discipline their children:

- Caning
- Shouting
- Withdrawal of privileges (e.g. use of handphone or computer)
- Time-outs
- Reduction in pocket money or allowance
- Standing
- Pulling their ears

Are there any other ways that are not listed here? How do we determine which of these approaches are appropriate?

Themes and Issues: Tradition & Modernisation

Discussion Prompts

1. In the play, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, Emily shares about how she insisted on kneeling to pay respects to her parents-in-law during Chinese New Year even though her father-in-law was 'modern' and did not mind that this tradition was not practised. Why do you think Emily insisted on doing so?
2. How important is it for us to retain our customs and traditions?
3. As Emily's story progresses, portions of her family home on Emerald Hill are sold, and the house gets surrounded by tall, urban buildings. In rapidly changing Singapore, how important is it for us to conserve traditional architecture, places and buildings?
4. How should we keep a balance between heritage conservation and urban renewal?

Key Ideas

Tradition

A long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another.

Modernisation

The process of adapting something to modern needs or habits.

Westernisation

The process of adopting the customs and practices of Western civilisation.

Culture

The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society. This can be thought of not just in terms of nationality (e.g. Singaporean culture), but also in terms of race, ethnicity, religion and class.

Ethnicity

A social group that has a common and distinctive culture, language, heritage and the like.

Religion

A particular system of faith and worship, most typically in belief and worship of a God (monotheism) or multiple deities and gods (polytheism).

Identity

The qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person or group distinct.

Heritage

Features that belong to the culture of a particular society, such as tradition, languages, buildings that were created in the past and still have historical importance.

Heritage Conservation

Preservation of places of interest and cultural property for future generations.

Multiculturalism

The presence, or support for the presence of several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society.

Diversity

The condition of having or being composed of differing elements.

Custom

A traditional and widely accepted way of behaving or doing something specific to a particular society, place, or time.

Melting Pot

A metaphor used when referring to a society where many different types of people, styles, customs and practices etc. are assimilated into a cohesive whole.

Articles and Videos

- Singapore's approach to diversity has created a distinctive identity across ethnic groups: PM Lee Hsien Loong – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/singapolitics/pm-whether-chinese-malay-or-indian-a-singaporean-can-spot-a-fellow-citizen>
- Integration makes Singapore Chinese identity distinct: PM Lee – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/integration-makes-singapore-chinese-identity-distinct-pm>
- URA forms new partnership to promote built heritage and identity – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/ura-forms-new-partnership-to-promote-built-heritage-and-identity>
- Eight shophouses in Jalan Besar to be conserved, another 24 under consideration by URA – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/eight-shophouses-in-jalan-besar-to-be-conserved-another-24-under-consideration-by-ura>
- Conserved shophouses filled with memories – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/conserved-shophouses-filled-with-memories>
- Building momentum in efforts to protect local history – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/building-momentum-in-efforts-to-protect-local-history>
- Too much heritage affected by roads and MRT lines: Architect, historian Lai Chee Kien – Channel News Asia: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/lai-chee-kien-architect-historian-on-the-record-10181678>

Suggested Activities

Discussion: Culture and Traditions in Singapore

Read The Straits Times article, 'Singapore's approach to diversity has created a distinctive identity across ethnic groups: PM Lee Hsien Loong', by Nur Asyiqin Mohammad Salleh. In this article, PM Lee talks about how Singapore is not a melting pot but rather a place where each race is encouraged to preserve its unique culture and traditions.

Singapore's approach to diversity has created a distinctive identity across ethnic groups: PM Lee Hsien Loong - Straits Times:
<https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/singapolitics/pm-whether-chinese-malay-or-indian-a-singaporean-can-spot-a-fellow-citizen>

Discussion Prompts

1. How have you been encouraged to preserve your own cultures and traditions? Do you have any examples of this?
2. Have you ever visited the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, the Indian Heritage Centre and/or the Malay Heritage Centre? What do you think is the roles of these sites to preserving our cultural identity?
3. In the article, PM Lee said that 'Our aim is integration, not assimilation.' What is the difference between 'integration' and 'assimilation'?

Class Project: Collected Family Recipes

Singaporeans are very proud of our food culture. Many families, like Emily's, have family recipes that are passed down from generation to generation. Compile a 'Collected Family Recipes' together as a class. You may wish to include photographs in your collection. Refer to the following table as a guide for your recipe.

Recipe Name

Written by

Ingredients

Steps

My Favourite Memory of this Dish

Themes and Issues: Women in Society

Discussion Prompts

1. In the play, Emily said *'I learned that a woman is nothing in this world that men have made, except in the role that men demand of her.'* What is the 'role that men demand' of women in the context of the play? Are these demands still present today?
2. "Some occupations are more suited for men and others for women". What are your views?
3. Many women now hold full-time jobs. However, a considerable part of the household and caregiving duties still seems to rest on their shoulders. Why do you think this is so? What effect does this have on women at the workplace?

Key Ideas

Gender Roles

The behaviours, values, and attitudes that a society considers appropriate for each gender.

Social Norm / Social Expectations

In a particular community, a set of unspoken rules that guide the behaviour of its members.

Conformity

Behaviour that follows the usual standards that are expected by a group or society.

Feminism

The advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes.

Personality

The combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character. In discussing gender, men and women are typically assumed to possess certain personality traits and behaviours.

Stereotype

A widely accepted judgment or bias about a person or group – that is overly simplified and not always accurate.

Glass Ceiling

A metaphor for the unspoken barrier that limits a particular community or demographic from advancing past a certain level in the workplace.

Social Status

The relative level of respect, honour, assumed competence, and deference accorded to people, groups, and organisations in a society.

Male Chauvinism

A form of prejudice based on the belief that men are superior to women.

Double Day, Double Shift, Double Duty or Second Shift

Additional unpaid domestic labour, such as childrearing, household chores and caring for the elderly, on top of holding a full-time job.

Patriarchy

A system of a society or government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it.

Pink Collar Worker

Someone who is working in a job traditionally considered to be women's work such as in the beauty industry, nursing, teaching, childcare or teaching.

AWARE Singapore

Singapore's leading gender equality advocacy group, formed in 1985. AWARE believes in the rights of women and men to make informed and responsible choices about their lives and to have equal opportunities in education, marriage and employment, and in the rights of women to control their own bodies, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive rights. AWARE is dedicated to removing gender-based barriers.

Articles and Videos

- Women chefs taking a stand against discrimination in Singapore kitchens – CNA: <https://cnalifestyle.channelnewsasia.com/dining/female-chefs-discrimination-kitchen-11807304>
- First woman receives prestigious Singapore Police Force Scholarship – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/first-woman-receives-prestigious-singapore-police-force-scholarship>
- Singapore should celebrate its women, who have played pivotal role in its history: Grace Fu – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-should-celebrate-its-women-who-have-played-pivotal-role-in-its-history-grace-fu>
- Gender bias biggest hurdle for women execs – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/gender-bias-biggest-hurdle-for-women-exec>
- Singapore's gender wage gap widens in 2018 – TodayONLINE: <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/singapore-gender-wage-gap-widens-2018>
- Hong Kong and Singapore, Asia's heavyweights, must lead the way in empowering women and promoting equality: UN director – South China Morning Post: <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2189096/hong-kong-and-singapore-asias-heavyweights-must-lead-way>
- Commentary: Gender equality is not just a 'women's issue' – CNA: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/gender-stereotypes-men-women-toxic-unfair-narrow-equality-10615146>
- This bicentennial, get to know these 10 women pioneers from Singapore's history – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/this-bicentennial-get-to-know-these-10-women-pioneers-from-singapores-history>
- Josephine Teo calls for 'concerted effort' to encourage women to enter politics – Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/notice-women-who-are-doing-well-and-encourage-them-to-join-politics-josephine-teo>

Suggested Activities

Discussion: Gender Roles & Stereotypes

Ask the class to discuss the following terms, and what it means, and to give some examples.

- Gender roles
- Stereotypes

Gender roles

The behaviours, values, and attitudes that a society considers appropriate for each gender. However, these can vary and are affected by ethnicity, culture, and the country one is living in. Gender roles also change in society over time.

Stereotype

A widely accepted judgment or bias about a person or group – that is overly simplified and not always accurate.

Stereotypes can be based on gender. Stereotypes can be a precursor to sexism, and it's when a person may face unequal treatment and unfair treatment due to their gender.

There are different types gender stereotype that affect both men and women, in areas such as:

- Personality
- Domestic behaviour
- Occupation
- Appearance

Ask the class to discuss what constitutes each of these four types, and why they think it's still happening in today's society, and if there's any way these gender stereotypes can be combatted.

Activity: A Survey of Households

List down the various responsibilities and chores in a home. Then, ask the class if the chore is mostly done by the men or women in their households. Record your findings in a table, such as in the example below:

Responsibility / Chore	Mostly done by the men in the household	Mostly done by the women in the household
Making sure there are meals for the family		
Laundry		
Ironing		

Talk about the result. What do you think about the result of the survey? Do you think it is a fair division of labour in your household? Think of the idea of the 'Double Day':

Double Day, Double Shift, Double Duty or Second Shift

Additional unpaid domestic labour, such as childrearing, household chores and caring for the elderly, on top of holding a full-time job.

In a family with two working parents, why do you think the majority of household and caring responsibilities fall upon the women?

Discussion: Personality Traits

Ask the class to think about the character, Emily Gan from the performance. What traits do they think best describes her personality, and why?

Example of Personality Traits:

- Loyalty
- Devoted
- Determined
- Persistent
- Abrasive
- Petty
- Dominant
- Confident
- Persuasive
- Ambitious
- Bossy
- Resourceful
- Charismatic
- Affectionate
- Shy
- Stubborn

Ask the class to think about the words they would use to describe a man in power (e.g. CEOs, heads of states, etc.). Now ask the class to describe a woman in the same position.

Discussion Prompts

1. Are there any differences in the terms used to describe the same characteristic? (e.g. assertive vs bossy)
2. What are the connotations of each term? Are they positive or negative?
3. What are the effects of these differences?

Extension Activity

Read the following article from the Harvard Business Review, 'The Different Words We Use to Describe Male and Female Leaders' and write a reflective response to the article.

<https://hbr.org/2018/05/the-different-words-we-use-to-describe-male-and-female-leaders>

For Drama Clubs

In this section, we have prepared some exercises on performing monodramas and monologues that are for Drama CCAs.

Monodramas

Emily of Emerald Hill is a monodrama performance. Not to be confused with monologues – defined as a single speech or section of a larger piece or story. A monodrama is a complete play that is performed by a single actor, often telling the story through the eyes of one character.

In a monodrama, the focus is on one person as they are the sole performer in the show. Usually, the performer appears to be talking to other characters who are not seen by the audience.

Questions for Discussion

1. Are there examples of shows that you have watched that was a monodrama? How did it differ from a show that has more actors?

Examples may include:

- *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole* by Kuo Pao Kun
- *How Did The Cat Get So Fat* by Zizi Azah
- *Roots* by Oliver Chong
- *Occupation* by Huzir Sulaiman
- *To Whom It May Concern* by Chong Tze Chien
- *Best Of* by Haresh Sharma
- *An Actress Prepares* by Alfian Sa'at
- *Building a Character* by Ruth Tang
- *Forked* by Jo Tan
- *#UnicornMoment* by Oon Shu An

2. With no other actors to engage with, what do you think are the joys and challenges of performing a monodrama?
3. How can a performer help the audience to imagine the other characters in the story?

Performing an Excerpt from *Emily of Emerald Hill*

In this exercise, we have included three extracts from the play that your students can try performing to the class. It is strongly recommended that the students read the play in its entirety before attempting to perform these excerpts. You can find more information about where to purchase copies of the play under 'Further Resources'.

In these extracts, the performer may seem to be talking to another character, who is unseen and unheard by the audience. The performer should utilise their voice and body to convey not just the lines written for their character, but also how the unseen and unheard characters are responding.

In preparation for the performance, you might want to use the '**Character Analysis Sheet**' and '**Tips on Performing a Monologue**' in the following pages.

After the person has performed the excerpt, discuss and review the performance.

Here are some questions to get the discussion started:

1. What choices did the actor make to help us get a sense of the character's background and personality?
2. Was the story effectively communicated?
3. Did the actor look like they were talking to someone else?
4. Where was the actor looking? Was it at eye-level? What did this suggest about the character they were talking to?
5. What was the relationship between the different characters in the excerpt? How did the actor communicate this?

Extract 1

Emily dials the phone — speaks in an upperclass educated voice.

EMILY: Hello Adelphi Hotel? Good morning ... may I be connected to the patisserie please? Thank you ... Good morning, this is Mrs Gan Joo Kheong speaking. I've ordered a birthday cake from you, for tomorrow, may I enquire when it will be ready for collection? Yes, the message on it is 'Richard - many happy returns of the day.' And twenty candles. Twenty! Twenty! I'll come in to collect it tomorrow morning then. Yes, thank you ever so much.

She rings off dials again. This time her voice is warm, friendly and relaxed.

EMILY: Hello, Bee Choo? Emily here. Just want to remind you, don't forget dinner tomorrow night, Richard's birthday. Ya-lah, the boy so big now, grown-up already, going to England next month. I asked him whether he's happy to go, you know what he said? Mummy, to go to England happy also-but to leave my home very sad 'ah!' Yah, rascal! ah dia. All right, give my regards to your mother eh, hope she'll be better soon ... I see you eh Bee Choo? Bye-bye.

She hangs up the phone.

Extract 2

EMILY: Richard! Richard, come let Mother talk to you something.

Emily's son Richard enters

EMILY: Hullo boy-boy, did you sleep well? Ah, big strong sonny, tomorrow going to be twenty years old, eh?

She laughs as Richard flatters her.

EMILY: Ya, 'strong son, beautiful mother', indeed ... Eh, this afternoon I want you to come out with me in the car. I'm making five woollen suits for you at Chotirmall's, I'm taking you down for fittings.

What do you mean not free this afternoon? Riding, I know you're riding. You go up to the polo ground at five o'clock only. I bring you back here in time to change and get ready. I know all your plans when I make my arrangements. Eh, you want new riding boots is it? True! ah, it's cheaper to make them here and take them to England. We'll go to the boot-makers this afternoon, you can choose your leather and show them your pattern. Then we drop into the passport office; Auntie Rosalind's husband who's working there has got all your papers ready for you.

Extract 3

EMILY: Ah Hoon! Ah Hoon come! Where are you?

Those new vests for Master Richard, put them in the sun to air. Get Master Edward's scout uniform mended in time for his campfire tonight. The Third Mistress is playing bridge at eleven o'clock, tell the driver to bring the car round. Ask the Fourth Mistress's baby amah to see me, the baby has prickly heat, she must use this powder. Is the new servant here?

Emily goes down left to meet new servant, speaks to her very kindly.

EMILY: So Ah Sim you want to work for me, I give you sixty dollars a month, and you have your day off once in two weeks. You work well for me and I will be very good to you, and surely we will get on very nicely together. You know how to wash clothes; you must put a lot of starch in the Big Master's trousers, and all the children's school uniforms. But don't put a lot on my kebayas. Only just a little bit of starch on my kebayas, you do it the way I want. All right, you go with Ah Hoon now, she will show you around.

Emily dismisses servant.

Extracts from *Emily of Emerald Hill* by Stella Kon (SNP Editions, 2000).

Character Analysis

It is essential to know the given circumstances, needs and wants of a character so you can understand how they tick and how they respond to the different people and situation in their lives. Use the Character Analysis sheet below as a guide to creating a compelling backstory for the character you are playing.

THE CHARACTER	
Name	
Age	
Gender	
Occupation	
Character Traits	
WHO IS THE CHARACTER SPEAKING TO?	
Themselves. It is directed internally.	Someone else.
THE LOCATION	
What is the environment the character is in?	
How does this affect their behaviour?	
THE STORY OF THE MONOLOGUE	
What is the main issue in the text?	
What is the character's desired outcome?	
What is preventing the character from achieving these outcomes?	
WHAT HAPPENED RIGHT BEFORE THE MONOLOGUE BEGAN?	

Tips on Performing a Monologue

1. **Figure out who you are speaking to:** Decide where or who the monologue is to be directed at. Is it another character? Themselves? The audience? Does this change in the course of the monologue? If you are speaking to another character, is this person taller or shorter than you? Is this person seated or standing?
2. **Introducing levels & movement :** Break the piece down to different parts, and think about the flow of the piece – how the emotions are changing or what the character is saying, and how it affects them. This can allow you to identify points when the character should move (i.e. from standing to sitting).
3. **Do some research:** If the play is set in a different time or place, understand the contextual details such as the names, place, country or year that it is referencing. What kind of music is playing on the radio during that time period? What sort of houses do people live in? Were there any major socio-political events during that period that might be important to know about?
4. **Charting the character's journey:** Think about the emotions to be expressed in the piece. Where does the character journey start? Where does it end up?
5. **Explore the character's physicality:** Physical attributes can make your character unique and real. Work your way down from top to bottom. Start with the head (face and neck), the upper body (shoulders, chest and arms), and then the character's lower body (hips, legs and feet). Also think of other factors that might affect your character's physicality such as age, fitness, ailments, etc.
6. **Make it seem that each time you are performing the monologue, it's as if you are speaking the lines for the very first time.**

FURTHER RESOURCES

This section contains links and information to additional resources that you may use to supplement the students learning.

Articles

- **One Small Voice: The Monodrama in Singapore Theatre** by Corrie Tan
<http://www.nlb.gov.sg/biblioasia/2016/04/04/one-small-voice-the-monodrama-in-singapore-theatre/>

Plays by Stella Kon:

Apart from *Emily of Emerald Hill*, Stella Kon has written and published numerous collections of plays, including:

- **Emily of Emerald Hill**, 2000
- **Silent Song and Other Plays**, 2000
- **Butterflies Don't Cry**, 2000
- **9 Classroom Plays**, 2006
- **3 Stellar Plays**, 2012

You can find more information on her books, including where to purchase them, at <https://emilyofemeraldhill.com>

Other Singaporean Monodramas

- **No Parking on Odd Days & The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole** by Kuo Pao Kun can be found in **The Complete Works of Kuo Pao Kun, Volume 4, Plays in English**, by Kuo Pao Kun, 2012
- **Roots** by Oliver Chong can be found in **The Finger Players. 09, Roots** by Oliver Chong, 2014
- **Rosnah** by Haresh Sharma can be found in **Shorts 2** by Haresh Sharma, 2011
- **Best Of** by Haresh Sharma, 2014
- **Occupation** and **The Weight of Silk on Skin** by Huzir Sulaiman can be found in **Huzir Sulaiman: Collected Plays 1998 - 2012** by Huzir Sulaiman, 2013

- **My Mother's Chest** by Ng Sin Yue, translated to English by Kuo Pao Kun, 1997
- **To Whom It May Concern** by Chong Tze Chien can be found in **Four Plays** by Chong Tze Chien, 2011

Books

- **A Peranakan Legacy: The Heritage of the Straits Chinese** by Peter Wee, 2011

The term 'Baba' is used to refer to the Straits-born Chinese or Peranakans. The Babas boast a unique culture and way of life that is an amalgamation of Chinese and Malay customs and etiquette. Their culture is perhaps best captured in the beautiful clothing, stunning jewellery, pretty porcelain and other artefacts used in daily living. Girls were taught, from a young age, how to cook a variety of elaborate meals as well as crafts such as beading and embroidery. The result is a rich legacy of splendid kebayas (embroidered blouses), beadwork and various other items.

Through lavish, full-colour photographs of Peranakan artefacts and clothing, this book explains the origins of the various customs and traditions. While some customs are still practiced today, other more complicated ones have disappeared as modern babas adapted to contemporary lifestyles which are deemed more convenient and practical.

- **Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion in an Interconnected World** by Peter Lee, 2014

This book traces the history of the costume of Peranakan women; specifically, the sarong, kebaya, and baju panjang. The sarong kebaya is only a starting point, however, for a rich history of language, women, trade, slavery, community formation, and education. Profusely illustrated with a wealth of historical photographs and beautiful images of sarongs and kebayas from a large donation to the Peranakan Museum, as well as those in a private collection, the book will become a valuable reference. Independent scholar Peter Lee has amassed impressive documentation from primary and secondary sources in this highly readable, visually stunning book.

Websites

- **The Peranakan Association Singapore**

<https://www.peranakan.org.sg>

Do check out past editions of the **The Peranakan Magazine** at

<https://www.peranakan.org.sg/magazine-archive/>

POST-SHOW TALK IN YOUR SCHOOL



As a follow-up to your students' trip to the theatre, we can organise a free post-show talk in your school for your students. These talks are an opportunity for students to respond and learn more about the play and the theatre industry in Singapore. The talk can be a generic discussion of the show, or go deeper into one of the themes or issues of the play.

If you would like to arrange a talk for your students for *Emily of Emerald Hill*, get in touch with Ezzat at ezzatalcaff@wildrice.com.sg

Talks are subject to availability.