

WILD
RICE



THE AMAZING CELESTIAL RACE

THE CHINESE ZODIAC MUSICAL FOR ALL THE FAMILY

19 FEBRUARY - 21 MARCH 2021 | WILD RICE @ FUNAN

The big news is out, and it's enough to drive all the animals in the Heavenly Kingdom wild with excitement!

In just a few days' time, the Heavenly Jade Emperor will host The Amazing Celestial Race. To make it across the finish line, contestants must survive diabolical detours, a raging river... and one another.

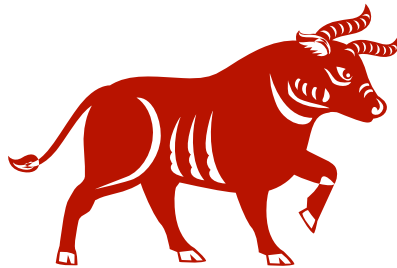
Every animal is raring to go, and ready to fight until the bitter end.

Because this is no ordinary race. It's a chance for everlasting glory – the opportunity to become a legend.

Only 12 coveted prizes are up for grabs.

And only one animal will emerge the ultimate champion.

Directed with joyous humour by Glen Goei, *The Amazing Celestial Race* takes inspiration from the legendary competition at the heart of the Chinese Zodiac. Featuring a wickedly funny script by Dwayne Lau and heartwarming original songs by Julian Wong, this hilarious musical comedy is the perfect way to celebrate the Lunar New Year for anyone from the ages of 5 to 95!



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In ways big and small, COVID-19 has disrupted festivities all over the world. Here, in Singapore, we've just celebrated a Lunar New Year quite unlike any we've experienced before – from having a daily limit of eight visitors per household to quietly tossing *lohei* with our masks on.

The pandemic has affected Wild Rice's programming too. We had to cancel our annual holiday musical last year – a heartwarming tradition that we know many of you look forward to every holiday season.



And so, we resolved to treat Singaporean audiences to something happy and joyous when our theatre finally received the green light to re-open.

As a result, *The Amazing Celestial Race* was born. We have done our best to fill it with magic and music, wit and wonder, and we hope this show brings you and yours some festive cheer in this strangest of years.

My heartfelt thanks go out to everyone, on stage and off, who has helped us bring this show to life. We could not do what we do without the passionate support of our Angels and supporters. And thank you to everyone in the audience today; we have been eagerly anticipating your laughter, your energy and your joy for weeks!

Creating a piece of theatre – essentially a constellation of moving parts coming together in perfect harmony to tell a story – has always been something of a minor miracle. These days, when so many theatres around the world remain dark, it's more of a major miracle. I know I speak for everyone in this company when I say we are profoundly grateful for this privilege.

GLEN GOEI

MESSAGE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

As a kid, I would always hear this question – “Hey! You were born in the year of what animal ah?” I always wondered where the animals of the Chinese Zodiac came from. Over the years, I discovered the story that explains the Zodiac – how it’s made up of the 12 animals who overcame many challenges to prevail in a legendary race. I had often thought about how this would make for a fun and vibrant story on stage.



I also grew up listening to many stories that my mother would tell me before bedtime. This piqued my interest in adventure and fired up my imagination. Growing up, I was exposed to more folk tales and legends that originated both locally and around the region. These were narratives rich in valuable life lessons.

I began to realise that I wanted to tell more of these stories, especially the ones that were a part of our own cultures and beliefs. The story of the Zodiac kept coming back to me, because it teems with wonderful details and has the makings of a fun, frantic and heartwarming LIVE adventure! And hence, the birth of *The Amazing Celestial Race*: a show about friendship, teamwork, perseverance and what it takes to be a hero in this everyday race we call LIFE.

It has been wonderful working on the original music with composer and arranger Julian Wong, and collaborating with director Glen Goei, who has been so meticulous in fleshing out the script. Kudos, too, to the cast and the amazing team of *Unsung Heroes* behind the scenes who have worked hard to bring this show across the finish line!

In many ways, I was inspired by my weekly playdates with my very adventurous and imaginative godchildren, Gratus and Gracia. I hope *The Amazing Celestial Race* will, in turn, inspire you to continue to dream big, to persevere to attain your goals, and to find a chance to be someone else’s Hero today! Enjoy the show!

DWAYNE LAU

5 FUN FACTS ABOUT THE CHINESE ZODIAC!

By Shawne Wang



THE CHINESE ZODIAC IS OVER 2,000 YEARS OLD!

No one knows exactly when the Zodiac was created, but it was officially identified in the early years of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) Some 500 years later, during the Zhou Dynasty (557 – 581 A.D.), it became a popular way to mark a person's birth year. This was likely because everyone – including the illiterate – could easily use the cycle of 12 animals to chronicle the passage of time.

THE CHINESE ZODIAC FOLLOWS THE LUNAR CALENDAR!

These days, the world follows what is known as the Gregorian calendar, a solar calendar system with 365 days that was first created in 1582. China officially adopted this global standard in 1912, but continued to use its ancient lunar calendar – based on astrology and the phases of the moon – to determine traditional holidays and auspicious dates. The first day of each new lunar year must occur between January 21 and February 20.

WHAT DOES YOUR ZODIAC SIGN SAY ABOUT YOU?

Just like the Western Zodiac, the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac have distinctive personality traits. People born in the Year of the Ox, for example, can be patient and

hardworking – but also stubborn and narrow-minded. Your Zodiac sign also determines your fortune (or lack thereof) in life – from wealth and health to romantic prospects.

WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY...

Many popular folk tales have sprung up to explain why the cat is missing from the Chinese Zodiac cycle – some say it failed to make the cut because it was taking a cat nap, others that it had been tricked by the rat. However, the truth is that there were no cats in ancient China. Our feline friends are native to Egypt, and were first introduced into China only a thousand years or so after the creation of the Chinese Zodiac.

ANIMAL INSTINCTS

The Chinese Zodiac has influenced and inspired similar zodiac systems all over Asia – including in Singapore, Korea, Japan and Cambodia. Some other Asian countries have different animals in their zodiac line-ups. For instance, the Thai Zodiac includes the Naga (a mythical half-human, half-snake spirit) in place of the Dragon, and the Vietnamese Zodiac has swapped out the Rabbit in favour of the Cat. Myanmar's Zodiac has eight animals – the Tiger, Lion, Elephant (With Tusks), Elephant (Without Tusks), Rat, Guinea Pig, Dragon and Garuda (a mythical bird-like creature).

DID YOU KNOW? The term 'zodiac' finds its etymological roots in ancient Greek, and literally translates to 'circle of animals'!

FINISHING THE RACE!

Many tales have sprung up in Chinese folklore to explain the order of the 12 animals in the Chinese Zodiac. Can YOU decipher the clues below and guess who came first in *The Amazing Celestial Race*?

1. This quick-witted and resourceful rodent occasionally moonlights as a French chef in Paris!

I AM: !

2. Honest, dependable and stubborn, this bovine creature can typically be found chewing the cud on a farm.

I AM: !

3. Sporting gorgeous brown stripes on orange fur, this wildcat – the largest in the world! – is fierce, confident and impulsive.

I AM: !

4. Keep an eye on your carrots when this kind, sensitive and timid fluffball turns up! Famously related to Bugs and Roger.

I AM: !

5. Magnificent and mythical, this fearsome beast is an ambitious, inspiring leader whose fiery temper is something to behold...

I AM: !

6. Sssslither on over the finish line with this clever, curious and cold-blooded reptile!

I AM: !

7. Lively and independent, this equine mammal is adept at travelling great distances at top speed.

I AM: !

8. Sheepish, easygoing and prone to being disorganised, this caprine critter can come across a bit woolly!

I AM: !

9. This cheeky, clever chimp loves bananas, fooling around and would be a great companion on a journey to the west!

I AM: !

10. Cock-a-doodle-doo! This feathered friend is nature's best alarm clock – but is occasionally boastful enough to get on your nerves!

I AM: !

11. Often said to be man's best friend, this canine creature is loyal and loving... but can also be overly anxious and excitable!

I AM: !

12. Generous, intelligent but also a bit lazy, this porcine peace-maker is planning to bring home the bacon!

I AM: !

OUR CAST



VICTORIA CHEN

Rat, Goat, Bird 1, Court Official, Villager

Vic aims to create multidisciplinary pieces that challenge stereotypes and share unheard narratives. Vic is an associate artist of Bhumi Collective and recently received the Best Emerging Artist Award for *Charlie*, her interactive solo piece at the Melbourne Fringe. Vic kicked off 2021 with her professional directorial debut, staging the Singapore premiere of *Bull* under Wild Rice's Directing Residency Programme.



TIA ANDREA GUTTENSOHN

Cat, Horse, Court Official, Villager

Tia is a multicultural collector and sharer of stories. Her credits include *Julius Caesar* (Singapore Repertory Theatre) and *Broadway Beng: Last Beng Standing* (Dream Academy). She is excited to be back and sharing in the magic of live theatre with you!





DWAYNE LAU

Dragon, Dog, Monkey, Bird 2, Court Official

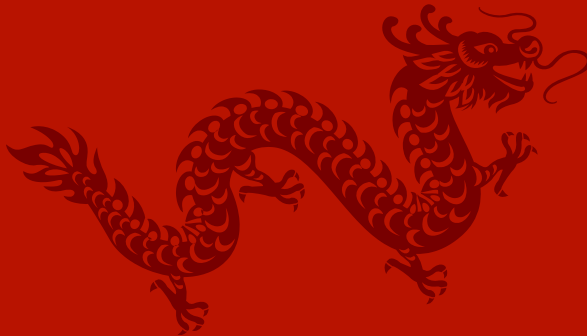
A graduate of NUS' Theatre Studies Programme, Dwayne teaches drama and regularly performs in children's theatre and comedy. He also played the Record Keeper in SRT's epic musical, *Forbidden City*. Credits with Wild Rice include *HOTEL*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *Hansel & Gretel*, *A Singapore Carol* and *Peter Pan in Serangoon Gardens*.



ANDREW LUA

Ox, Pig, Rooster, Jade Emperor, Court Official, Villager

Andrew is an actor, host, voice-over artist and director for film and theatre. His craft has led him to places such as Barcelona, Japan, the Philippines and even the Himalayas. He is grateful to be back prancing on stage in these trying times. Much love to his family, Fly Entertainment, Wild Rice and all of you supporting the Arts. God Bless.





AUDREY LUO

Rabbit, Tiger, Snake, Court Official, Villager

Audrey is an established stage and screen actress, as well as a bilingual singer, host and voice-over artist. She won Best Supporting Actress in the 12th Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards for her role in *881 The Musical*. Other notable credits include the titular role in Toy Factory's *Titoudao* (2015) and 'Mrs Wong' in feature film *Our Sister Mambo*.



OUR TEAM



GLEN GOEI

Director

Highlights from Glen's storied career in the performing arts include his Olivier Award-nominated lead performance in *M. Butterfly* opposite Anthony Hopkins in London's West End; and his critically acclaimed feature films, *Forever Fever* and *The Blue Mansion*. As Wild Rice's Co-Artistic Director, Glen has directed hits such as *Emily of Emerald Hill*, *Supervision*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *HOTEL* and *Boeing Boeing*.



DWAYNE LAU

Playwright

Dwayne has written a wide range of plays and musicals, including *Brave Maeve* (Children's Cancer Foundation), *Ashputtel: The Story of Cinderella* (I Theatre) and scripts for schools that have received distinction awards in the biennial Singapore Youth Festival. He recently wrote and performed in two sold-out solo shows, *A Date With Dwayne* and *#GOALS*. *The Amazing Celestial Race* is his first collaboration with Wild Rice as a playwright.





JULIAN WONG

Composer & Music Director

Julian has been making music with Wild Rice since 2007. Collaborations include *Peter Pan in Serangoon Gardens*, *Faghag* and *The Emperor's New Clothes*. *The Amazing Celestial Race* is Julian's third musical score with Dwayne Lau, following *Ashputtel: The Story of Cinderella* (2012) and *Brave Maeve* (2013). Julian postponed his hiatus by a month to finish this race with Dwayne!



SEONG HUI XUAN

Choreographer

Hui Xuan is an actor, singer, dancer and choreographer. Previous shows with Wild Rice include: *Café*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *My Mother Buys Condoms*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *Aladdin*. Other professional credits include: *Urinetown*, *Rent*, *Rising Son*, *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *Rabbit Hole*, *Spring Awakening*, *Into the Woods* and *Company*. Choreography credits include: *Liao Zhai Rocks!*, *Lao Jiu*, *Chicken Little* and *Forever Young*.





WONG CHEE WAI

Set Designer

Chee Wai is a full-time freelance set designer. He has designed for and worked with various performing arts companies in Singapore. Some of his recent works with Wild Rice include *Mine*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Merdeka / 獨立 / தந்திரம்*, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, *Supervision*, *Mama White Snake*, *HOTEL* and *Monkey Goes West*.



MICHAEL CHAN

Lighting Designer

Michael is an arts and entertainment lighting designer who also consults on architainment projects. Michael is currently a member of LASALLE College of the Arts' industry advisory group. Please visit lightinginsomnia.com to find out more about Michael's work.





PAUL SEARLES

Sound Designer

Paul is a composer and sound designer from The Gunnery, one of South-East Asia's finest music houses. He has composed music and designed sound for many Wild Rice productions, including *HOTEL* and *Romeo & Juliet*. Paul composed a Bernard Herrmann-inspired score for Glen Goei's *Revenge of the Pontianak*. He recently released a solo album, *Stay*, as Kazr.



KOO CHIA MENG

Multimedia Designer

Trained in filmmaking, Chia Meng has been involved in film production and multimedia design since 2009. Chia Meng and co-designer Andrew Robert Ng received the Best Multimedia Design Award for their work on Wild Rice's *Supervision* at the 2019 Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. Chia Meng is currently Creative Director at Fiction Shore.





BRIGHT ONG

Puppetry Director

Bright is a multidisciplinary performance-maker, actor and puppetry creative. He is an Associate Artist with Mascots and Puppets Specialists (Singapore), as well as an adjunct lecturer on puppetry at LASALLE College of the Arts. Bright's work has also brought him to festivals all over the world, including in Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, Korea and Scotland.

IG: @bright.ong
www.brightong.net



JOYCE GAN

Masks & Props Designer

A props designer and art director for stage and screen, Joyce enjoys building objects into characters. Recent career highlights include designing props for the award-winning short film, *The Pitch*, and serving as the weaponsmith for upcoming television series *The Night Watchers*. Joyce is thrilled to usher in an exciting 2021 theatre season with *Wild Rice*.





TUBE GALLERY

Costume Designer

Tube Gallery, a renowned Bangkok-based fashion house, comprises two dynamic designers: Saxit Pisalasupongs and Phisit Jongnarangsin. Beyond showcasing its pieces at fashion shows all over the world, Tube Gallery has designed costumes for stage productions in Singapore, Thailand and Korea. It has won the Straits Times Life! Best Costume Design Award thrice for its work on 881 *The Musical*, *Monkey Goes West* and *Private Parts*.



ASHLEY LIM

Hair Designer

Ashley started his hairstyling career in 1986. In 1999, he set up Ashley Salon to further pursue his dedication towards the art of hairdressing, especially for the theatre. He has worked on over 300 productions locally and abroad, and recently took home the Lifetime Achievement Award for Theatre, presented by Mediacorp.





BOBBIE NG

Make-Up Designer

Bobbie, co-founder of The Make Up Room, has been passionately involved in designing make-up for local theatre productions for the past 20 years. She first collaborated with Wild Rice on *Blithe Spirit* in 2001. Since then, she has fostered great friendships with many of Singapore's best theatre-makers.



JEANNETTE CHONG

Stage Manager

Jeannette moves swiftly behind the scenes and works hard in supporting every show in which she's involved. She loves working on productions that challenge her to hone her craft. Making paperwork interesting for others to read is one of her hobbies.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THANK YOU!

CK Chia / Dan Ng / Distilleri / Ruey Loon / SISTIC.COM Pte Ltd
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CREDITS

CAST

Victoria Chen
Tia Andrea Guttensohn
Dwayne Lau
Andrew Lua
Audrey Luo

MUSICIANS

Electric Guitar **Addy Cradle**
Acoustic Guitar **Feri Susanto**
Electric Bass **Colin Yong**
Drums **Viknes Vinayak Veerappan**
Ukulele **Evan J De Silva**
Backing Vocals **Vanessa Kee & Sharon Sum**

CREATIVE TEAM

Director **Glen Goei**
Playwright **Dwayne Lau**
Composer & Music Director **Julian Wong**
Choreographer **Seong Hui Xuan**
Set Designer **Wong Chee Wai**
Lighting Designer **Michael Chan**
Sound Designer **Paul Searles**
Multimedia Designer **Koo Chia Meng**
Puppetry Director **Bright Ong**
Masks & Props Designer **Joyce Gan**
Costume Designer **Tube Gallery**
Hair Designer **Ashley Lim**
Make-Up Designer **Bobbie Ng** from The Make Up Room

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer **Koh Bee Bee**
Production Manager **Melissa Teoh**
Technical Manager **David Sagaya**
Production Co-ordinator **Phua Yun Yun**
Production Assistant **Angela Ee**
Stage Manager **Jeannette Chong**
Assistant Stage Managers **Anne Lee & Nadia Noordin**
Multimedia Producer **Xu Xin'en**
Multimedia Illustrator **CK Chia**
Multimedia Motion Graphics Artist **Chap Heng**
Multimedia Operator **Marilyn Ang**
Puppet Maker **Frankie Malachi**
Masks & Props Assistant **Tan Yi Kai**
Technicians **Ahmad Hafriz Bin Berkath & Muhammad Azhar Bin Azman**
Lighting Operator **Joanne Ng**
Followspot Operators **Suzannah Anne Chia & Suhaila**
Fly Operator **Zam**
Stage Assistants **Allyson Bong, Alethea Koh, Nurarina Nasir & Nurliana Haron**
Hair Assistant **Michelle Wai**
Make-Up Assistants **Esther Goh & Hiroko Willot**
Wardrobe Manager **Theresa Chan**
Dressers **Tiffany Chai & Lim Zhiying**

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.

Its 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, the company creates memorable experiences for audiences in Singapore and across the world.

The company's exciting and varied programming for the main stage includes:

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

The company's 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 its shows internationally to raise the profile of Singapore theatre, to create an international awareness of its unique productions, and to engage its artists and collaborators in creative dialogues with the international arts community. Its distinctively Singaporean productions have won great acclaim in major international arts festivals in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand and Russia.

Wild Rice @ Funan is the company's new home in the heart of Singapore's civic and cultural district. This 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 TEAM

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