

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WILD RICE's Virtual Rice Ball Raises Critical Funds  
To Help Company Survive The Pandemic**



5 October 2020 – For the first time in its 20-year history, WILD RICE staged the Rice Ball – its annual fundraising gala – as a virtual event over the weekend.

On Saturday, the Rice Ball was beamed live to 500 guests in Singapore and all over the world from WILD RICE's performing arts complex in Funan.

This marked a significant break from tradition for the theatre company, which is one of Singapore's leading arts institutions. Since 2003, the Rice Ball has dazzled and delighted its guests at the Shangri-La Hotel's Island Ballroom.

"It was a huge risk for us to go virtual, because we had to struggle with and overcome the challenges of this brand-new digital medium," says Ivan Heng, Founding Artistic Director of WILD RICE.

"But we are always ready to push the envelope and rise to the challenge. And we're so grateful to everyone – artists and audiences alike – who took a leap of faith with us as we moved the Rice Ball online this year."

With the generous support of donors, the Rice Ball raised \$650,000 from table sales, donations and the evening's silent auction. Guests tuned in from Singapore to Malaysia, Australia, Myanmar, Hong Kong, Qatar and the United Kingdom.

“We are deeply moved and grateful for the amazing support of our patrons, which will help us get through these tumultuous times,” says Heng. “The funds raised will enable us to continue to provide a home for Singapore theatre, where our theatre community can keep working, dreaming and creating,”

For the first time since theatres were closed in March, some of Singapore’s brightest stars performed for audiences on the stage of The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre in Funan.

The sensational Rice Ball concert featured musical numbers and comedy sketches performed by such theatre luminaries as Heng, Glen Goei, Pam Oei, Siti Khalijah Zainal, Benjamin Chow, Dwayne Lau, Audrey Luo and Andrew Marko, as well as a stunning solo performance by actor-musician Benjamin Kheng.

The company also worked with some of Singapore’s finest chefs to deliver exquisite meals to the homes of each guest. These included culinary creations by Chef Julien Royer of Michelin-starred Odette; Chef Beppe De Vito of Braci; Chef Massimo Pasquerelli of the Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore; Chef Ricky Ng of OPIO Kitchen & Bar; and Chef Teo Yeow Siang of Three Embers.

## **About the RICE BALL**

The Rice Ball, now in its 19th edition, has distinguished itself as one of the most highly anticipated and talked-about fundraising events of the Singapore social calendar.

Annually, the great and the good come together to show their support for WILD RICE as it continues to fulfil its mission of creating important, inclusive and innovative works that inspire audiences in Singapore and around the world.

In 2002, the inaugural Rice Ball, *Starry Starry Night*, was conceived and spearheaded by WILD RICE's Guardian Angel, Kay Kuok, as a by-invitation-only dinner and soiree at the Shangri-La Hotel with the late President SR Nathan as the Guest-of-Honour.

Since then, this gala event has been organised by the Rice Ball Committee, a group of committed individuals who have been inspired and touched by WILD RICE.

Every Rice Ball is guaranteed to be fabulous, sophisticated and a little wild, with guests dressed to the nines according to the night's theme, dining on a gastronomic feast created by the island's finest chefs and enjoying a concert that showcases Singapore's best theatre talents.

WILD RICE, like all other major arts institutions from around the world, looks to the generosity and support of benefactors, patrons and sponsors in order to do its work. All funds raised from the evening's festivities will go directly towards supporting the company's artistic and educational programming.

## About WILD RICE

WILD RICE was founded in 2000 by Ivan Heng, an internationally acclaimed and award-winning theatre practitioner, and is recognised today as one of Singapore's leading professional theatre companies.

Our mission is to provide an open forum for the shared experience of theatre: celebrating our diversity; reflecting on the problems and possibilities of our times; and presenting productions that inspire, challenge and entertain.

A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of WILD RICE's creative work, which is first and foremost a celebration of Singapore's theatrical talent. By producing and touring productions that are distinctively local in flavour and yet universal in vision and concerns, WILD RICE creates memorable experiences for audiences in Singapore and across the world.

Our exciting and varied programming for the main stage includes:

- + New and original works
- + New productions of the Singapore repertoire
- + New interpretations of world classics

Our mission to build a theatre culture also extends to the wider community through the following divisions:

- + WILD RICE Academy and First Stage, which offer drama and training programmes to nurture young talents from the ages of 5 to 12
- + Singapore Youth Theatre, which develops and empowers young people aged 13 to 17 through theatre
- + Young & Wild, which identifies and develops Singapore's young theatre professionals from the ages of 18 to 30

WILD RICE is committed to touring our shows internationally to raise the profile of Singapore theatre, to create an international awareness of our unique productions, and to engage our artists and collaborators in creative dialogues with the international arts community. Our distinctively Singaporean productions have won acclaim in major international arts festivals in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand and Russia.

WILD RICE @ Funan is our new home in the heart of Singapore's civic and cultural district. Our groundbreaking performing arts complex promises to be an iconic destination theatre for Singapore, one dedicated to creating and presenting the best of Singapore theatre, while nurturing the artists and audiences of tomorrow.

WILD RICE is a Singapore-Registered Institution of a Public Character (No. 000122).