

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WILD RICE ANNOUNCES NEXT THREE SHOWS IN 2022 SEASON



4 April 2022 – Wild Rice today announced the next three shows in its 2022 season: ***Faghag*** (from 12 May 2022), ***Straight Acting*** (16 June – 2 July 2022) and ***Don't Call Him Mr. Mari Kita*** (7 – 23 July 2022).

“Wild Rice is proud to present these critically acclaimed productions, which represent the very best of Singapore theatre and deserve to be seen by as many people as possible,” says Ivan Heng, the company’s Founding Artistic Director.

All three shows will be performed in The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre, Wild Rice’s main-stage venue in its performing arts complex in Funan.

A Message of Love, Pride and Acceptance

In May, Pam Oei will make a triumphant return to the Wild Rice stage for a full run of ***FAGHAG***, her critically acclaimed one-woman show that documents her journey as an LGBTQ+ ally and activist. (See **Annex A** for more information.)

The production has run into a number of obstacles as a result of the pandemic. In July last year, the show had to be cut short when restrictions on live performances were tightened under Phase 2 (Heightened Alert).

A planned encore run in November 2021 was cancelled when Oei tested positive for COVID-19 a few days before the show was set to open.

“Third time’s the charm,” Oei laughs. “As with everyone in Singapore and around the world, the pandemic has tried repeatedly to bring us down. What we all need now, more than ever, is love and laughter and light, which is what audiences will get with this show.”

For Oei, this restaging of *Faghag* remains profoundly relevant. On 28 February, Singapore’s Court of Appeal upheld Section 377A of the Penal Code, which criminalises sex between men.

“It’s evident that Singapore still has a long way to go in according our LGBTQ+ community the equality and respect they deserve,” says Oei. “Until that day, I will proudly perform *Faghag* and keep sharing its message of love, pride and acceptance.”

Getting *Straight* to the Point

In June, Thomas Lim’s ***STRAIGHT ACTING***, which premiered to sold-out houses last year, returns to Wild Rice’s stage for a limited run.

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 B** for more details.)

Hailed by critics and audiences alike for its honest, empathetic portrayal of the struggles faced by Singapore’s LGBTQ+ community, the production recently received two Straits Times Life! Theatre Award nominations for two members of its cast – Darren Guo (Best Actor) and Deonn Yang (Best Actress).

“I’m excited to revisit this work and try out some new ideas that I’ve had since its premiere last year,” says Lim. “Live theatre relies so heavily on the interaction between the actors on stage and their audiences – so, this time around, I’m also thrilled by the prospect of having this show play to a full-capacity audience!”

A Celebration of Singapore’s Musical Heritage

In July 2022, Wild Rice will present ***DON’T CALL HIM MR. MARI KITA***, a sensational new musical tribute to Zubir Said – the late, great composer of Singapore’s National Anthem and beloved classics such as *Semoga Bahagia*. (Please refer to **Annex C** for more information.)

This uplifting, inspiring exploration of Singapore’s musical heritage is written and will be performed by Julian Wong, one of the country’s leading music directors. He created the show as a tribute to his teacher’s teacher – Zubir Said taught music to the late Iskandar Ismail, Wong’s mentor.

“I hope to show audiences that Zubir Said was so much more than just the composer of our National Anthem – his music, his life, his sacrifices, and the courage of his convictions are all equally noteworthy,” says Wong. “At a time of ongoing uncertainty and division, I think there is no better composer whose music can unite us.”

The upcoming run in July will be the first time *Don’t Call Him Mr. Mari Kita* will be performed for the general public. The production had originally been slated to premiere in 2021, but had to be postponed and, ultimately, cancelled due to tightened pandemic

restrictions. Four private performances of the show were produced to raise funds for Wild Rice.

“We are so glad to finally be welcoming audiences to *Don’t Call Him Mr. Mari Kita*,” says Heng, who will be directing the production. “This very special show is a love letter to Singapore’s music and history, and is essential viewing for anyone who calls Singapore home.”

Tickets to all three shows go on sale to Wild Rice Angels from 4 April, and to the general public from 10am on 11 April.

For media enquiries, please contact Linda Tan at lindatan@wildrice.com.sg.



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.



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CAST & CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

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PRAISE FOR *FAGHAG*

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**

FAST FACTS

Playwright	Pam Oei
Director / Set Designer	Ivan Heng
Music Director	Julian Wong
Cast	Pam Oei <i>with</i> Julian Wong and Amin Alifin
Dramaturg	Alfian Sa'at
Lighting Designer	Alberta Wileo
Sound Designer	Shah Tahir
Multimedia Designer	He Shuming
Costume Designer	Frederick Lee
Hair Designer	Ashley Lim
Make-Up Designer	Bobbie Ng
Performance Dates	From 12 May 2022 Tue – Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 2.30pm & 7.30pm Sun: 2.30pm
Ticket Prices	Tue – Thu: \$30, \$40, \$50, \$60 Fri, Sat & Sun: \$35, \$45, \$60, \$70
Venue	The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre @ Wild Rice
Press Contact	Linda Tan (lindatan@wildrice.com.sg)
Public Sales	From 11 April 2022, 10am
Discounts	20% off on Category 1 & 2 tickets for Wild Rice Angels 10% off on Category 1 & 2 tickets for Students & Senior Citizens
Ticketing Agent	SISTIC.com Pte Ltd SISTIC Website www.sistic.com.sg SISTIC Hotline (+65) 6348-5555

STRAIGHT ACTING

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY THOMAS LIM

16 JUNE – 2 JULY 2022



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. Fresh off a sold-out premiere run in 2021, this sensational new play makes its eagerly anticipated return to the Wild Rice stage in June. Don't miss it!

2022 STRAITS TIMES LIFE! AWARDS NOMINATIONS

Best Actor – Darren Guo

Best Actress – Deonn Yang



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CAST & CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

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PRAISE FOR *STRAIGHT ACTING*

RAVE REVIEWS FOR *STRAIGHT ACTING*!

“... the most honest and intelligent play about the struggles of the LGBTQ community in Singapore in recent history. Rising young playwright-director Thomas Lim has once again couched a complex and sensitive topic in very local, very human terms.”

– **The Business Times**

“Thomas Lim has a deep empathy which has served him well in his storytelling thus far... There is a lot more comedy here than was on offer in Lim’s previous plays... What anchors the story in deeper waters is Lim’s ability to write nuanced characters with just a few lines of dialogue.”

– **The Straits Times**

“Thomas Lim’s skill as a playwright is more evident than ever, tackling such a stressful and sensitive subject with nuance and a healthy amount of wit and humour. Much of the play’s success is derived from his ability to write realistic, recognisable characters and dialogue, and how the cast’s strong chemistry makes it feel as if they’ve truly spent years living together.”

– **Bakchormeeboy**

AUDIENCES LOVE *STRAIGHT ACTING*!

“A very visceral and emotional journey of laughter and tears... tonight’s show really inspired and touched me so much... this was one of the most honest and beautiful shows I’ve ever watched... I am thoroughly moved.”

– **KEAT (@kid.keat)**

“Thomas Lim’s funny, tender and ultimately life-affirming drama gently upends the heteronormativity that pervades so much of our society and shows that everyone should have the right to live life on their own terms.”

– **Naeem Kapadia (@nkapped)**

“11/10 would recommend! [*Straight Acting* is] funny, sad, heartwarming and heartbreaking – sometimes all at the same time.”

– **Teo Yu Sheng (@heckin.unicorn)**

FAST FACTS

Playwright / Director	Thomas Lim
Cast	Goh Guat Kian, Darren Guo, Tan Shou Chen, Eve Voigtlander & 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	16 June – 2 July 2022 Tue – Fri: 7.30pm Sat: 2.30pm & 7.30pm Sun: 2.30pm
Ticket Prices	Tue – Thu: \$25, \$35, \$40, \$50 Fri, Sat & Sun: \$30, \$40, \$50, \$60
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SYNOPSIS

Zubir Said made history with his music. In 1958, he composed *Majulah Singapura* – the iconic song that has galvanised our nation, and is still sung all over the island to this very day. But there is so much more to Zubir Said’s remarkable career than the song that has come to define it.

Intent on pursuing his dream of becoming a musician, he defied his father’s wishes and left his village in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, to settle in Singapore. Over 40 years, he became one of the pioneers of Singapore’s nascent music industry – composing close to 1,500 songs as well as countless film scores. Later in his life, Zubir Said dedicated all his energies to teaching children how to read, play and love music.

Wild Rice invites you to come and meet the man behind the melody we all know by heart. In this joyful, moving and inspiring celebration of Zubir Said’s life and legacy, Julian Wong – one of Singapore’s most acclaimed music directors – pays loving tribute to his teacher’s teacher. Directed with keen insight and visual flair by Cultural Medallion winner Ivan Heng, this production incorporates archival footage from Singapore’s golden age of cinema and stunning period costumes to evoke the style and glamour of a 1960s television variety show.

Accompanied by some of Singapore’s most accomplished musicians and young vocalists, Julian will bring you the best of Zubir Said’s songbook – from beloved classics like *Semoga Bahagia*, *Sayang Disayang* and *Orang Singapura*, to rare musical gems long thought to have been lost forever.

You’ll never sing ‘Mari Kita’ in the same way again!



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CAST & CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

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PRAISE FOR *DON'T CALL HIM MR. MARI KITA*

"We were so touched and so deeply moved by the show. To think that we continually search for our Singapore identity and our sense of belongingness, when it's right here under our noses in the music and sentiments expressed by the very composer of our national anthem, Zubir Said. Julian Wong did an amazing job and he is patently the anointed one to tell Pak Zubir's story. As a 61-year-old man who just had a national medal given to me, I can say that I have never felt my Singaporeanness more deeply than I did tonight."

– Jeremy Monteiro (Cultural Medallion Winner, 2002, and Public Service Medal Recipient, 2021)

"Soulful, spiritual, brilliantly produced and with so much depth. I learned so much about Pak Zubir's story, and Julian's telling of it reminded me of my own story – of how my dad opposed me doing things I wanted to do. The show reminded me of how happy and honoured I am to be a Singaporean."

– Datuk Ramli Sarip

"I have heard these stories about Pak Zubir but never in the way they were presented in this show. The more I learn, the more I realised the less I know. Julian Wong was endearing, captivating and passionate. I would definitely invite more people to see this work."

– Najip Ali

"Despite not being born Singaporean, this show gave us such a beautifully sung, classy, educational and truly valuable history class about Singapore. We were so deeply touched to learn about Zubir Said, who came from humble origins but was a giant in terms of his achievements and contributions to this nation."

– Anthonia Hui & Leonardo Drago

"I had grudgingly sung Zubir Said's songs in school, but watching *Don't Call Him Mr. Mari Kita* helped me realise how meaningful they are. Julian made me want to relearn and sing these songs every day. Such a magical, awesome and emotive evening!"

– Susanna Kang

"A moving, beautiful story of mentorship and love, and a wonderful tribute to an important person in our lives. It made me think about who we are as a people and it felt like a proper celebration of Singapore through the music and legacy of one man. It was patriotic without pander or pomp, celebratory yet contemplative. Thank you once again for a beautiful show. Can't wait to buy tickets for everyone I know!"

– Petrina Kow

FAST FACTS

Composer / Lyricist	Zubir Said
Writer / Music Director	Julian Wong
Director / Set Designer	Ivan Heng
Performers	Julian Wong <i>with</i> Hannah Nordin, Malcolm Lim & Rohaniah Sa'id
Musicians	Julian Wong <i>with</i> Din Safari, Leonard Mikhail, Riduan Zalani & Ryan Sim
Dramaturg	Alfian Sa'at
Lighting Designer	Alberta Wileo
Sound Designer	Lim Cheng Yi
Multimedia Designer	He Shuming
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