



presents

# 同人與善

## THE MORNING PEOPLE

by CHAY YEW

adapted from Anton Chekhov's THE CHERRY ORCHARD

with

NEO SWEE LIN LIM KAY SIU  
BEATRICE CHIA GERALD CHEW EMMA YONG  
LEE WENG KEE JANICE KOH HOSSAN LEONG  
CARINA HALES SHEIKH HAIKEL RODNEY OLIVEIRO  
CHUA EN LAI KEVIN MURPHY

DIRECTION AND SET DESIGN GOH BOON TECK  
COSTUMES TAN HONG CHYE  
ORIGINAL MUSIC AND SOUND BANG WENFU  
LIGHTING DOROTHY PNG  
HAIR DESIGN ASHLEY LIM  
MAKE-UP ELAINE LEE  
GRAPHICS ZACHARY G.

6, 7 & 8 JUNE 2002 8PM  
VICTORIA THEATRE, SINGAPORE

TOY FACTORY  
THEATRE ENSEMBLE





## Synopsis

Chay Yew's *The Morning People* is a bold adaptation of Anton Chekhov's finest masterpiece *The Cherry Orchard*.

The year is 1934, a time of great social, political, civil and economic change in China's history. The marching footsteps of the communist army is approaching in the distance as China moves towards a revolutionary period.

The cherry orchard is located this time in the mountainous province of Shaanxi, in northern China.

The plot hinges on the tragic loss of a family estate [the cherry orchard] that its genteel owners dearly loved, to a businessman who used to be a peasant.

The play opens with the return of Madam Siet, a famous Chinese singer and the owner of the cherry orchard. She returns from London after a self-imposed exile following the death of her husband and only son. Madam Siet arrives home to find the much-loved cherry orchard that has been in the family for generations, is to be auctioned off, to repay the accumulating debts brought on by the family's frivolous spending.

Against this backdrop of revolutionary change, the various generations of Madam Siet's family are caught in their lives, loves, struggles and feeble attempts to save the cherry orchard.

Duration of Performance 155 minutes inclusive of one interval of 15 minutes.

### ACT ONE

Dawn, early Spring 1934, Mdm Siet's Estate, Shaanxi, China

### ACT TWO

Summertime 1934, before Sunset. Not far from the cherry orchard.

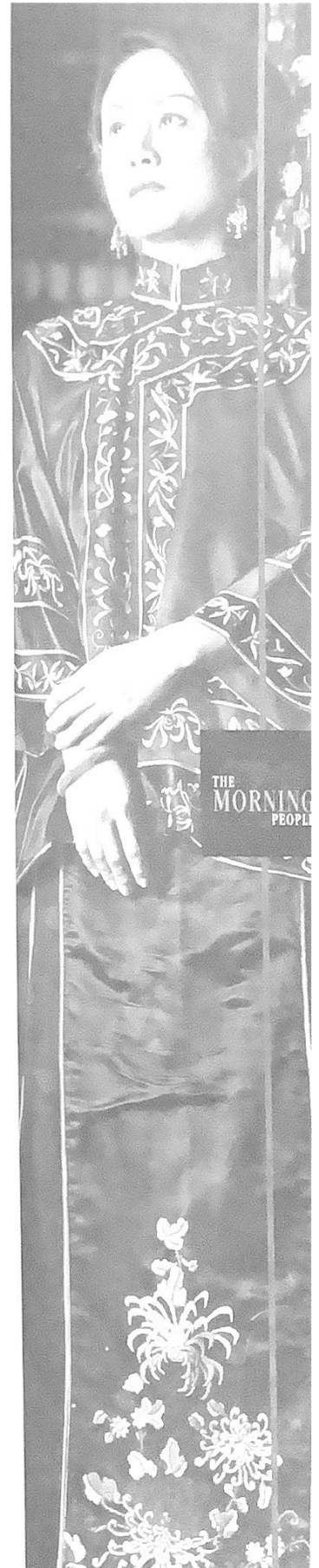
### INTERVAL

### ACT THREE

Autumn 1934, Auction Day, Mdm Siet's Estate.

### ACT FOUR

Early Spring 1935, Mr Qiang's Estate.



**Madam Sir Neo Swee Lin**

Neo Swee Lin is probably best known as the co-host of the TV magazine show, *Really Something*, and as Ah Ma in the sitcom *PCK Pa Lid*, a role which won her the Asian TV Award in 1999. Although her work on television is more widely recognized, it was on the stage that she first found her love of performing. Since her first appearance at the 1985 Arts Festival (playing the lead whilst singing for her dead near law exams in NUS) she has appeared in almost 40 productions. These include western classics *Medea*, *Mother Courage* (directed by the late William Teo), *The Glass Menagerie*, *Hamlet*, *The Crucible*, local work: the original productions of *Army Daze*, *3 Children and Mama Looking for her Cat*, *Daughter Promise*, *The Belly of the Corp*, *Ah Kong's Birthday Party*, monologues *My Mother's Chest*, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole* and *No Parking On Odd Days*, and musicals *Fried Rice Paradise*, *The King and I* and *Beauty World*. Most recently, she was in *Club Temper!*, *The 7th Drawer* and *Blithe Spirit*. Film: *Night watch*, *12 stories*, *Tenage Textbook*, *Where Got Position*, *Anna and the King*. Swee Lin has a law degree (LL.B) from the NUS and a diploma in dramatic art (D.A.) from the Royal Scottish Academy of Drama, where she attended as a B.A.T. Scholar.

**Quang Lim Kay Siu**

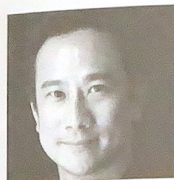
Lim Kay Siu started acting at the late age of 29. Now, at 46, he has acted in over 80 plays, movies and TV episodes. Movies include *Anna and the King*, with Chow Yun Fat and Jodie Foster, *Night Watch*, with Pierce Brosnan, *Forever Fever*, directed by Glen Goei, and *12 Stories*, directed by Eric Khoo. On TV, he played Chief Wong in *Happy Belly*, and has most recently been seen as Franky Foo in *PCK Pa Lid*. Theatre, where he learnt to love his craft, has been the main medium. He most recently appeared in *Ah Kong's Birthday Party*, directed by Fran Heng, *Oleanna*, and *The 7th Drawer*, directed by Gob Bon Teck, and *Blithe Spirit*, directed by Glen Goei. Plays in the UK include *3 Japanese Women*, directed by Glen Goei, and *The Letter*, with Joanna Lumley and Tim Pegg. He studied Theatre Directing at Central School of Speech and Drama in 1997-1998. Plays he has directed include *The Journey West*, *Crucible*, *Hall-Lives*, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, *Bullwink Dancing*, *Ballet*, and *Club Temper!*. Musicals he has performed to include *Beauty World*, *Fried Rice Paradise*, and *Nagasaki*.

**Beatrice Chia**

Beatrice Chia is the winner of the Best Director Award at the 2001 DBS Life Theatre awards and is also the Associate Artistic Director at Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble. She graduated from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London in 1996. In the UK, she worked on films for MTV Europe and BBC Wales as well as being active onstage, with plays ranging from Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *As You Like It*, to contemporary classics like Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*. Beatrice returned to Singapore in 1997. Her television work includes roles in *The Downy Lee Show* as well as the police drama *Triple 9*. While Beatrice's roles in film include *Stories About Love* and the Hong Kong-American film *Last Time*, she is proud of her roles onstage. Her work in the theatre includes the critically acclaimed roles in *Mr. Bean*, *Thouand* and most recently, in *Plunge*, directed by Krishna Ju. Beatrice made her directorial debut with Toy Factory's *Shopping And Plying*, which played to over 20 sold out performances and strong reviews. She has gone on to direct *The Necessary Stage's LoveWave 96.6*. She recently directed Toy Factory's *Beautiful Thing* once again to strong reviews and full houses.

**Emma Yong**

Emma has recently returned from London after completing a postgraduate performance course in musical theatre at the Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. She is a familiar face on the local theatre scene after having performed in numerous productions, she was *Top in BeautyWorld* (Theatreworks 10th Anniversary production), *Miss Adelaide in Guys and Dolls* (Toy Factory), *Hotel in Fiddler on the Roof* and the Electric Guitars in *Koro-yo-oi* (Action Theatre). She has also played lead roles in mandarin plays such as *Storm* and *I Have A Date With Spring* (Toy Factory). In 1999 Emma was named "Artiste of the Year" by the *Living Intrap Theatre Magazine*. She was also in the Channel 8 drama series *S.N.A.G* and is currently appearing in Mediacorp's new medical drama *First Touch*. Prior to graduation Emma was cast as the lead in Mountview's public performance of the *Moby and Shire musical Baby*. She is signed on with the London-based agency Michael Garrett and Associates.



**Xing Gerald Chew**

Gerald Chew trained at Central School of Speech and Drama, London. He worked in London in theatre and film from 1995 to early 1999 when he returned to Singapore. He performed the lead role in last year's Arts Festival event *100 Years In Waiting* based on the life and loves of Dr Sun Yat Sen, staged by The Necessary Stage and Practice Theatre Ensemble. He was seen in a successful run of Patrick Marber's *West End and Broadway* hit *Close* playing Larry. He also performed in David Hare's *The Blue Room* which is only the third production of the play outside London and Broadway. He played the role of the Politician in critical acclaim. Other plays recently include *Viva Viagra*, *Joined At The Head* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. In London, he worked extensively in theatre. Productions include lead roles: *Jason in Her Days And Eternal Triangles*, by Penny Casagli (Tiptotaka Theatre Company), *Hippolytus in Hippolytus*, by David Lian (Theatre Melange), *Samuel in Mead or the Madness*, (Gridiron Theatre Company), roles in *The Love Of The Nightingale*, by Timberlake Wertenbaker (Theatre Melange), *In The Jungle Of The Cities*, by Brecht and *Impression at Aulis*, by David Lian (Southwark Playhouse Theatre Company), *Confession Of The Birds*, by Uta (Alibay Theatre), *Ghosts*, by Sobel (Site Specific) *Walk in Singapore* includes *Light in the Village*, *Under The Red One Yellow Rabbit* and *TheatreWorks*, *Beauty World*, *Lady Of Soul* and *The Ultimate 5 Machine*, *Mergers And Acquisitions*, *Mad Forest* and *Olone* (All with TheatreWorks). For Singapore Repertory Theatre, he worked in *Wong*, *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?*, *Death Of A Salesman*. Other plays include *Brecht's Mother Courage*, *Asia in Theatre Research Circus* and *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Silly Little Girl* and *The Fanny Old Tree* (Practice Theatre Ensemble). Gerald stars in Mediacorp Production 5's latest drama *9 Months High* playing the Vice-Principal, as well as in *Kid's Central's Robbie And The Book Of Tales*. He just completed work, playing Edward Chan on *Aster* with Joan Chen, David Warner and William Sanderson. He starred as the lead actor in Eric Khoo's film *Stories About Love* (Warner GV) in 2001 and guest starred in many episodes of Production 5's programmes *Making Love*, *Growing Up*, *Under One Roof* and *Triple Nine*. He starred in Central/Film Formations, award winning production (New York Festival 2000) *After Asians*, *Or Else The Lightning God*. He also worked in independent film in London, playing a lead role in *Yellow Fever*, directed by Ray Young (Sankofa Films) which opened in festivals to critical success in L.A., San Francisco and New York. He also played Doctor Lee in the British film *Rage Trade* (Granada Films). He appeared in the workshop film of *Medea*, directed by Fiona Shaw for Film Four (BBC) and in Singapore *Sling* (Australian Broadcasting Corp).

**Pastory Lee Wong Kee**

Wong Kee started out as one of the most promising solo finalists in the National RTS (now TCS) *Talentime '78*. He went on to garner the coveted role of Judas in the Andrew Lloyd Webber rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* for the Sceneshifters. He was *Perchik in Fiddler on the Roof* for STARS (now SKT) in 1980. Wong Kee was rare reviews: "Wong Kee is the reason to watch ARMY DAZE" - Business Times in *Too Ah Beep in Army Daze* for Theatreworks. "Wong Kee single handedly raise the show" - Straits Times, as *Madam Ye Cha in Most To Sup Neang* for Brink. He was most memorable as the under-dog food & beverage manager Cedric in the narrative play *Ah Kong's Birthday Party*. He stars in the 13-part sitcom *Happy Belly* as the restaurant manager Johnny that was the 1996 THE NEW YORK FESTIVAL, of Int'l TV Programming World Medal. He played Gary's father-in-law (Chang) in the drama series *Growing Up*. In the local movie *Chicken Rice War* as Chan Tih, he won rare review - "The wacky supporting cast is delightfully funny especially veteran Lee Wong Kee & Catherine Sng" - Straits Times. Most recent review, in *A Tainted Edge*, he delivered an acutely sensitive performance as the dutiful son suffocated by his mother's love" - Straits Times, with an impressive range spanning 4 decades from 20 something young man to a decrepit 60 year old in *Fu Long in A Tainted Edge*, for Toy Factory which earned him a BEST ACTOR NOMINATION for Life! Theatre Awards 2000. He had just completed 8 English & 4 Mandarin sellout shows of the musical magic show *Magie of Love* at Shanghai Charlie, for Touch Entertainment at the Kallang Indoor Stadium. Wong Kee is effectively bilingual.

**Liang Carina Hales**

This is the third time Carina has had the wonderful opportunity to work with Toy Factory, having been in previous productions like *The Eastern Line* on *My Palm*. She's worked with companies like Theatreworks, Action Theatre, I Theatre and recently TNS, performing in *Dreaming Up a Prince* which was part of the MI Youth Concert. Besides Theatre, she also acts in TV, hosts her voice as a voiceover artist and teaches drama.

Mei

**Janice Koh**

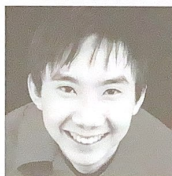
Janice is a seasoned actor and a familiar face on the Singapore theatre scene, having worked in both the local and international theatre circuit for almost ten years. She received her drama training under the Theatre Studies and Drama programme at Victoria Junior College and went on to pursue her Honours degree in Theatre Studies at the National University of Singapore. In 1996, she obtained her Masters in Theatre from Goldsmith's College, London. Last year in Toy Factory's sold-out production of *Beautiful Thing* in January this year, Janice has worked on several other projects with the company including *The Eastern Line* on Mr Palm written and directed by Goh Boon Teck and Duncan Sarkies' *Lovepale* directed by Jeffrey Tan. Janice has worked extensively as an actor and collaborator with Theatreworks and director Ong Keng Sen. These include Kuo Pao Kan's critically acclaimed *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral*, which toured to Berlin and the Hamburg International Summer Festival, as well as *The Spirit's Plea*, which recently visited the Morishita Studios in Tokyo in November 2001. In television, Janice has taken on major supporting roles in the local miniseries *Growing Up and Slaves* as well as a leading role in *Touch by the Sun*, a 2 part episode for the Television Corporation of Singapore's *Love of a Lifetime* series. 2002 has been a prolific year of theatre for Janice. Fresh from a lead role in Tan Yun How's newly commissioned play *Machine*, staged by Theatreworks in March this year, Janice went on to perform in Naomi Wallace's *One Flew Over by Lonesome* and in *Spell #7*'s recent production *7.7*. Janice has taken a half-year sabbatical from her job at the National Arts Council to pursue full-time acting.



Hoa

**Hossan Leong**

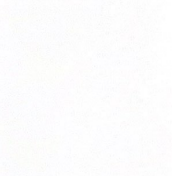
Hossan was last seen on stage in the role of the Cat in *Hunk!*. He won the Best Ensemble Acting Award at the Life! Theatre Awards 2000 for the hit play *Assen Rosa Vol 1*. He has also worked with Dramaplots Arts in their recent play *The Church*. Hossan played Motel the tailor in the Broadway hit musical, *Fiddler On The Roof*. In April 1999, he performed a dramatic monologue *Skrings In Space*. Best known for his stand-up comedy routines as Singapore Boy, Hossan has also displayed his versatility as a performer in musicals like *Clung and Eng*, *A Taste of Fate*, *Breath World*, *Sing To The Dawn* and *Corporate Animals*. He also performed in a Stephen Sondheim revue called *Southside*, *Sex and Life*. Other theatre credits include: *The Teenage Yearbook*, *Koro-vo OK!*, *Let's Squeeze Again!*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Army Daze*, *Hope*, *Three Years in the Life and Death of Land*, *The Chosen One*, *Talk*, *Scare Me While I Kiss the Sky*, *Mother's Day*, *Waiting*, *Lovepale* and *Off Centre*. Television credits include: *The Monkey King* (NBC), *The Times Lee Show*, *Slaves*, *Can I Help You?*, *Under One Roof*, *Growing Up and Gormin's World*. Film credits include: *One Leg Kicking and I Not Skupid*. Besides having recorded the Original Cast Recordings of the musicals he has done, Hossan has also sung on two gospel albums: *Covering and On Eagles' Wings*.



Huang

**Rodney Oliveira**

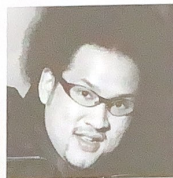
Rodney graduated from NUS with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Studies and English Literature in 2000 and has been performing full-time since. Making his debut in 1992, he has performed with diverse theatre companies and appeared in productions such as *The Private Ear*, *The Bald Soprano*, and *The Chosen Ones* (Centre for the Arts), *You Can Count On Me* and *Sex Heres 10!* (The Necessary Stages), *Geylang People in the Net* (Theatre Practises), *Water Queens* and *The Lady Of Seal and Her Ultimate*, *S' Machine* (2001) (TheatreWorks), *Go to Go* and *Charging Up Memory Lane*, *Friends and Awakenings of the Red Chamber* (Action Theatre), *Love Bites* (14 Company), *Bad and Spring Awakening* (spell#7). He last appeared in TNS' *The Beginning of the End*. Rodney's TV credits include a supporting role on PCK *Pie Lid* and as a member of the main cast in the teen-drama, *Spin*, on Mediacorp Production 5.



Wan

**Sheikh Haikel**

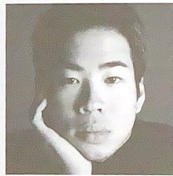
Haikel first caught the media's eye as a singer for Construction Sight - a duo group which went on to win the 1991 Grand Championship in Asia Bagan's regional talent show Construction Sight has since then released seven singles and entered the Song Hit Top 10 at no 4. And Haikel has performed in several large-scale events such as representing Singapore in the Asian Music Festival in Tokyo (1997), Asia Bagan Grand Championship Best of the Best in Tokyo (1997), and Earth Fest (1997). Haikel's infectious sense of humour and impeccable comic timing has also secured him plum roles in hit comedies such as Michael Chiang's popular *Army Daze* the movie, and the 4th and last set of the play. He was also in a leading role in TCS 5's sitcom, *Three Rooms*, *The Diner*, *Lee Show* and the very popular, *Under One Roof*. You might have also seen him in Sara's Malay sitcom, *JM*. Besides acting, Haikel is also highly sought after as a presenter and singer. He made appearances in the entertainment programmes, *TV Kasi* and *Bersama Sin*, on Suria. Haikel has performed at the Singapore Musicfest 2000 - Music Day. He was also a guest performer at The New Paper New Face Awards. Haikel graduated with a Bachelor in Drama conferred by QUT, Australia. Haikel is very much involved in theatre productions. He has been in Act 3's three major shows - *The Little Prince*, *Jonathan Living Seagull* and *Born in Siam*. His most recent stage drama, *Lovepale* 96.6, won rave reviews from the public and press alike - "the energy and pace of the play picked up with the entrance of Haikel" - *The Straits Times*. Life! Haikel also performed in Eplandae's *Wah! So Drama* 2001, an outdoor touring play, *AK Bot!* It is based on Chng Suan Tee's three bite size funny monologues - *Kevin's Birthday Party*, *Good Asian Values* and *She only Talks*. He was also the guest artist for the Heritage Hill Carnival Concert 2001 and has a role in the interactive drama, *Club Tempest*. In early 2002, Haikel was one of the 10 artists picked by IKON, a Suria programme to participate in an artiste popularity poll. He emerged as one of the top five popular artistes in the programme. Musically, he will also be scoring with the release of a new CD in March. Look out for his brand new songs, *I Got U Know*, *I Know Music*, *Withth* and many more available in all music stores from 15 March. In April, he will be performing in Singapore Music Festival. In June, he will be one of the lead actors in Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble - *The Morning People*.



Ti

**Chua En Lai**

Chua En Lai is the winner of the Best Actor award at the 2001 DBS Life Theatre awards. *The Morning People* is the fifth time Enlai is working with Toy Factory. Enlai was born in Singapore but grew up in New Zealand. While supposedly working towards a degree in Architecture, he spent most of his time at The Actor's Space and the Auckland School of Performing and Screen Arts, attending classes in acting for stage and TV. He also has an A.T.C.L. in Speech and Drama (Trinity College, London). In a year of patriotism, Enlai returned to Singapore in 1998 and joined the SAF Music and Drama Company for the duration of his National Service. Since returning, Enlai has worked on 18 theatre productions and several dramatised reads. The most recent ones include the Krishna Iii directed *Plunge* (Action Theatre), *7 X 7* (Spell #7), *Stop Kiss* (Livid Room) and *Off The Page* (The Necessary Stages). Other stage credits include *Shopping*, *4 P.M.ing* and *Lovepale* (Toy Factory), *Shakespeare's R & J* (SRK), *Mean & Me* (Spell #7 / TheatreWorks), *Tall Tales* (Imaginarts), *Magic of Love* (Touch Entertainment), *Snarkies* and *Breaking Through* (TheatreWorks) and, *Bad and My Last Night in Sin* (Spell #7). On screen, Enlai now co-hosts *Bobby TV* (Central - MediaCorp). Other screen credits include hosting and acting in the Asian Television Awards nominated *The Old Squad* and *The Big Buffet* (TV Works - MediaWorks). He has also had guest roles on *Xena*, *Warrior Princess* (Pacific Renaissance Pictures) and *PCK Pie Lid* (MediaCorp), and has been seen in a short film entitled *His Name Was W.O.N.G.* (Finalist in the 1998 Silver Screen Awards). Enlai is managed by Rly Entertainment.



De

**Kevin Murphy**

Kevin's encounter with the stage began in 2001 with *Pan Island Expressway* (TheatreWorks) *Charging Up Memory Lane*, 30 Plays in 30 Days. He went on to do *Poetry In ACTION!* for the Second 42 Theatre Festival. This year has seen him appear in Toy Factory's *Beautiful Thing* and *Livid Room Productions' Stop Kiss*. His film credits include *Chicken Rice War*, *Cin Sharks* and *Auster Estle*.





**Lighting Designer** Dorothy Png

A graduate from the University of Iowa in Theatre Arts, with an emphasis on lighting design, Dorothy is a much sought after lighting designer in Singapore. Her most recent credit is assistant lighting designer for Ong Keng Sen's *The Silver River* for both in Singapore and New York performances. She was the head lighting designer for Theatreworks *30 Plays in 30 Days* as well as the acclaimed *Oleanna* directed by Goh Boon Teck.

**Music Composer** Bang Wenfu

Classically trained pianist Bang Wenfu now freelances as a composer, arranger and accompanist. He specialises in the field of theatre, having involved himself in theatrical productions since 1994. Stage musicals where he had performed as pianist/keyboardist include *Kampong Amber* (1994), *Mortal Sins* (1995), *Chang & Eng* (1997), (2001) & (2002), *Fantasticks* (1997), *Joseph & The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (1998), *A Twist of Fate* (1998), *Nonsense* (1999), *They're Playing Our Song* (1999), *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* (2000), etc.

As an arranger, he did a tribute to Stephen Sondheim in *Elements - Air, Sondheim Revue, Sooner or Later*. He also arranged the music to musicals *The Magic Paintbrush* (1999), *Song of the Whale* (2001), and for the following plays *Oleanna* (2000), *White Sails Over Blue Blue Sea* (2000), *The Seventh Drawer* (2001). His spoof music for *Hark the Jingle Red-Nosed Chestnuts* won critical acclaim in the Arts Magazine and Flying Inkpot reviews.

As composer, he wrote the music to *Women On Canvas* which also received rave reviews in the Flying Inkpot column, and to other musicals such as *Chameleon* (2000), *Heart Over Heels* (2001) and *I am Roger* (2001). Apart from the theatre, he also scores music for television serials, television commercials and arranges music for the Taiwan pop industry.

To date, Wenfu has written about 300 works, mostly in piano form.

**Costume Designer** Tan Hong Chye

Tan Hong Chye graduated with a Diploma in Costume Technology from the Hong Kong Academy For Performing Arts in 1990. He is an experienced costume designer and has designed for several theatre productions. They include *La Boheme*, *A Twist of Fate* and *Dan Xin Pa*. He first worked with Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble as a costume designer for *I Have A Date with Spring* in 1995 and the award-winning *Titou Dao* in 2000. Hong Chye now leads his gift of costume design once again to *The Morning People*.

**Hair Designer** Ashley Lim

A professional hairstylist by training, Ashley has been a hair designer for stage performances since 1988. Ashley's creations have been seen in Toy Factory's *I Have A Date With Spring*, *A Tinted Edge* and *K*. His designs were also seen in Ah Kong's *Birthday Paris*, *Madame What's Next?* And *Hot Pants*. Ashley also runs his own salon on Orchard Road. He lends his gifted fingers once again to *The Morning People*.

**Makeup Artist** Elaine Lee

Elaine has worked as a hairstylist and makeup artist for 12 years, in various industries. While her work is chiefly concentrated in the print and glamour industries, her expertise has taken her beyond Singapore into the international arena. Trained in the USA and Hong Kong, Elaine is the proud owner of the Elaine Lee Professional Artist Team.

**Choreographer** Richard Chia

Trained in ballet, luigi jazz, tap, American line dancing and musical theatre, Richard is currently the Director of Dance Circle Studios. Richard has choreographed extensively for Company Dinner and Dances and Product Launches including this year Chingay 2002 and Toy Factory's *The Morning People*. His talent was recognized internationally when he was invited to perform in Singapore Tourism Board's *Singapore Live* show in UK in 1987 and Theatreworks' *Beauty World* when the musical made its tour in Japan in 1992. His other theatrical involvement include *The Nutcracker*, *Ballet*, *Godspell*, *Snoopy-the Musical* and *Rest*.

**Vocal Trainer** Elaine Chan

A gifted musician and highly sought after vocal trainer, Elaine has worked on numerous musical productions. Her past credits include: *Godspell*, *Into the Woods*, *Charlie Brown and Snoops*, *Ask The Stars and Earnest*, *Chang and Eng*, *Broadway Baby* and *Kailan and Opera Gala*. She has coached the cast of *Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Fiddler On The Roof* and *Mr Beng*.

**Speech & Dialogue Coach** Nora Samosir

Nora is one of Singapore's most important and sought-after voice and speech trainers. Trained in London and Toronto, Nora now teaches at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. Apart from an illustrious teaching portfolio, Nora is also one of the industry's most versatile and exciting actresses.



**Production Team**

*Director* Goh Boon Teck  
*Assistant Director* Beatrice Chia  
*Playwright* Chay Yew  
*Publicity & Marketing Consultant* Yean Cheong  
*Publicity & Marketing Executives/ Administration* Doris Teo  
 Linda Wee

*Set Designer* Gordon Woo  
*Lighting Designer* Dorothy Png  
*Music Composer* Bang Wen fu  
*Costume Designer* Tan Hong Chye  
*Graphic Designer* Zachary G.  
*Hair Design* Ashley Lim  
*Make-up Artist* Elaine Lee  
*Choreographer* Richard Chia  
*Vocal Trainer* Elaine Chan  
*Speech & Dialogue Coach* Nora Samosir  
*Program Editor* Audrey Brohier

*Stage Manager* Ong Suan Hwee  
*Assistant Stage Manager* Koh Joy Chern  
*Production Manager* Chan Lee Lee  
*Production Coordinator* Ong Wei Shiong  
*Props Master* Lim Kang San  
*Props/Sets Coordinator* Chan Lee Lee  
*Master Electrician* Ian Tan Kuan Liang  
*Lighting Operator* Kong Siaw Swan  
*Sound Operator* Ong Wei Meng  
*Make-up Assistant* Kristy Pang  
 Kelly Lee  
 Audrey Sims  
 Parie Leung

**Wardrobe Mistress**

*Crew* Koo Yuan Hui  
 Tan Lih Chin  
 Jenny Ng  
 Cheong Kai Lin  
 Karen Lam

**Front Of House**

Anna Goh  
 Doris Teo  
 Linda Wee  
 Choy Wee Fong  
 Joanna Lim

*Video Projection Designer* Casey Lim

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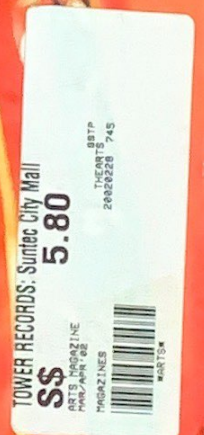
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## Chekhov in China

by Toy Factory  
Theatre Ensemble

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COVER STORY

# A Well-Pruned Cherry Orchard

## Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble tackles Chekhov

BY KK SEET



L to R: Cast members of *The Morning People*—Beatrice Chia, Hossan Leong, Janice Koh, Lim Kay Siu, Neo Swee Lin, Emma Yong and Gerald Chew



## SETTING THE STAGE

The setting is a sprawling family estate in Shanxi, China, which has a cherry orchard so renowned, it is listed among the natural wonders of the region and documented in the encyclopaedia. This cherry orchard is unusual in not being a working farm with a commercial function, but a mere cosmetic adornment of the landscape which gives its owners much aesthetic pleasure in the grand tradition of the leisured classes and landowning gentry.

The time is the 1930s, an age of transition when China is on the cusp of major upheavals and seismic shifts in the sociopolitical system can be felt. The communist insurgency is gathering force and momentum, and the old ways are rapidly being eroded. The social rubric of that large extended household is, in itself, being threatened with radical change, as feudal constructs are on the decline, and a new industrial order is wreaking havoc on the old social hierarchy.

The mistress of the household is a widow, inured in the extravagant ways of her aristocratic lineage, yet ahead of her time in seeking to break free from the status quo by electing to be a lounge singer. She is emblematic of the tensions between the past and the future, tradition and emancipation. After the death of her beloved son, she leaves China for London on the Orient Express with two grown-up daughters and while there, takes up companionship with a feckless lover who exploits her generosity and subsequently abuses her. Debt-ridden, she returns to the family hearth only to be confronted with the possibility of losing her greatest possession

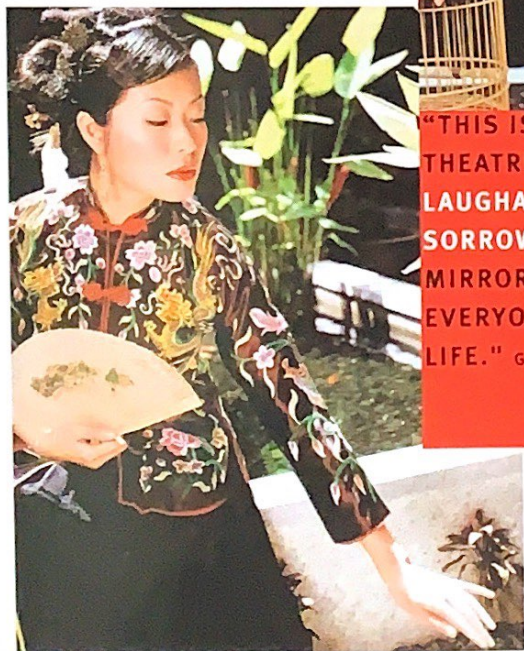
and most treasured heirloom, the family's cherry orchard, which may soon go under the auctioneer's hammer. Meanwhile, life within the estate continues in a whirligig of parties as if in an opium daze.

## REPLANTED

This, in a nutshell, is Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble's version of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, which has been commissioned by the National Arts Council (NAC) for the *Singapore Arts Festival 2002*. Temporally leapfrogging by a century, the struggle between the old and new Chinas in the decade of the 1930s has become the cultural signifier in place of the revolt of the serfs and the impact of the railroad on Russian civilisation in the 1830s, as depicted in Chekhov's masterpiece. Yet the decay of the moneyed classes and the questions of their adaptability in a new socioeconomic milieu remains relevant (even today), despite the



**"THIS IS A PIECE OF THEATRE FULL OF LAUGHABLE PAINS AND SORROWS, WHICH MIRROR BLATANTLY ON EVERYONE'S EXISTING LIFE."** GOH BOON TECK



relocation of cultural context.

Re-titled, *The Morning People*, this production is a first-time collaboration between the USA-based Singapore playwright, Chay Yew, who was entrusted with adapting the script, and the artistic director of Toy Factory, Goh Boon Teck, who will function as both set designer and director. With associate artistic director, Beatrice Chia enrolled as both assistant director and cast member, Bang Wenfu as composer of the play's incidental music and Dorothy Png as the lighting designer, the production will amass the talents of some of the most prominent names in Singapore theatre today. The sterling cast includes Neo Swee Lin in the Madam Ranetskaya role, Lim Kay Siu as the lowly born servant who will soon usurp the orchard, Janice Koh and Carina Hales as the young daughters, Gerald Chew as the effete brother of the matriarch, Emma Yong as the servant girl aspiring about her station, Rodney Oliveiro as the idealistic young intellectual, Sheikh Haikel as a rich landowner, and with Chua En-Lai, Kevin Murphy and Hossan Leong lending stalwart support as a motley gang of loyal retainers, both old and young, within the household.

Goh Boon Teck says of the production: "Toy Factory celebrates the return of Neo-Naturalism with *The Cherry Orchard*; it's a timeless classic with a whole new interpretation. It's about the change of time and how our hearts keep up with it. We wanted to stage an English production that is not an art of intellectual, but emotional strength. The morning people are waking upon the dawn of Communism, the sale of their ancestral estate and a new day



## COVER STORY

consisting of unknowns. Facing the ironies and little uncelebrated tragedies of life, this is a piece of theatre full of laughable pains and sorrows, which mirror blatantly on everyone's existing life."

This production will mark Goh Boon Teck's third contribution to the *Arts Festival* programme, albeit his first English language entry. Way back in 1992, Goh submitted the shadow puppetry piece, *Playback*, for the *Festival Fringe*, and in 2000, his Mandarin play, *A Tinted Edge*, was showcased in the festival's main programme. This latest production is also significant for being Goh's maiden outing at a major arts event after winning the NAC's coveted Young Artist of the Year Award for Theatre, and scooping up no less than five out of nine awards at last year's inaugural *Life! Theatre Awards for Titoudao*, based on his mother's life on the wayang stage.

### RIPE FOR THE PICKING

Chekhov's plays have been described as dirigibles suspended above drama and incident, full of repetitive and delusional dialogue. As a result, too earnest an ascription to the text only ends up weighing it down, causing it to sag and in the worst scenario, deflate or even implode. Unlike Ibsen, whose stage directions serve as a vocal emphasis and fill the pregnant pauses with meaning, Chekhov is more visual in orientation, even in terms of images that are diegetic to the text; like the eponymous cherry orchard, which serves as an overarching leitmotif in the dramatic plot, but is never physically represented. Rigid allegiance to a Chekhovian text can therefore prove fatal, when the actors intone the lines with the self-conscious formalism of theatre majors.

In this light, Toy Factory's loose adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, where every smidgen of dialogue has been re-written and only the bare-boned structure of the narrative retained, may be an expedient approach to this Russian maestro of tragicomedy, by resolving the ambiguities of his lines and concretising the references therein. Goh confirms that the new script serves to substantiate the themes by virtue of its accessibility.

Certain characters in the original play, such as the governess and the neighbour, have been reconfigured as the eldest daughter and her husband respectively. In doing so the nexus of relationships becomes more constricted and circumscribed, with

everything happening under one roof, as symptomatic of large Chinese families. Where emotions lingered beneath the surface and on occasion became perilously elusive in Chekhov's original, the strong familial ties and convoluted liaisons are made more pronounced and credible by Chay's codifications. That the anti-heroine is now a woman of high birth with a predilection for the lowly craft of the stage (considered a dubious profession by any stratum of Chinese society during that era) accentuates both her character's wilfulness and self-indulgence. As a thematic sleight of hand, this latter detail also strikes a self-reflexive note as a sly comment on the state of Singapore theatre.

However, aligned to Chekhov's visual preoccupation is Goh's stage vocabulary, which trades on the splendour of chinoiserie as evident in the play's publicity stills in which the characters are clad in brocade period garb complete with frog buttons and high collars and complemented by period hair accessories. In regards to the mise-en-scene, Goh promises a revolving stage which can dexterously capture different portions of the family estate, as it rotates.

As one of Toy Factory's most ambitious and expensive projects thus far, *The Morning People* looks set to be a touring production; it was one of three shows fervently promoted by the theatre company at the 5th *Australian Performing Arts Market* in Adelaide, March 2002. The other two being *Titoudao*, inarguably Toy Factory's signature work, and the more recent, *The Eastern Line of My Palm*, about a young woman's spiritual odyssey in India.

While some may find *The Cherry Orchard*'s thematic concerns somewhat dated, Goh feels that by foregrounding the play's emotional element and transposing this to a Chinese milieu, he helps to fill the lacunae of the text, as well as keeping its observations of human folly universal and timeless. Lastly, as Chekhov has always done, but did not categorically stipulate, Goh will also wisely keep the image of the cherry orchard off-stage in his new version, such that its value as a pivotal symbol becomes multi-referential and its alleged beauty best left to the imagination ☐

*The Morning People* is on 6-8 Jun at Victoria Theatre.

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# back | stage

at the singapore arts festival 2002







theatre

text by  
low kee hong



# Chekhov's Cherry Orchard goes to China



## Task 1:

Try uprooting rows of mature cherry trees from an extensive orchard and transplanting them onto an alien land. Difficult but not impossible.

## Task 2:

Make sure that the replanted cherry trees continue to survive and bear fruit. This requires an acute sensitivity to the nature of the trees, the composition of the new soil and the environment of the new location.



director Goh Boon Teck

The **MORNING People**  
by Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble (Singapore)  
June 6 to 8 • 8pm • Victoria Theatre  
Tickets: \$42, \$32, \$22, \$16  
Duration: 155 minutes (with intermission)  
Website: [www.toyfactory.org](http://www.toyfactory.org)

**THE** same applies to an adaptation of Chekhov's final masterpiece, *The Cherry Orchard*. Written in 1903 against a background of great social and economic upheaval in Russia, Chekhov gave us one of those rare dramatic texts which imbues its characters with a life-giving transparency that illuminates a contextual specificity as well as a timeless examination of the human condition.

Designated as a comedy by Chekhov himself, the play centres on the loss of a family estate to an upstart businessman. The premise is straightforward and the plot simple but the dramatics lie in the exquisitely written characters who delve deeply into themes of wealth, communication, work, love and the future.

**"Tell me honestly, how would you feel if you were asked to move out of your home, your territory? Moving out of your ancestral home means taking down your grandfather's picture, moving the altar, taking out the floormat and clearing pieces of furniture that meant something to you. And as the director, I am going to focus a lot on this."**

The folks at Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble have given themselves the mammoth task of bringing us their version of *The Cherry Orchard* at this year's Singapore Arts Festival. Titled **The MORNING People**, it is now relocated to Sha'an Xi in central China, circa 1934.

This crossing of borders is to bring Chekhov's canonical text closer to home. My fellow artists have assured me that the utmost respect has been given to the original and yet it has been transformed to resonate with an emotional core relevant to the Singapore audience.

Assistant director Beatrice Chia offers: "We want to speak to the audience as

directly as possible and to put up something strange like Asian-looking actors putting on wigs and pretending to play Russians would be very alienating."

Director Goh Boon Teck, in his mission to showcase local talent, has chosen to work with an entirely Singaporean creative team. Interestingly enough, the task of carrying out the mechanics of adapting the script falls on the shoulders of Chay Yew, who, like the matriarch of Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*, went through a period of self-imposed exile abroad.

Explains Goh: "I think Chay Yew is one of the few Singaporean writers who is able to handle this adaptation effectively."

"Based on the initial drafts, Chay Yew has actually traversed from the Russian original, through the English translations and then back again to a Chinese location that sits comfortably next to the original."

Agreeing, Chia adds: "Chay Yew has kept the whole essence of the original Chekhov but at the same time, he makes it sound like Chinese people are talking but without the condescending bad English."

And the decision to relocate the play to Sha'an Xi, China posits a geographical twin to Singapore today. "... because it is a society that is privileged to draw on cultures East and West, where her people have access to board the Orient Express and embark on journeys," says Goh.

Simultaneously, the time line reflects the Chinese at the end of the Kuo-Min Tang era and dealing with the rise of communism. Adds Goh: "As we step into 2002, we find ourselves at the brink of many changes like the economic recession and post-9/11 sentiments and **The MORNING People** must reflect these changes that are happening around us."

That said, Goh adds that as a director, he would rather approach the project from a more "down to earth" perspective. "Yes, the original Chekhov is about a great social and political change in Russia... but for me, the play is really about the struggles of a family forced to move out of their ancestral home."

Reflecting on his own personal experience of dealing with the same, Goh postulates that "if even in my generation, I have the opportunity to encounter something like this, I am sure the majority of Singaporeans will at some point in their lives have been made to move out of their homes." And herein lies the projected emotional resonance of the piece.

"Tell me honestly, how would you feel if you were asked to move out of your home, your territory? Moving out of your ancestral home means taking down your grandfather's picture, moving the altar, taking out the floormat and clearing pieces of furniture that meant something to you. And as the director, I am going to focus a lot on this," says Goh.



"SIM's involvement in the arts expresses the Institute's philosophy of creating holistic meaningful learning experiences for its members. We are proud to participate once again in the Singapore Arts Festival to help promote Singapore's rich cultural, creative and artistic heritage."

Ronald Tan Hee Huan  
CEO & Executive Director  
Singapore Institute of Management