



FEAR

# TheatreWorks & National Arts Council

*present*

The word "LEAR" is written in a bold, expressive, red calligraphic style. The letters are thick and fluid, with some overlapping and dynamic strokes, particularly in the 'L' and 'A's. The overall effect is one of energy and artistic flair.

A Japan Foundation Asia Center production

Directed by Ong Keng Sen

Written by Rio Kishida

28 – 31 January 1999, 8 pm

30 January 1999, 2.30 pm

## **Asian Tour**

Hong Kong	22-23 Jan	APA Lyric Theatre
Singapore	28-31 Jan	Kallang Theatre
Jakarta	5-7 Feb	Teater Tanah Airku
Perth	13,15-18 Feb	His Majesty's Theatre

The Hong Kong-Singapore-Jakarta-Perth tour of "LEAR" has been made possible by the financial cooperation of the Hong Kong Arts Festival, TheatreWorks (S) Ltd, International Touring Department of the National Arts Council of Singapore, the Festival of Perth and the Japan Foundation.



# Prime Minister Singapore

Being a small country, Singapore cannot afford to think and work only within traditional boundaries. In order to succeed as a nation, we particularly need to think outside the box, be it in business, science, sports, or the arts.

On the artistic front, I am heartened that TheatreWorks has taken on this challenge. TheatreWorks has created in *Lear* a unique Asian production of creative depth and imagination. Its success will pave the way for more Singaporean artistes seeking new stages and audiences overseas.

I extend my heartiest congratulations to TheatreWorks and all those involved in the production of *Lear*. May I also wish you success for your Asian tour.

**Goh Chok Tong** *Prime Minister, Singapore*



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL



**The National Arts Council**

**helps nurture the arts and**

**develop Singapore into**

**a vibrant global city**

**for the arts. It promotes**

**excellence, innovation,**

**vibrancy and access**

**in the arts.**

The National Arts Council

is proud to support the 1999

Asian tour of TheatreWorks'

Lear to Singapore, Hong Kong,

Perth and Jakarta.

# TheatreWorks' Message

**LEAR** is finally coming to Singapore. Behind that simple statement lies a whole melange of hopes and dreams realised, anxieties and obstacles negotiated and conquered. It has been a journey of cementing old alliances such as with the Japan Foundation Asia Center and creating new ones.

For us, Lear is about our continuing commitment to presenting and evolving new theatrical experiences for the 21st Century. Lear brings together traditional and contemporary Asian artists and practitioners to re-investigate and negotiate new artistic spaces.

What is perhaps the most exciting aspect of this entire artistic adventure is the fact that it is Asian based. For too long, we have had only European initiatives in intercultural work. Lear represents the new confidence of Asian artists exploring their roots and identity through Western and Asian perspectives.

That is why the Company feels it is important for the Japan Foundation Asia Center production of Lear to be mounted in Singapore which together with Tokyo was the centre of its genesis. Multi-lingual and multi-cultural in nature, the production represents the essence of what it means to be a modern Asian, and perhaps Singaporean.

TheatreWorks is therefore very proud and happy to present The Japan Foundation Asia Center's production of Lear on its Asian tour. We would like to thank the National Arts Council and all our sponsors for making this possible. Lastly, we would like to thank you for your support and belief in the pioneering spirit of TheatreWorks.

**Ong Keng Sen** *Artistic Director*

# National Arts Council's Message

**LEAR** is a significant milestone. The commissioning of director Ong Keng Sen and TheatreWorks by the Japan Foundation to lead a team of Asia's cultural talents is a clear international affirmation of Singapore's artistic talent and creativity. Critical success has significantly raised the awareness and stature of Singapore arts in the international arts community.

The National Arts Council is pleased to be co-presenter of *Lear* in Singapore. The Council is committed to promoting the best of Singapore's arts overseas. More focus is now given to building relations with international arts organizations to generate opportunities for our artists. The Council has undertaken several initiatives to inform and interest international arts centres of our artistic resources. We hope that in time to come, performing or exhibiting overseas will be part and parcel of the work of our artists.

I extend my congratulations to TheatreWorks for its staging and touring of *Lear*, and for flying the cultural flag of Singapore. I also thank the Japan Foundation for giving Singapore artists the opportunity, and look forward to more collaborative artistic ventures between Singapore and Japan.

I wish TheatreWorks every success in all its future international endeavours.

**Liu Thai Ker** *Chairman, National Arts Council*

# Director's Message

**LEAR:** Linking Night and Day by *Ong Keng Sen*

In directing this intercultural project, I wanted these cultures to exist together as one but not in an amalgam which would reduce their difference. We have to deal with difference as we face the new millennium. No one culture should be able to understand Lear in its entirety, no one culture appropriates another. Above all Lear would be performed in many different languages. Any culture would require translation to understand this production completely.

Working with Rio Kishida on the themes of the play, I was particularly interested in looking at new Asia as it grapples with its history. How can new Asia have a dialogue with the old, with traditions, with history? How can history not become baggage but become constructive for the future?

The position of the older daughter trapped by patriarchy is a symbolic representation of new Asia. Other world views apart from patriarchy are introduced in this reinvented Lear, such as the world of the Mother. Patriarchy and authority is often respected in Asia. As a young Asian, I want to explore whether these are the only options for our countries. And what better play than King Lear, where family authority symbolizes the country and the larger cosmology.

As artists, we have to continue to produce art which is rooted in changing cultural contexts. Old definitions of traditional and modern no longer seem useful in the new millennium. "Contemporary" can be seen to be a redefinition of tradition. Ballet was once considered to be modern but it may come to be described as traditional 20th century dance in the new millennium.

Time constantly forces us to recontextualise. Ultimately, we need to recognize that there may be no such dichotomy of tradition and modern. We simply journey on this time line. The child who kills the father, one day becomes the father.

Tradition has continued to include change, in order to sustain its relevance. Change is not to be feared. It is only societies that have mythicized tradition into a stable phenomenon. Tradition is perhaps best seen as a continuum rather than as a monolith. The rigid meaning of tradition has little significance in the world of the twenty-first century where walls are breaking down.

What we are creating with Lear is a contemporary piece of theater. At the same time, it is a traditional theater which involves and embraces change. It negotiates roots, identity and tradition.

We must move beyond the dichotomy of tradition and contemporary. They are not just polar opposites. Night becomes day when dawn approaches.

Lear is hopefully the dawn that links night and day.



# Producer's Message

**CHILDREN WHO KILL THEIR FATHERS:** The Creation of Lear  
by *Yuki Hata*, The Japan Foundation Asia Center

Lear was produced by the Japan Foundation Asia Center, a semi-governmental organization dedicated to fostering cultural exchange with other Asian countries. The Center carries out projects in various fields, ranging from the arts to intellectual exchange. Its performing arts program is in the vanguard of efforts to present a new vision of Asia; as such, it has brought several important contemporary theater works of other Asian countries to Japan.

Over the past few years, we have often sensed that many people involved in theater in Asia feel that they have reached an impasse and are seeking a way out. It would seem that Asian theater as a whole needs to be re-examined if it is to avoid falling into a suffocating trap. This is why, in the autumn of 1995, we decided to create a new work with theater people from other countries that would provide the impetus for reconsidering the present state of Asian theater and for exploring new possibilities.

Our first step was to create an international team with members on an individual basis rather than by choosing a specific country or a specific theater company, in which every member could have the same distance from the work. Realizing that a completely new play would make it impossible to avoid introducing a bias in favor of the playwright's own culture, we decided to present a work that was not from a specific Asian country and that already enjoyed a universal existence. This is how Shakespeare was selected. Although it would have been fine not to do a play by Shakespeare, we were also interested to see how Asian artists would dismantle and re-assemble his work.

We invited the Singaporean Ong Keng Sen, who was 33 at the time, to be the director. For nearly ten years, we had watched him journey from the question of what it means to be Singaporean in a young and multiracial country to the broader question of what the new Asia is and what it means to be Asian in today's world. We wanted the perspective of his generation to be included in the project.

Ong promptly expressed interest and said that if we were going to do Shakespeare, he would like to do King Lear. He interpreted this play as a story in which the paternalistic authority represented by King Lear is wrested away by women represented by Gonerill. He wanted to reinterpret the play from a female perspective, and asked for a woman to be chosen as the playwright. This is how the Japanese playwright Rio Kishida became involved.

In our first meeting with Ong and Kishida; Kishida, in keeping with Ong's suggestion, presented the idea of having Gonerill kill King Lear. She also wanted to create a part for the mother of the daughters or the wife of King Lear (who does not appear in the original play) and to have her represent a figure who saves all beings. We decided to start the play in the silence after King Lear's death, where Lear is no more a king but just an old man. Thus, we decided to call the play Lear, not King Lear, and our Lear parted company with the original play, and a new story of an old man and his daughter was born..

Through this project, Ong sought to reinvent the traditional art forms from a contemporary perspective, and we asked the noh actor Naohiko Umewaka to play the Old Man and the Mother.

Ong superimposed the slaying of the older generation by the younger generation on the Older Daughter's patricide, which meant finding a powerful acting style for the Older Daughter's role. This is how the Beijing opera actor

Jiang Qihu became involved in the project. The remaining actors were recruited from contemporary theater and dance genres. Male actors were selected to play female roles to convey the idea of gender crossing, and also because such an approach is an extension of the Asian theater tradition.

To achieve a similar multi-layered effect in the music, we asked several composers to participate. The lyrics were composed by Singaporean pop musician Mark Chan, who also sings and performs instrumental music in the play. The Javanese gamelan music was composed by Rahayu Supanggah, a leading Indonesian composer, while the percussion music is the work of Piterman, a Sumatran Minangkabau musician. The biwa music for the Older Daughter was composed and performed by Junko Handa, one of Japan's foremost biwa players, and the synthesizer music was composed by Rosita Ng from Singapore.

The movements of the Old Man and Older Daughter are based on the actor's respective traditions; the choreography for the Loyal Attendant, Retainer, and Warriors, which was created by the Indonesian Boi Sakti, is based on puncak silat, a traditional martial art form from Minangkabau. The movement of the Earth Mothers was choreographed by Aida Redza, a Malaysian dancer/choreographer, who herself appears in the play as the Shadow of the Mother.

The cast members and musicians are drawn from six countries: China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. Staff members from Australia and England bring the total number of nationalities to eight. It was our natural decision to have all the performers speak in their native languages. Thus, the Old Man and the Fool speak in Japanese; the Older Daughter in Chinese; the Loyal Attendant and Retainer in Indonesian; and the Younger Daughter in Thai. The songs sung by the gamelan players are in Javanese, and Piterman's prayers are sung in Minang. It was by no means our intention to maximize the number of languages used; this is simply how the process of choosing the appropriate performers and music turned out.

In these ways, the work incorporated many layers of national and cultural contrasts, as well as differences between tradition and the contemporary world. As producers, we were always aware that the play would lose all meaning if those contrasts and differences failed to be sublimated in a way that reflected their own cultures.

The process of completing the work forced everyone involved to think seriously about how to view tradition, or the old order, from a new perspective. Actually, this was no easy task. Many participants suffered from mental and physical stress as they worried about the appropriateness of their efforts amid all the different styles. The anxiety and dissatisfaction that swirled among them exploded on several occasions, and there were also times of resignation when it seemed that the curtain might never open on the performance.

Despite these difficulties, the play opened in Tokyo on September 9, 1997, exactly two years after the work was originally conceived. The harmony created out of so many disparate elements was greatly praised, and our intention to have the Older Daughter's patricide interpreted as a transcendence of the old order was well received by the audience. A great variety of opinions were presented in the media in Japan and many other Asian countries, ranging from a theatrical standpoint to a cultural perspective. In short, we achieved our aim of sparking debate.

Everyone who joined the production realize that this is not the end. The task of transcending our fathers – not only the father named Lear but also various other fathers with us – has only just begun.



# Synopsis

## Prologue

Silence after a raging storm. Empty space. A song is heard:  
Life was interrupted.  
Clutching seeds of endless resentment,  
restless in body and spirit,  
people were buried.  
For them, I pray  
death's road leads to life's door.

## Scene 1

An old man (a ghost) appears. "Who am I? I was sleeping in terror of a nightmare I cannot recall." As if in response to his question, a young woman (a ghost) appears. "I am your first-born daughter. Three selves exist within me. Come out all of you!" The older daughter's three shadows -- Ambition, Unpredictability, and Vanity -- appear and bow to the old man.

Another young woman (a ghost) appears. The older daughter says to the old man, "This is your younger daughter: the leftover dregs of your love. She is always silent. Nobody knows what she is scheming in her mind." The younger daughter simply smiles wordlessly.

A fool appears and says, "You are the king!" The time shifts to the present.

## Scene 2

The older daughter convinces the old man to set out on a journey. She says, "I will bestow the joy of freedom on you." He asks the younger daughter, "What then are your words?" She is silent. He gets angry, and banishes her.

The old man sets forth on his travels, accompanied by his loyal attendant and the fool. When his party is out of sight, the older daughter laughs raucously and sits on the throne. "Words are weapons! I have won with words," she declares.

## Scene 3

During the journey, the fool bets the old man that the throne will be usurped while they are gone. Although the old man believes in his daughter, the fool's words have planted seeds of doubt, and he hurries back to the palace.

## Scene 4

All alone, the younger daughter dances a dance of maternal love.

Suddenly the phantom of the mother appears. She sings about how she first encountered the old man when they were young:

Round and round went the spinning wheel;  
Round and round, the gyrations of fate,  
that led me to him.

The older daughter, who loathes the fact that her mother had been a poor, lowly spinner, watches from the throne. She drives away her mother, saying, "Only the king's blood flows in my veins."

## Scene 5

"I love power," announces the older daughter. She gathers together the retainer and warriors and has them engage in a contest of strength.

The old man and his companions return from their travels and join the spectators. When the old man tries to bestow a prize on the victorious retainer, the retainer refuses to receive it. The older daughter calls her bewildered father "an old man forsaken by your daughter."

## Scene 6

The old man is in despair.

The fool says, All things get overturned in this world. If you lament your daughter's betrayal, betray her in return! At his words, the old man returns to his senses, and vows to regain the throne.

## Scene 7

Having usurped throne, the older daughter feels that she cannot rest in peace as long as her father is alive. Her retainer urges her on, saying, "Death is absolute. If you kill your father, you will become the true ruler." The older daughter decides to kill her father, while vaguely sensing the possibility of the retainer's betrayal someday.

## Scene 8

The old man sings a lonely song as he wanders on the heath:

By the river of forgetfulness  
I will sing  
about my days of glory

The phantom of the younger daughter appears. In the old man's eyes, she appears like a newborn infant. The old man slowly dances with her, who had been his favorite child.

### Scene 9

When the younger daughter's phantom vanishes, the shadows of the older daughter and the retainer attack the old man and his companions. The loyal attendant is captured. Watching the helpless old man, the fool says, "I'll ramble here, ramble there, until I find a king who knows how to play with words." He departs. The old man is left alone. In the sound of waves, the older daughter's voice is heard saying, "The blood bond between father and daughter was sundered. The demon road to hell awaits you."

### Scene 10

The captured loyal attendant entreats the older daughter to leave the old man alone; in response, she has the retainer blind him and sends him back to the old man.

Seeing the blood-strained loyal attendant, the old man mutters, "My life is over."

### Scene 11

The older daughter's retainer gathers his warriors and plots a revolt against the older daughter. He says, "I will have that woman kill the king, and then I will become king. A new king will arise from among those who know starvation." But the older daughter's shadows have secretly been watching them.

### Scene 12

The older daughter sits alone on the throne. She sings about the loneliness that she usually hides.

A glass ball containing loneliness  
I hold it in my hands, and gaze at it forlornly  
If I drop it, it will shatter  
And loneliness will scatter far and wide  
So I gaze at it, careful not to drop it

### Scene 13

Deeply distressed by her father's situation and her older sister's plot, the younger daughter visits the older sister. Using words for the first time, she begs, "Please don't inflict any more pain on Father."

The younger daughter sings a song about how tenderly her father treated her when she was a child, but the older daughter, who possesses no such memories, is extremely envious. Screaming, "Kill the memories," she has the retainer choke the younger daughter to death, whereupon the older daughter's shadow Vanity falls to the ground.

### Scene 14

Songs for the repose of the souls of the dead float through the air, while the old man waltzes with the younger daughter's body in his arms. The blinded loyal attendant announces, "I can see. Now I will go to live somewhere and watch over your majesty until I die." He departs.

### Scene 15

The older daughter and retainer are making love. "The old era has been overthrown, and a new era has arrived. It is yours and mine," says the retainer. The older daughter suddenly has her shadows chop off the retainer's head.

The older daughter laments, "The mirror shattered into tiny pieces. Inside my heart now are tears.", Unpredictability dies.

### Scene 16

The old man invokes his dead wife. Taking off his mask, he and his wife unite.

A voice is heard.

I can hear memories  
Deep within me,  
my wife is resurrected  
I will go on living

He visits the older daughter. The older daughter says, "I have no mother, I do not need a father. I am a daughter of the gods, dispatched to this world in the drifting boat of destiny. Die, Father!" She stabs the old man.

Ambition dies, too.

### Scene 17

Loneliness assails the older daughter, standing in the uninhabited kingdom. She says, "I want to be a bird... Bird, bear me away. Fly with me, to the place where I shall become earth."

The phantom of the mother appears and dances like a bird.

The older daughter murmurs:

Who is behind me?  
Who is behind me?

# Crew

Produced by	<i>The Japan Foundation Asia Center</i>
Directed by	<i>Ong Keng Sen (Singapore)</i>
Script by	<i>Rio Kishida (Japan)</i>
Music directed and composed by	<i>Mark Chan (Singapore)</i> <i>Rahayu Supanggah (Indonesia)</i>
Minang style music composed by	<i>Piterman (Indonesia)</i>
Biwa music composed by	<i>Junko Handa (Japan)</i>
Synthesizer music composed by	<i>Rosita Ng (Singapore)</i>
Choreography by	<i>Boi Sakti (Indonesia)</i>
Additional choreography by	<i>Aida Redza (Malaysia)</i>
Set design by	<i>Justin Hill (Australia)</i>
Lighting design by	<i>Shin Inokuchi (Japan)</i>
Costume design by	<i>Koji Hamai (Japan)</i>
Sound design by	<i>Masahiro Inoue (Japan)</i>
Masks and props:	
Design by	<i>Nobutaka Kotake (Japan)</i>
Fabrication by	<i>Akio Fukuda (Japan)</i>
Make-up/hair design by	<i>Katsunobu Takahashi (Japan)</i>
Assistant director	<i>Lok Meng Chue (Singapore)</i>
Script translation:	
English by	<i>David Crandall and Janet Goff</i>
Chinese by	<i>Zhang Zhifan</i>
Indonesian by	<i>Ayu Utami and Sitok Srengenge</i>
Script consultation for Japanese noh lines by	<i>Keiko Okuyama</i>
Technical director	<i>Jun Mano (Japan)</i>
Production manager	<i>Kumi Odaira (Japan)</i>
Stage manager	<i>Danny Hones (UK)</i>
Deputy stage manager	<i>Sonoko Yamamoto (Japan)</i>
Assistant stage manager	<i>Yoshitaka Shiraishi (Japan)</i>
Electricians	<i>Tetsuya Yamazaki (Japan)</i> <i>Kaoru Matsuda (Japan)</i>

# Cast

Old Man/Mother	<i>Naohiko Umewaka (Japan)</i>
Older Daughter	<i>Jiang Qihu (China)</i>
Younger Daughter	<i>Peeramon Chomdhavat (Thailand)</i>
Fool	<i>Hairi Katagiri (Japan)</i>
Loyal Attendant	<i>Lim Yu-Beng (Singapore)</i>
Retainer	<i>Gani Abdul Karim (Singapore)</i>
Mother's Shadow	<i>Aida Redza (Malaysia)</i>
Older Daughter's Shadows:	
Ambition	<i>Low Kee Hong (Singapore)</i>
Unpredictability	<i>Tang Fu Kuen (Singapore)</i>
Vanity	<i>Jeremiah Choy (Singapore)</i>
Warriors	<i>Benny Krisnawardi (Indonesia)</i> <i>Jefri Andi (Indonesia)</i> <i>Fitrik (Indonesia)</i>
Earth Mothers	<i>Sharon Lim (Singapore)</i> <i>Sesy Liana Ali (Singapore)</i> <i>Elaine Cheah (Singapore)</i> <i>Ling Poh Foong (Singapore)</i>
Musicians	<i>Mark Chan (Singapore)</i> <i>Junko Handa (Japan)</i> <i>Piterman (Indonesia)</i> <i>Rosita Ng (Singapore)</i> <i>Rahayu Supanggah (Indonesia)</i> <i>Nurwanta (Indonesia)</i> <i>Suyoto Martorejo (Indonesia)</i>

# Crew

Sound operators	<i>Masami Ono (Japan)</i> <i>Koji Harada (Japan)</i>
Make-up artist	<i>Miho Shimizu (Japan)</i>
Wardrobe mistresses	<i>Shumi Abe (Japan)</i> <i>Yukako Ozaki (Japan)</i>
The Japan Foundation Asia Center	
Producer	<i>Yuki Hata</i>
Tour company manager	<i>Norikazu Sato</i>
Production assistant	<i>Mariko Mugitani</i>
Production manager	<i>Jodie Koh</i>
Technical manager	<i>Charles Millward</i>
Production assistant	<i>Michelle Bong</i>
Structural engineer	<i>John Portwood</i>
Subtitling operator	<i>Elvan Ong</i>
Hospitality leader	<i>Sim Hwee Peng</i>
Hospitality assistant	<i>Jeffrey Pung</i>
Local crew	<i>Mohd. Sharil</i> <i>Jonathan Gwee</i> <i>Valerie Oliveiro</i> <i>Keef Siew</i> <i>Malcolm Thum</i> <i>Brendon M. Fernandez</i> <i>Gail Perera</i> <i>Karen Loh</i> <i>Chia Jenn Hui</i> <i>Cedric Tay</i> <i>Triston Yeo</i> <i>Charlotte Chiew</i> <i>Luanne Poh</i> <i>Joyce Yao</i> <i>Joseph Cheong</i>
Make-Up assistant/Interpreter	<i>Namiko Chan</i>
Interpretors	<i>Michiyo Sumida</i> <i>Fukui, Shiho</i>

# Biography

## CREATIVE TEAM



### Ong Keng Sen (Director)

Since 1988, he has served as the Artistic Director of TheatreWorks, Singapore's leading English language theater company which is engaged in the creation and production of original plays. He has built up a solid body of widely acclaimed work, while serving as a major force behind the formation of "Singapore theater."

From 1993 to 1995, Ong studied inter-culturalism through the performing arts at New York University. After returning to Singapore, he embarked on an ambitious workshop project, called The Flying Circus Project that aims at spearheading Asian traditional art forms into the future. The first event which took place in 1996, and the second event in 1998 brought together artists from South, East and South-East Asia.

He has an epic performance style created through the fusion of different art forms, and almost all of his recent works are collaborations with librettists, musicians, choreographers, visual artists, and film makers, often from other cultures or other countries.

Overseas performances include: Madame Mao's Memories at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland (1992); Three Children and Beauty World in Japan under the Japan Foundation Asia Center (1992); Lao Jiu at the Perth Festival in Australia (1994); Eat Me at Journey to the East 98 in Hong Kong (1998); and Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral at the Cairo Theater Festival in Egypt (1996), as well as at the Hamburg Summer Festival and the Berlin House of World Culture in Germany (1998). He is committed to creating a new performance piece for the 2000 Adelaide Festival.

### Rio Kishida (Playwright)

In 1974 she joined Experimental Theater Laboratory Tenjo-Sajiki, headed by the late Shuji Terayama, a major figure in theater whose work has had a world-wide impact that continues even today, more than a decade after his death. She was an important collaborator who worked closely with Terayama on many pieces, including Shintokumar, Leming, and Ekibyō Ryukoki (Account of an Epidemic).

In 1983 after Terayama's death, she founded the theater company Kishida Jimusho + Rakutendan, and wrote many important plays until the company dissolved in 1993. In 1986 she won the 29th Annual Kishida Drama Prize, the most important drama prize in Japan, for Ito Jigoku (Woven Hell), a play that depicts women living in obscurity in Japanese history.

In 1988, she won the 23rd Kinokuniya Drama Prize, another important drama prize of Japan, for Tsui no Sumika/Kari no Yado (Final Home, Temporary Lodging). Kishida continues to write about women from the perspective of gender as well as about the nature and role of the Father. In 1992, Ito Jigoku was performed at the Adelaide and Perth festivals in Australia, where it was well received.

Kishida has been active in international theatre exchanges. She has also worked with the renowned Japanese director Yukio Ninagawa on major productions such as a revised version of Shintokumar (1996 in Japan; 1997 in London) and Kusa Meikyu (Grass Labyrinth; 1997 in Tokyo).

# Biography

## **Mark Chan** (Music director/composer)

A composer and musician from Singapore, Chan began composing music in 1985. He has also established a reputation for his playing of Asian musical instruments. Since early in his career, he has collaborated with Ong Keng Sen on productions such as *Three Children*, *Madam Mao's Memories* and *Lao Jiu*. For *Lear*, he is responsible mainly for composing the lyrics. As one of the musicians, he sings a requiem in the prologue and plays many instruments.

## **Rahayu Supanggah** (Music director/composer)

A leading Indonesian composer, he studied gamelan music at the ASKI (Indonesian Performing Arts Academy), now STSI (Indonesian College of the Arts) in Solo, he earned a doctorate in ethnomusicology from the Sorbonne in Paris.

The first Indonesian composer to mix gamelan music with contemporary music forms, he expands the potential of the former through combination with computer music and other genres. His works have been introduced all around the world, including Europe, the United States, and other countries in Asia. He composed the gamelan music for *Lear* and is one of the musicians.

## **Piterman (Minang style music)**

A composer from Sumatra, Indonesia, Piterman studied music at ASKI in Padang and has been active as a composer and singer for the distinguished Indonesian dance company, *Gumarang Sakti Minangkabau*, led by Gusmiati Suid. For *Lear*, he composed the percussion segments in Minangkabau style for the *Warriors* and he also sings in some scenes.

## **Junko Handa (Biwa music)**

A renowned performer and composer for the Japanese biwa, from 1972 to 1992, she was a member of Pro Musica Nipponia, a group that performs contemporary music using traditional Japanese instruments, and has performed in concerts in over 20 countries around the world. She has also held many solo performances in Japan and abroad.

Handa is also one of the few biwa musicians who is active in exploring new directions. For *Lear*, she composed and performs the music of the *Older Daughter*.

## **Boi Sakti (Choreographer)**

One of the leading choreographers in Indonesia, he was trained in the traditional dance and music of Minangkabau, he studied contemporary dance at IKJ (Jakarta Institute of the Performing Arts). His innovative choreography incorporates elements such as pancak silat, a traditional martial art form in Minangkabau. Silat is also used as an important resource in the choreography for the *Retainer and Warriors* in *Lear*. Currently, he leads the Boi Sakti Dance Theater in Jakarta.

## **Aida Redza (Choreographer/ Mother's Shadow)**

Redza is a Malaysian dancer and choreographer. She was trained in both contemporary and traditional dance forms. She is currently the Artistic Director of *Shakti Dances*, as well as a lecturer at the National Arts Academy in Kuala Lumpur. For *Lear*, she choreographed for the *Earth Mothers*, and appears as the *Mother's Shadow*.

# Biography

## CAST

### **Naohiko Umewaka (Old Man and Mother)**

A Kanze-school noh actor born into a famous hereditary family of noh actors, Umewaka made his debut at the age of 3; at age 9 he performed his first role as a shite, or principal actor. He has made a name for himself as an internationally oriented noh actor. From 1991 to 1994 he pursued the study of comparative theater at London University, and earned a doctorate. He has performed and held workshops in many countries in Europe and South America.

Umewaka has also been active in the production of new noh plays. He choreographed and performed the role of the shite in such plays as Hyoen (Drifting Fires), Jesus no Senrei (The Baptism of Jesus: the Vatican, Rome; Brussels, Belgium, etc.), Azuchi no Seibo (The Holy Mother in Azuchi), Tsujigahana no Mai written to commemorate the opening of the textile exhibition Icchiku Kubota: In Praise of Nature at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., and Takayama Ukon, the costume of which was designed by the fashion designer, Hanae Mori. Takayama Ukon is going to be performed in Paris this year.

Umewaka is active in a wide variety of other fields as well. In 1994 he choreographed Yukio Mishima's play Madame de Sade at the Almeida Theater in London. At the Spring Loaded Festival in London that same year, he performed with a ballet dancer in Qui Affinity, a dance that he also choreographed and directed. In addition, he played the role of the Showa Emperor in the TV film Hiroshima, a joint Canadian-Japanese-U.S. production.

### **Jiang Qihu (Older Daughter)**

Jiang is a member of the highly prestigious China National Beijing Opera Company in



China's capital. One of the leading performers of xiaosheng (young man roles), he holds the title of National Artist, First Rank.

In 1987, he won the Best Acting Prize in the xiaosheng category at the Competition for Outstanding Young Chinese Actors. In 1993, he won the Mei Lanfang Golden Prize in the same category. He has performed traditional Beijing Opera in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Finland, and Japan.

In 1996 Jiang performed in *The Bacchae*, a production jointly mounted by the China National Beijing Opera Company and the New York Greek Drama Company. The work was presented in the Hong Kong Arts Festival, the Delphi Art Festival in Greece, Artcarnuntum Internationales Theater Festival in Austria, all in 1998.

In the Japan premier of *Lear*, in which Jiang performed a full-fledged female role for the first time, his powerful acting and singing won high praise.

### **Peeramon Chomdhavat (Younger Daughter)**

Chomdhavat began studying khon, a form of traditional Thai dance, at the age of 10 and was later trained in ballet, modern dance, and jazz dance.

From 1992 to 1993, he studied in France. In addition to participating as a member of the Le Jeune Ballet de France in concerts in France and abroad, he also appeared in Roman Polanski's opera *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at the Opera de Paris Bastille. He is one of the most exciting young dancer-choreographers in Thailand today.



# Biography

## CAST

### Hairi Katagiri (Fool)

A Japanese actress, Katagiri joined the theater company Buriki no Jihatsu Dan in 1982. Her highly individual acting made her one of the company's star actresses. In 1994 she left the company; since then, she has worked on her own.

She has received excellent reviews for many plays, including *Venturesno Yoru* (Night of the Ventures) directed by Ryo Iwamatsu; *Machine Nikki* (Machine Diary) directed by Suzuki Matsuo; *Showa Kayo Daizenshu* (Popular Song Anthology of the Showa Period) and *Romeo and Juliet*, both directed by Yukio Ninagawa. She is also a familiar figure in television dramas, commercials, and movies.

The film *Eight and a Half Women* directed by Peter Greenaway, in which she plays a half woman is scheduled for release in 1999.

### Lim Yu-Beng (Loyal Attendant)

An actor with TheatreWorks, Lim Yu-Beng has appeared playing major roles in most of the company's plays directed by Ong Keng Sen, such as *Beauty World*, *Fried Rice Paradise*, *The Lady of Soul* and *Her Ultimate S. Machine*, *Longing*, *Broken Birds*, *The Yang Family*, *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror*, and *Workhorse Afloat*. He is also a familiar figure in a Singaporean detective drama serial, *Triple Nine*.

### Abdul Gani Karim (Retainer)

A Singaporean dancer, choreographer, singer, and performer, Gani has appeared in Ong's productions such as *Beauty World*, *Broken Bird* and *Mortal Sins*. He has choreographed various plays, live shows and TV extravaganzas in Singapore.

### Low Kee Hong, Tang Fu Kuen, Jeremiah Choy (Older Daughter's Shadows)

Low Kee Hong, who plays *Ambition*, was trained in such genres as ballet, modern dance, and Balinese dance. Among Ong Keng Sen's productions, he appeared in *Mortal Sins*, *Workhorse Afloat* and *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (Hamburg and Berlin).

Tang Fu Kuen, who plays *Unpredictability*, has appeared in almost all of Ong's recent productions, which include overseas performances of

*Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* in Cairo, Hamburg, and Berlin. At the 1996 Cairo International Festival of Experimental Theatre, he was awarded the Critic's Award for Best Acting.

Jeremiah Choy, who plays *Vanity*, is also a familiar figure in Ong's productions. He appeared in overseas performances of *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral*, and in Cairo, he was awarded the prize of Best Actor. He is also a director and playwright.

### Benny Krisnawardi, Jefri Andi, Fitrik (Warriors)

Benny took up dance with the *Gumarang Sakti* dance company and studied at IKJ (Jakarta Institute of the Performing Arts). Since 1988, he has been a leading dancer and choreographer of *Gumarang Sakti*.

Jefri started dance when he was a child, and was trained in *pancak silat* as well. He later studied at IKJ and joined *Gumarang Sakti* in 1995. Presently, he is a core member of the company, and also leads his own group, *Himpunan Mahasiswa Jurusan Tari*.

Fitrik was a member of the senior group of *Gumarang Sakti*, and joined the company in 1994. Presently, he is a core member.

### Sharon Lim, Sesy Liana Ali, Elaine Cheah, Ling Poh Foong (Earth Mothers)

Sharon Lim is a familiar figure in many of Ong Keng Sen's productions, including *Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror* and *Workhorse Afloat*. She performed as an Earth Mother in the Japan premier of *Lear*.

Sesy Liana Ali performs with the Singapore Armed Forces Music and Drama Company. Her theater credits include *Beauty World*.

Elaine Cheah first established herself by winning the Fame Awards 1995. Since then, she has participated in such performances as *Six of the Best*.

Ling Poh Foong's experience in theater began when she graduated with a degree in Chinese Studies and Chinese Language. Her proficiency in Mandarin has led her to be involved in both theatrical and television work.



# TheatreWorks – The Company

## TheatreWorks (Singapore) Limited

TheatreWorks is an independent Singaporean theatre company that develops and nurtures professional theatre skills. It is dedicated to reaching a broad section of the community and to taking Singaporean theatre abroad. The Company recognises its responsibility in encouraging awareness of human and social issues.

Ultimately, TheatreWorks is inspired by and dedicated to sharing the Magic of Theatre.

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TheatreWorks (S) Limited, a registered charity, was incorporated in February 1985 as the first English language adult professional theatre company in Singapore.

TheatreWorks has gained a reputation for the successful juxtaposition of Western and Eastern performance traditions, refreshing interdisciplinary interpretations and unconventional approaches, and its commitment to cross-cultural collaborations and international touring.

TheatreWorks' critically acclaimed works have earned the company a reputation for being the best Singaporean theatre company. The company has toured internationally.

In 1992, the company visited Tokyo with *Three Children* and presented *Madame Mao's Memories* at the Edinburgh Festival. In the same year, *Beauty World* toured Tokyo-Osaka-Hiroshima-Fukuoka. In 1994, *Lao Jiu* was performed at the Festival of Perth, and in 1996 *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* was performed at the Cairo International Festival of Experimental Theatre. This play was awarded the Critics Award for Best Acting and was nominated as one of the Best Productions in the Festival. In 1998, TheatreWorks performed a new piece, *EAT ME* at the Hong Kong Arts Centre. TheatreWorks' production of *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* also toured Berlin and Hamburg in August 1998 to much acclaim. This is the European premiere of Singapore theatre, a traditionally difficult market to break into.

TheatreWorks was associated with the international production of *Lear*. Produced by the Japan Foundation Asia Center, TheatreWorks hothoused the production. Harnessing the creative energies of the TheatreWorks' Artistic Director, Resident Composer, Resident Designer and the performance ensemble, the scintillating production was created. Early workshops and half of the rehearsals were carried out at TheatreWorks. The management of the South East Asia creative team was also the responsibility of the company. *Lear* premiered in Tokyo in September 1997 to great critical acclaim.

TheatreWorks' biggest international achievement and crowning glory is the *Flying Circus Project*, embarked on in late 1996. This 6-year project is conceptualised and headed by TheatreWorks' Artistic Director, Ong Keng Sen. It examines the traditional arts of Asia and seeks to take them into the 21st Century. The first phase in 1996 brought together performing artists from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan and Singapore. The second project in 1998 saw dialogues, talks, workshops, classes and demonstrations by traditional and contemporary artists from India, Korea, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The project expanded to incorporate video and installation artists. The third will happen in the year 2000 with artists from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Mongolia, Philippines and Papua New Guinea.

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