

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Wild Rice Shines Spotlight on New Directors,
as part of Initiative to Invest in Future of Singapore Theatre**



(L-R) Thong Pei Qin, Sim Yan Ying 'YY', Ivan Heng, Victoria Chen & Hazel Ho

4 November 2020 – Wild Rice today announced that four young theatre directors will be taking centre stage in the company's performing arts complex in Funan.

These theatre-makers – Victoria Chen, Hazel Ho, Sim Yan Ying 'YY' and Thong Pei Qin – will helm four new productions under the auspices of Wild Rice's Directors' Residency Programme.

This residency programme for directors marks a new initiative for the company, which has long offered training opportunities for actors.

"When COVID-19 compelled the closure of our theatre, we made a decision to pivot from presenting shows to incubating projects – we took the opportunity to invest in the future of Singapore theatre," says Ivan Heng, Founding Artistic Director of Wild Rice.

The four directors were selected from an open call in April, which garnered more than 60 submissions. Over the past six months, they have been honing their craft in collaboration with Heng to bring their creative visions to life.

"We are always on the lookout for new voices, new stories and new ways of thinking and talking about who we are," Heng adds. "With these remarkable young artists, we were able to create a space to learn, experiment and innovate."

Each director was given the opportunity to choose and develop their script, cast and rehearse with their actors, assemble and lead a design team and more.

Originally slated to be staged in a black-box setting, all four productions will now be presented in Wild Rice's main venue – The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre – giving each director the challenge of directing a thrust-stage production.

Over the next few months, audiences will have the opportunity to watch the following exciting new productions, which cover topics as diverse as hoarding, living in modern-day Singapore, office politics and grief.

- **MINE** (directed by Thong Pei Qin) from 26 to 28 November 2020
- **CAFÉ** (directed by Hazel Ho) from 3 to 5 December 2020
- **BULL** (directed by Victoria Chen) from 7 to 9 January 2021
- **WHERE ARE YOU?** (directed by Sim Yan Ying 'YY') from 4 to 6 February 2021

(Please see **Annex** for full details on all four shows.)

Empowering Future Generations of Theatre-Makers

Working with Wild Rice has also been a challenging and rewarding learning experience for the four directors.

“Under Ivan’s mentorship, I am stretched in all the right ways so as to make me confident enough to take control of my creative ideas and commit to them wholeheartedly,” says Chen.

As part of the company’s commitment to celebrating and uplifting new voices, Heng took care to select directors who were willing to push the envelope and try different things.

“I was pleasantly surprised when my application was accepted by Wild Rice, as it seemed to deviate from their existing body of work,” admits Sim. “In addition to the trust that they have placed in me, I thoroughly appreciate the leap of faith that the company is taking in programming a devised physical theatre production.”

Each director also received full financial, marketing and production support from Wild Rice’s entire team, for which they are grateful.

“The Wild Rice team and Ivan are all very, very experienced and knowledgeable in what they do, so being part of this residency has given me the invaluable opportunity to learn from them by osmosis,” says Ho.

Significantly, all four directors under this programme are women – who remain underrepresented in this capacity in the arts industry.

“I do get a kick out of everyone being female,” Thong observes. “It really speaks to a new kind of leadership and new ways of creation in our local theatre scene. I am excited for what the future of our industry holds, and am proud to be in the company of these bold, young women, who I know will be making changes right here in Singapore!”

WILD RICE'S DIRECTORS' RESIDENCY SEASON

MINE:	26 – 28 November 2020 Thurs & Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 2.30pm & 7.30pm
CAFÉ:	3 – 5 December 2020 Thurs & Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 2.30pm & 7.30pm
BULL:	7 – 9 January 2021 Thurs & Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 2.30pm & 7.30pm
WHERE ARE YOU?:	4 – 6 February 2021 Thurs & Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 2.30pm & 7.30pm
Producer:	Koh Bee Bee
Venue:	The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre @ Wild Rice
Press Contacts:	Samantha Jong (samantha.jong@distilleri.com.sg) Linda Tan (lindatan@wildrice.com.sg)
Ticket Price:	\$35
Public Sales:	From 9 November 2020
Discounts:	\$25 tickets for Wild Rice Angels, Students & Senior Citizens
Ticketing Agent:	SISTIC.com Pte Ltd SISTIC Website www.sistic.com.sg SISTIC Hotline (+65) 6348-5555

MINE

26-28 November 2020

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre @ Wild Rice

Written By: Tan Suet-Lee

Directed By: Thong Pei Qin

Cast: Chanel Chan & Karen Tan

Su-Lin's mother, Molly, considers herself a collector. To her, everything has a story, and a place in her home. When Su-Lin's American boyfriend asks to visit, this sets mother and daughter on a collision course.

Why does Molly feel the need to surround herself with all of her belongings? What does Su-Lin learn when she digs through things that she's usually forbidden to touch? And can the relationship between Molly and Su-Lin survive coming face-to-face with their deepest, darkest secrets?

Humorous and heart-breaking, *Mine* – like the family at its heart – looks in dark, forgotten places to find moments of light and love.

Mine is a work-in-progress based on *The Weight of Emptiness*, which was staged as part of Playground Entertainment's State of Mind (a production showcase of four plays) that ran from 26 to 29 October 2016 at The Arts House at The Old Parliament.

About Thong Pei Qin

Pei Qin is an independent theatre director who devises original works of social relevance. She has been making and teaching theatre professionally for the past ten years. Selected recent directing credits include *BOOM: Zoom Read* (Singapore Repertory Theatre, 2020), *SUPER MERMAID* (Manipulate Festival 2019, Edinburgh), *BITTEN* (2018) and *招: When The Cold Wind Blows* (Singapore Theatre Festival 2018). She graduated from the University of Essex (M.A. Distinction, Theatre Directing) and the National University of Singapore (B.A. Honours, Theatre Studies).

Directing Portfolio: (thongpeiqin.wix.com/livingtheatre)

Facebook Page: (www.facebook.com/thongpeiqin.director/)

Pei Qin on *Mine*

"*Mine* resonates with what is actually happening in Singapore currently, as family members rediscover their relationships with one another during Work-from-Home arrangements, stepping on one another's toes when spaces at home start to overlap, when boundaries are blurred. The play asks how far we would go to protect a loved one, even if it means hiding the truth from them, and looks at whether love can withstand the stress of confronting our deepest secrets and fears."

CAFÉ

3-5 December 2020

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre @ Wild Rice

Written By: Joel Tan

Directed By: Hazel Ho

Cast: Adib Kosan, Ants Chua, Darren Guo, Elizabeth Loh & Seong Hui Xuan

It's a perfectly ordinary day in a perfectly ordinary café in Singapore. Or is it?

Two old friends chat and snap selfies over plates of fried chicken and *aglio olio* pasta. The three wait-staff bicker and constantly refill cups of coffee while waiting for their shifts to end.

But something strange is brewing both inside and outside of the café. Perhaps it's finally time to wake up and smell the coffee – if it's not already too late to do so.

A darkly funny psychological thriller with a conscience, **Café** asks us all to take a good hard look at ourselves and the way we live in modern-day Singapore. What do we choose to confront... and what goes wilfully ignored? What do we tell ourselves to keep going in a harsh, unkind world? Is ignorance really bliss? And can we all be nicer to wait-staff, please?

Café was first staged at The Twenty-Something Theatre Festival in 2016.

About Hazel Ho

Hazel was a co-founder and producer at The Improv Company. For seven years, she devoted her energies to the creation of a thriving, sustainable improv community in Singapore. She last directed *Dear Jay* by Euginia Tan at The Esplanade Theatre Studio in 2016. Hazel graduated from the National University of Singapore with a B.A. in Theatre Studies.

Hazel on *Café*

“*Café* really appeals to me because I like its brand of dark, absurd humour. I think it has something extremely profound to say about how we live in Singapore. It's a Joel Tan play, so it's very Singaporean and full of local flavour and immensely relatable, and the questions it raises, while timeless, will have many additional layers now because of the state of Singapore and the world in 2020, right smack in the middle of a raging pandemic.”

BULL

7-9 January 2021

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre @ Wild Rice

Written By: Mike Bartlett

Directed By: Victoria Chen

Cast: Dennis Sofian, Brian Nai, Oniatta Effendi & Selma Alkaff

Times are tough. The company is downsizing. Survival is all Thomas, Tony and Isobel can think about as they wait for their boss to arrive. They know that, by the end of the meeting, only two of them will be left standing. With their careers on the line, the trio will do whatever it takes to make one final good impression. No blow is too low.

Diving into the murky depths of office politics, Mike Bartlett's award-winning **Bull** invites us to examine the darker side of capitalism. Is climbing the corporate ladder worth putting up with all the bullying, bullfights and bullsh*t? What exactly does survival of the fittest look like? And what does it mean for our workplaces, our society, and our humanity?

Find out in this sharp, unnerving black comedy that makes its Singapore premiere at The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre in January!

This amateur production of *Bull* is performed by arrangement with Nick Hern Books.

About Victoria Chen

Vic aims to create multidisciplinary pieces that challenge stereotypes and share unheard narratives. She was recently part of How Drama's *Fat Kids Are Harder To Kidnap* on Zoom. Vic is an associate artist of Bhumi Collective and will be staging her solo piece, *Charlie*, with them at the Melbourne Fringe. Find out more at <http://victoriachen.co.uk> (IG: @vhickles)

Victoria on *Bull*

"This play strikes me to the core! I shook with rage the first time I read it. The second time, I was angry, then helpless. *Bull* examines the ugly side of our society by lifting the veil on vicious office politics. Did you know a recent survey found that 1 in 4 employees in Singapore feel bullied in the workplace? We have all been trapped in a sick game of backstabbing and gaslighting in our professional lives. It really makes you wonder how far people will go to rise up the career ladder."

WHERE ARE YOU?

4-6 February 2021

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre @ Wild Rice

Devised By: Sim Yan Ying 'YY' and the *Where Are You?* cast

Directed By: Sim Yan Ying 'YY'

Cast: Al Hafiz Sanusi, Hafeez Hassan, Deborah Hoon, Aiswarya Nair, Rachel Nip, Shanice Nicole Stanislaus & Zora Smith

It's been said that grief changes us irrevocably – that the death of a loved one shakes us up in unexpected and unimaginable ways. Some of us cling to rituals and superstitions. Others replay memories. Still others laugh in the face of its absurdity.

Weaving together personal stories and cultural perspectives, *Where Are You?* attempts to excavate the universal experience of grief through its unique manifestations. How do we talk openly and honestly about death? How can we be fearless about grieving deeply? And how will we reckon with where we go after death?

First conceived and staged in New York in 2019, *Where Are You?* will be re-imagined from scratch by director Sim Yan Ying 'YY', in close collaboration with a new team of Singapore-based artists. Come February 2021, join us in bringing some light and lightness to stories that are too often kept in the dark.

Where Are You? was first conceived and staged at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2019. It most recently had a digital production in October 2020 and is continuing its development as part of the Mabou Mines 2020/21 SUITE/Space programme.

About Sim Yan Ying 'YY'

Yan Ying 'YY' is a theatre artist based in Singapore and New York. She creates in the capacities of director, performer, writer and choreographer, and is particularly drawn towards intercultural works that challenge existing forms and boundaries. Original works include: *Who's There?* (The Transit Ensemble & New Ohio Theatre), *I LOVE WHITE MEN* (Caveat NYC, Ars Nova ANT Fest, Dixon Place) and *Without Reason* (Esplanade). YY is currently an artist in the Mabou Mines SUITE/Space programme and WILD RICE's directing residency. Training: BFA at NYU Tisch & 2017 SIT Company Summer Intensive. simyanying.com. IG: @simyanying

YY on *Where Are You?*

"*Where Are You?* was born out of confusion and chaos during a time of immense personal grief. I realised that my way of grieving was to cling to every ritual and every superstition, which had previously made little sense to me. I later became curious to find out how people across cultures come to the grieving experience, which is both so universal and specific, and then what would happen if we put these stories, which are often social taboos, on stage to share with an audience. I hope that audiences will be able to find some resonance with *Where Are You?*, whether it is feeling comforted in their grief, gaining a newfound courage to speak openly about death, or even taking with them some joy and lightness from the show."