



WILD
RICE

STRAIGHT ACTING

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY THOMAS LIM

14 – 24 OCT 2021

Under embargo until 1 September 2021

Wild Rice Announces World Premiere of Thomas Lim's ***STRAIGHT ACTING*** and Return of Pam Oei's ***FAGHAG!***

30 August 2021 – Wild Rice today announced the next two main-stage productions in its 2021 season – the world premiere of ***Straight Acting*** by award-winning playwright Thomas Lim (*Grandmother Tongue*, *Supervision*); and the return of ***Faghag!***, Pam Oei's critically acclaimed one-woman show.

Getting *Straight* to the Point

In October, Wild Rice will present Thomas Lim's ***Straight Acting*** – the eagerly anticipated new play by one of Singapore's most acclaimed young playwrights.

Heartfelt and humorous in equal measure, *Straight Acting* introduces us to two LGBTQ+ couples who pretend to be straight in order to start a family and make a life together – something they cannot easily do in straight-laced Singapore. (See **Annex A.**)

Since making his professional playwriting debut in 2016, Lim has won critical acclaim for the thought-provoking and profoundly Singaporean social commentary in his work. His plays have also been very popular with audiences, enjoying sold-out success across multiple runs – from *Grandmother Tongue* (2016, 2017, 2021) to *Supervision* (2018, 2019) and *Peter Pan in Serangoon Gardens* (2019).

"As a theatre company, Wild Rice's mission has always been to tell stories that need to be told, to shine a light on under-represented communities," says Ivan Heng, the company's Founding Artistic Director.

"We are looking forward to welcoming audiences to *Straight Acting*, which takes an unflinching look at how we define love and family here in Singapore, and asks us if it's time for old ways and mindsets to change."

Lim was inspired by stories about the arduous process that LGBTQ+ parents must undergo in order to start and have their families be recognised in Singapore.

These include the landmark case of a gay man who was finally allowed by Singapore's high court to adopt his own biological child in 2018, four years after he first began legal proceedings. In 2020, his appeal for his long-term partner to be granted guardianship and joint custody of their children was rejected.

"I was deeply moved by the lengths that these parents would go in order to have children," Lim explains. "And I was equally unnerved by the way efforts were swiftly made to change policies and processes to prevent more LGBTQ+ parents from doing the same thing."

"With *Straight Acting*, I hope that we can begin to recognise, accept and support the shared dreams, aspirations and love that all parents have for their children and families."

***Straight Acting* will make its world premiere at The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre from 14 to 24 October.** Tickets go on sale to Wild Rice Angels from 1 September, and to the general public from 10am on 6 September (Monday).

WILD
RICE

FAGHAG

4 – 14 NOV 2021 | WILD RICE @ FUNAN

***Faghag* Makes Proud Comeback!**

In November, Pam Oei will return to the Wild Rice stage with ***Faghag*** – her critically acclaimed one-woman show that documents her journey as an LGBTQ+ ally and activist. (See **Annex B**.)

The production was playing to full houses at The Ngee Ann Kongs Theatre when its run was cut short in late July, as Singapore again tightened restrictions on live performances under Phase 2 (Heightened Alert).

At the time, Wild Rice had to cancel 11 sold-out performances of *Faghag*, disappointing close to 1,500 patrons who were looking forward to watching the show. Before the production abruptly closed, the company had also been fielding requests from the public to extend the run.

“It was no easy feat but we reprogrammed the rest of our 2021 season so we could bring *Faghag* back – with some additional performances for good measure,” says Heng. “To everyone who missed out on getting tickets, this will be your last chance to watch this fabulous production!”

On her part, Oei is glad to have the opportunity to finish out the run of this show, which is near and dear to her heart.

“We’ve received so many lovely messages from audience members who were profoundly moved by *Faghag*,” says Oei. “I’m thrilled that we can share this show and its message of love, pride and acceptance with even more people.”

***Faghag* will return to The Ngee Ann Kongs Theatre from 4 to 14 November.** Tickets go on sale to the general public from 10am on 6 September (Monday).

STRAIGHT ACTING

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY THOMAS LIM

14 – 24 OCT 2021



Synopsis

From award-winning playwright Thomas Lim (*Grandmother Tongue*, *Supervision*) comes ***Straight Acting***, a hopeful, heartfelt comedy about the drama of trying to keep things straight... when you're anything but.

All Olivia and Jaime want to do is start a family and make a life together – something they can't easily do in straight-laced Singapore. To make the system work for them, Olivia and Jaime get their gay best friends, Russell and Jia Ming, in on the act. Together, they pretend to be two happy, heteronormative couples living in wedded bliss.

At first, blending a little fiction into the facts of their lives seems to go well. But things start to fall apart when Jia Ming's mother visits unexpectedly. Suddenly, the four friends find themselves wondering: is living a lie really living at all?

Bitingly funny, moving and thought-provoking, *Straight Acting* boldly examines – and redefines – what home truths and family values mean in Singapore. Don't miss this sensational new play when it makes its world premiere on the Wild Rice stage this October!

Praise for Thomas Lim's Plays

GRANDMOTHER TONGUE

"...an eloquent evocation of the linguistic, cultural and emotional ghetto of an elderly woman who is cut off from a society which regards her native tongue as substandard... *Grandmother Tongue* captures this ambiguity well, the sense that many of us are stranded in a linguistic no man's land, able to speak a coloniser's language well, but unable to communicate in, literally, our grandmothers' tongues." – Ong Sor Fern for *The Straits Times*

"...the regular sniffles from the audience meant that the play struck a close chord with many... captures many facets of what it means to be a senior citizen in Singapore today – painting a very vivid picture of an 84-year-old woman getting alienated from a rapidly changing Singapore... a play which does more showing than telling – but speaks volumes nonetheless." – *The Business Times*

SUPERVISION

Winner, Best Original Script at the 2019 Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards

"Lim is a playwright with an uncanny ability to transpose the nuances of real life relationships, in all their bittersweet complexity, onto the stage. At the same time, he locates these relationships firmly within a socio-political context, making the implications of the characters' struggles apparent without shoving commentary down anyone's throats." – *Centre 42*

"Rich, complex and stimulating... With a fine, tight script, excellent performances all round and a deft directorial touch, it's a 'must see' production, and a testament to Wild Rice's commitment to 'inspire, challenge and entertain'." – *The Robb Report*

PETER PAN IN SERANGOON GARDENS

"The story of the boy who never grows up is staged with both theatrical flair and heart... The hardworking cast from adorable kids to veteran actors deliver songs, dances, slapstick and a grand finale brawl with energetic brio." – *The Straits Times*

"Absolutely delightful... has all the ingredients of the perfect seasonal entertainment - strong performances, whimsical humour, rollicking action." – *The Business Times*

STRAIGHT ACTING FAST FACTS

Playwright & Director	Thomas Lim
Cast	Goh Guat Kian, Darren Guo, Tan Shou Chen, Eve Voightlander & Deonn Yang
Dramaturg	Alfian Sa'at
Set Designer	Wong Chee Wai
Lighting Designer	James Tan
Sound Designer	Jing Ng
Multimedia Designer	Rachel Ng
Hair Designer	Ashley Lim
Make-Up Designer	Bobbie Ng
Performance Dates	14 – 24 October 2021 Tue – Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 3pm & 7.30pm Sun: 2pm & 6pm
Ticket Prices	\$40, \$50, \$60
Venue	The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre @ Wild Rice
Press Contact	Linda Tan (lindatan@wildrice.com.sg)
Priority Sales	1 – 5 September 2021 for Wild Rice Angels
Public Sales	From 6 September 2021
Discounts	20% off on Category 1 tickets for Wild Rice Angels 10% off on Category 1 tickets for Students & Senior Citizens 10% off on Category 1 tickets – Solidarity Discount for patrons who have purchased tickets to Singapore Repertory Theatre's <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare</i> and Pandemonium's <i>The Mother</i> Group Discounts for 20+ (15% off Cat 1 and 2) and 50+ tickets (20% off Cat 1 & 2)
Ticketing Agent	SISTIC.com Pte Ltd SISTIC Website www.sistic.com.sg SISTIC Hotline (+65) 6348-5555

Creative Team Biographies

THOMAS LIM – Playwright & Director

Thomas made his professional debut as a playwright and director with *Grandmother Tongue*, which is performed in Teochew, English and Mandarin. His sophomore work, *Supervision*, won Best Original Script at the 2019 Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. He has worked as a drama educator in secondary schools and junior colleges across Singapore, and is currently the Associate Artistic Director for Youth and Education at Wild Rice.

Alfian Sa'at – Dramaturg

Alfian is the Resident Playwright of Wild Rice. He has been nominated at the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards for Best Original Script 11 times, and has received the award four times. His plays with Wild Rice include *HOTEL* (with Marcia Vanderstraaten), *The Asian Boys Trilogy*, *Cooling-Off Day*, *The Optic Trilogy* and *Homesick*. He was the winner of the Golden Point Award for Poetry and the National Arts Council Young Artist Award for Literature in 2001. His publications include *Collected Plays One, Two and Three*; poetry collections *One Fierce Hour*, *A History of Amnesia* and *The Invisible Manuscript*; and short story collections *Corridor* and *Malay Sketches*.

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 *The Amazing Celestial Race*, *Mine*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Merdeka / 獨立 / தந்திரம்*, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, *Supervision*, *Mama White Snake*, *HOTEL* and *Monkey Goes West*.

James Tan – Lighting Designer

James was conferred the Young Artist Award as well as the Arts Professional Scholarship by the National Arts Council of Singapore. Theatre: *Merdeka / 獨立 / தந்திரம்* (Wild Rice), *Dragonflies* (Pangdemonium), *God of Carnage* (Singapore Repertory Theatre). Events: *From Singapore to Singaporean: The Bicentennial Experience*, *The Art of the Brick® Exhibition @ ArtScience Museum*. Public Artwork: *Yellow @ Lorong Halus Bridge*.

Jing Ng – Sound Designer

A recipient of the National Arts Council Scholarship, Jing graduated with first-class honours from Rose Bruford College (UK), specialising in Performance Sound. Having designed for various productions over 10 years of practice, he aspires to provide audiences with a wholesome sonic experience – what, why and how you listen through a live performance. He was nominated for Best Sound Design at the 2014 Off West End Theatre Awards, as well as the 2018 Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. Website: www.jingngsound.com // www.soundcloud.com/jingsound

Rachel Ng – Multimedia Designer

Rachel is a digital content producer who is passionate about telling Singapore stories. She is currently the Social Media Executive at Wild Rice, where she has worked on marketing campaigns for recent productions such as *The Amazing Celestial Race*, *Faghag* and *You Are Here*.

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 is the co-founder of The Make Up Room, and 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.

Cast Biographies

GOH GUAT KIAN – Meilian

Guat Kian is a full-time theatre practitioner and teacher, and has appeared in more than 100 plays since 1982. She originated roles in plays by Kuo Pao Kun, the pioneer of Singapore theatre, including *Mama Looking for Her Cat*, *Lao Jiu*, *My Mother's Wooden Chest*, *The Spirits Play* and *Sunset Rise*. She won Best Actress at the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards for her performances in *Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea* (2006) by The Finger Players and *Underclass* (2019) by The Necessary Stage.

DARREN GUO – Jia Ming

Darren is a bilingual theatre practitioner who graduated with a BA in Theatre Arts from the University of Essex. He was last seen in *Café* by Wild Rice. Other notable credits include *Art Studio* by Nine Years Theatre, *Citizen Dog* by The Finger Players and *The Rat Trap* by Gateway Arts. Aside from working as an actor in both theatre and film, Darren has in recent years started to teach and do more creative work, including play-making and directing.

TAN SHOU CHEN – Russell

Shou Chen is a recognised theatre-maker. Selected stage acting credits: *Grandmother Tongue*, *Asian Boys Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* (Wild Rice); *The Hypochondriac* (Young & Wild); *Forbidden City: Portrait of an Empress*, *Twelfth Night* (Singapore Repertory Theatre); *Liao Zhai Rocks!* (The Theatre Practice, 2019, Shanghai); *The Reunification of the Two Koreas* (T: >Works and Centre Dramatique National de Tours); Eugène Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (The Esplanade Studios); *Charged* (Teater Ekamatra); *Framed, by Adolf* (The Finger Players); *The Last Bull* (Checkpoint Theatre). Shou Chen is also a director, voice-over artist and educator. www.shouchen.net IG: @shouchentan

EVE VOIGTLANDER – Jaime

Eve has performed for the local stage as an actress and a dancer. A graduate of Young & Wild's acting programme, her stage credits include *Anything Can Happen/Something Must Happen* (Wild Rice) and *The Naughty List* (Ugly On Paper). A television producer by day, Eve endeavours to integrate and expand her creative capacities to further her work as an artist.

DEONN YANG – Olivia

Deonn is a freelance theatre-maker. As an actor, she has been a part of Esplanade's PLAYtime! and Huayi Chinese Festival of Arts, the M1 Fringe Festival, and Singapore International Festival of Arts. Deonn is a core member of Playwrights Commune. She is interested in people and their stories, and always enjoys having a good laugh.



Synopsis

Pam Oei likes gay boys. Gay boys like her too. She has always felt a profound affinity with them – even as a teenager, before she knew what the term ‘gay’ meant.

Over the years, Pam’s adventures have included: coaxing gay boyfriends out of the closet, attending her first gay wedding in 2001, fighting to repeal Section 377A of the Penal Code in 2007, and acting as Pink Dot’s Countdown Queen every year (though the job is less ‘queen’ and more ‘drill sergeant’!). This makes her a gold-star straight ally and a *bona fide* faghag.

Join Pam and the multiple characters she plays in this rainbow-coloured cabaret! Accompanied by maestro Julian Wong on the piano, Pam will tell jokes, share heart-warming tales and throw in a few torch songs for good measure. Along the way, she’ll show you exactly why she deserves the title of Singapore’s Number One Faghag!

Directed with joyous pride by Ivan Heng, *Faghag* is back by popular demand following its critically acclaimed premiere at Wild Rice’s Singapore Theatre Festival in 2018.

Reviews

A Smash Hit With Critics!

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

“Oei gave us a very real and raw look at a subject that is very dear and valuable to her. She included personal and intimate stories and anecdotes that ranged from funny to touching to impassioned, and in the process, gave us one big performance that was both magnetic and soul-stirring.” – *BlogCritics.org*

“*Faghag* is a riot of a show, and Pam is completely in her element as she plays to her strengths in each and every scene. A polished performance brimming with real emotion, *Faghag* is the fine origin story of a modern superhero, and all it takes to recognise Pam as Singapore’s reigning faghag in our eyes.” – *Bakchormeeboy*

Audiences Love *Faghag*!

“One of the best solo shows of my life. Pam should tour the world with it - though Singapore would miss her too much... The lesson is that the personal story, told honestly with humour, compassion and an ocean of generosity... is a combination to better the complete works of William Shakespeare and empower the audience and send it singing into the streets.” – *Aubrey Mellor*

“You can’t deny the power of truthful, autobiographical storytelling and a strong clear message... This show gives me hope [and] reminded me of how beautiful, powerful and magical the theatre truly is. My slightly bitter, jaded heart left the theatre lifted, understood, empowered.” – *Ronald Goh*

“An awesome show for everyone, straight or gay... Pam Oei was absolute gold. My friends and I laughed till our jaws hurt... And our hearts pained with hers, as she talked about the struggles of the local LGBTQ community.” – *Kelly Chong*

FAGHAG FAST FACTS

Playwright	Pam Oei
Director	Ivan Heng
Music Director	Julian Wong
Cast	Pam Oei, Julian Wong & Gino Babagay
Dramaturg	Alfian Sa'at
Lighting Designer	Alberta Wileo
Costume Designer	Frederick Lee
Sound Designer	Shah Tahir
Multimedia Designer	He Shuming
Hair Designer	Ashley Lim
Make-Up Designer	Bobbie Ng
Performance Dates	4 – 14 November 2021 Tue – Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 3pm & 7.30pm Sun: 2pm & 6pm
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Cast & Creative Team Biographies

PAM OEI – Playwright & Performer

Pam has been in over 100 theatre, television and film productions. Theatre acting credits include the critically acclaimed *HOTEL*, *Animal Farm*, *Everything But The Brain*, *RENT* and *Boeing Boeing*. She is probably best known for being one third of Singapore's favourite cabaret trio, The Dim Sum Dollies. Her directing credits include *Mama White Snake*, *Boeing Boeing*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *Hansel & Gretel* for Wild Rice. This multi-tasking wife and mother is also the frontwoman of Singaporean rock band Ugly In The Morning. Their latest album can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3omiuca> Instagram: @pam_oei

IVAN HENG – Director

Ivan is one of Singapore's most prominent and dynamic creative personalities. In a pioneering career spanning three decades, Ivan has directed, acted in and designed many landmark Singapore theatre productions. Ivan founded Wild Rice in 2000. Under his leadership, the company has reached an audience of over a million people, and is today at the vanguard of creating theatre with a distinctive Singaporean voice. Its ground-breaking theatre complex opened in September 2019 with a mission to create and present the best of Singapore theatre, nurture young artists and audiences, and leave a legacy of artistic excellence for generations to come. In 2013, Ivan was awarded the Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest cultural honour.

JULIAN WONG – Music Director & Performer

Julian is a composer, arranger and music director. He has been making music with Wild Rice since 2007. Selected credits include *Peter Pan in Serangoon Gardens*, *The Amazing Celestial Race*, *Rice Ball 2020: MASKquerade!* and *An Actress Prepares*. Julian has accompanied Pam Oei in the *Dim Sum Dollies* shows and created *The Emperor's New Clothes* in 2015 with Pam and Joel Tan. He is honoured to share the stage with his Faghag once again!

ALFIAN SA'AT – Dramaturg

Alfian is the Resident Playwright of Wild Rice. He has been nominated at the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards for Best Original Script 11 times, and has received the award four times. His plays with Wild Rice include *HOTEL* (with Marcia Vanderstraaten), *The Asian Boys Trilogy*, *Cooling-Off Day*, *The Optic Trilogy* and *Homesick*. He was the winner of the Golden Point Award for Poetry and the National Arts Council Young Artist Award for Literature in 2001. His publications include *Collected Plays One, Two and Three*; poetry collections *One Fierce Hour*, *A History of Amnesia* and *The Invisible Manuscript*; and short story collections *Corridor* and *Malay Sketches*.

ALBERTA WILEO – Lighting Designer

Alberta is a freelance lighting designer and theatre artist. Over the past 18 years, he has designed for many professional performing arts companies in Singapore – including Arts Fission, Action Theatre, Singapore Repertory Theatre, Singapore Symphony Orchestra and more – and around the world from Malaysia to Indonesia, Japan, France and the USA.

He would like to express his gratitude to Wild Rice and director Ivan Heng for their trust in bringing him on board to paint *Faghag* with light.

SHAH TAHIR – Sound Designer

Shah has worked as a sound engineer and designer on projects such as the National Day Parade (2009-2019), the 2016 SEA Games and Child Aid (2010 to 2014). He has designed and mixed audio for several major theatrical productions in Singapore, including *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Beauty World* (Esplanade Theatre), *If There're Seasons* and *Forbidden City*. He has also worked with renowned musicians like Laura Fygi (and the Singapore Symphonic Orchestra), Dick Lee, Jacintha, Prema Lucas and Sheila Majid. In 2015, he was given the Artistic Excellence Award in Sound Engineering by COMPASS.

FREDERICK LEE – Costume Designer

One of Singapore's most sought-after designers, Frederick's couture fashion-as-performance-art theatricality has garnered him numerous awards and accolades. Most recently, he was named Best International Designer of the Year at Vietnam Fashion Week 2019. To support his friends in the theatre, Frederick has designed costumes for Wild Rice's *La Cage Aux Folles* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*; Dream Academy's *Dim Sum Dollies* and The Theatre Practice's *If There're Seasons*, among others. He has won the Best Costume Design Award at the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards thrice. Frederick was also the director of costumes for the 2008 and 2009 National Day Parades, as well as the 2010 Youth Olympic Games.

HE SHUMING – Multimedia Designer

Shuming is a screenwriter and director. He graduated with a MFA in Directing from the prestigious American Film Institute (AFI) Conservatory in Los Angeles. Shuming was conferred the Young Artist Award in 2019 by the National Arts Council. He is currently in pre-production for his debut feature film, *Ajoomma*.

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 is the co-founder of The Make Up Room, and 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.

GINO BABAGAY – Dresser

Gino is a full-time dancer and choreographer who has worked for companies like Wild Rice, Dream Academy, Mediacorp and Cake Theatre. Recent credits of which he is most proud include *I Am Kumar*, *Pesta Perdana 2021* and *Crazy Christmas: Keep The Dream Alive* (2020), which he both choreographed and performed in.

WILD RICE @ FUNAN: UPDATED VISITOR SAFETY INFORMATION

The health and safety of our audiences is our priority. To ensure that audiences feel secure and comfortable, Wild Rice will be closely following the government's latest health guidelines throughout our venue.

To enter our theatre, audiences must



Be Fully Vaccinated

- Pre-Event Testing **NOT** required
- Verify your status at the venue using TraceTogether

OR



Have Tested Negative

- Provide proof of negative COVID-19 test (24h validity)
- Pre-Event Testing **NOT** provided at venue

OR



Have Recovered from COVID-19

- Within 270 days of your diagnosis
- Must provide Pre-Event Testing Exemption Notice and photo ID at the door

For more details, please visit <https://www.wildrice.com.sg/visitor-safety-information>