



Dr. Loretta Chen – Creative Director, Academic, Artiste

Harper's Bazaar describes Dr Loretta Chen as “a force of nature”, The Straits Times labels her “a Rebel with a Twist” and a “Wild Thing” whilst The Peak calls her a “critical arts entrepreneur”.

Be it “wild thing”, “rebel” or “entrepreneur”, Loretta cuts a prominent figure in both the hallowed halls of academia and in the entertainment arena. This multi-talented scholar-turned-creative director topped her Masters' cohort at the prestigious Royal Holloway College, University of London and is the first doctoral scholar in Theatre Studies from UCLA-NUS. She pioneered the Creative Communications, Drama and Creativity, Innovation & Enterprise (CIE) programs in Singapore Polytechnic and is an Associate Lecturer in NUS, LASALLE, NAFA and NTU. Academia aside, Loretta directs various high-profile theatrical and large scale commissioned events.

Her directorial credits in London include Caryl Churchill's ***A Mouthful of Birds***, Harold Pinter's ***One for the Road*** and 15th century morality play, ***Everyman*** amongst others. As one of the few bilingual directors in Singapore, she has directed several Mandarin productions including ***13 Shaolin*** (a Singapore-China collaboration), ***24 Pieties***, ***Lot No. 8*** and ***Ten Brothers*** which garnered 4 nominations at the Life Theatre Awards including Best Director. Her other directing credits include the internationally acclaimed ***251***, a “fresh, inspired and victorious” production of ***The Vagina Monologues*** (2006, 2008), two sold-out seasons of ***The Swimming Instructor***, ***Postcards from Rosa***, ***MAGICBOX*** and the “ingenious” ***What the Butler Saw***. She also directed the Asian Premiere of the Broadway classic, ***Victor/Victoria*** (nominated for 2 Life Theatre Awards) starring international jazz sensation Laura Fygi and Grammy-nominated trumpeter, Ron King.

Loretta is also often commissioned by government bodies, statutory boards and corporations to helm their various campaigns and initiatives. These include the annual ***Career Fair*** organized by the Ministry of Manpower, ***Service Excellence Day*** for the Singapore Police Force, official launch of the ***Festive Crime Prevention*** campaign by the National Crime Prevention Council, SMRT's ***Eco Challenge*** and ***Go Green*** events, Singtel ***I Media*** launch, People's Association's ***It's All About YOUth!*** and the inaugural ***President's Design Awards***.

Loretta also directs specially commissioned musicals for corporations. Examples of these are ***Fly Me to the Moon***, Singapore's longest running musical for the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore, ***What's Cash?***, a musical commissioned by NETS, ***Pages of Singapore*** for Singapore Press Holdings, ***The Suspect*** for the National Crime Prevention Council, ***No More Cocoa*** for Pfizer and ***Love: In Stores Now*** for Orchard Central. Loretta's illustrious and satisfied clients include Capitaland, People's Association, Sony, Philips, Far East Organization, Underwater World, Beam Global Asia amongst many others.

A much sought after emcee and host, Loretta's list of corporate clients include F1, BEX ASIA, Sony, Sony-Ericsson, Philips, UBS, POSB, Kaplan, Nucleus Connect, NUS, Singapore Environment Council, SMRT and Singapore Press Holdings.

In 2009, Loretta received the Martell Rising Personalities Award and was nominated as a Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP). Loretta is one of the faces in Hermes' **P.S. I Silk You** campaign and joins the ranks of Naomi Campbell and Robert Pattinson in The Body Shop's **Stop Sex Trafficking** project. She is a frequent face in the media and has been featured in The Peak, The Business Times, The Straits Times, The New Paper, TODAY and all major publications.

She remains actively involved in various social campaigns and charity outreach projects and consults at various creative agencies including Spinn, VM&SD, Star Mission and 360 Productions, an international creative production house with headquarters in USA, Canada and Singapore. 360 Productions is the Asian arm of J Phillips Creative Management that provides action direction to major Hollywood blockbusters such as **Salt, Eclipse, Pirates of the Caribbean, Kung Fu Panda, Charlie's Angels** and the upcoming movie, **Thor**.

She is currently directing a short film, **Tapestry** (working title) commissioned by the People's Association which will be released in late February. She has also been invited to stage **The Vagina Monologues** in Toronto, Canada as part of the International Women's Day celebrations, come March 2011.

Loretta Chen's Curriculum Vitae (Creative)

Last updated August 2010

Selected Events (As Director)

2010	Zespri Magical Journey	<i>Starring Jeremy Lee</i>	Health Promotion Board
2009	Singtel I Media Launch	<i>Starring Hatta Said</i>	Zebra Crossing & Singtel
2008	Civil Service College Excellence Day	<i>Starring Magdalene See</i>	Fly Entertainment & CSC.
2007	Lakerol Promotion Launch		Qwerks
2007	Singapore Police Force	<i>Starring Amy Cheng</i>	Fly & S'pore Police Force
2007	S'pore Nurses Association	<i>Starring Irene Ang, Amy Cheng</i>	Fly & S'pore Nurses Association
2007	J Steel Company Dinner	-	J Steel Singapore Pte Ltd
2006	People's Association PAYM	<i>Starring Gurmit Singh</i>	PAYM
2006	President's Design Awards	<i>Inaugural event honoring Best Designers in Singapore</i>	Design Council Singapore
2006	Creative Directors Awards	-	SMRT, AIS.
2006	Caribbean By The Bay	-	Keppel Bay
2006	Career Fair	<i>Starring Paerin Choa</i>	Ministry of Manpower
2006	Continental Birthday Bash	<i>Starring Beatrice Chia-Richmond</i>	Red-Berri Productions
2005	Pages of Singapore	<i>Starring Hossan Leong</i>	AdAsia, Singapore Press Holdings
2005	Soho@Central	<i>Part of S'pore Fashion Week'05</i>	Far East Organization
2005	What's Cash?	<i>Starring Cheryl Miles</i>	NETS Singapore
2004	The Suspect	<i>Starring Edmund Chen</i>	National Crime Prevention Council
2004	The Legend of Chang-er	<i>Starring Darius Tan, Celine R Tan</i>	Civil Aviation Authority of S'pore(CAAS)

Selected Theatre (As Director)

2009	Victor/Victoria	<i>Starring Laura Fygi</i>	Zebra Crossing
2009	What The Butler Saw	<i>Starring Vernetta Lopez</i>	Zebra Crossing
2008	The Vagina Monologues	<i>2 Life! Award Nominations</i>	Zebra Crossing
2008	The Magic Box	<i>Starring Lawrence Khong</i>	Gateway Entertainment
2008	Theatre Idols	<i>Starring Timothy Nga</i>	Action Theatre
2007	Postcards from Rosa	<i>Starring Neo Swee Lin</i>	Action Theatre
2007	The Critic	<i>Starring Mark Zee & Debra Teng</i>	Short & Sweet
2007	251	<i>2 Life! Award Nominations</i>	Toy Factory Productions
2007	The Swimming Instructor	<i>March & May 2007 season</i>	Action Theatre
2006	Once Familiar	<i>Featuring George Chan</i>	Esplanade Recital Studio
2006	Let Me Entertain You	<i>Starring Leigh McDonald</i>	I Theatre & The Arts House
2006	The Vagina Monologues	<i>Starring Annabelle Francis</i>	NUS Theatre Society
2005	10 Brothers	<i>4 Life! Award Nominations</i>	Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble
2004	24 Pieties	<i>Starring Edric Hsu & Paerin Choa</i>	Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble
2004	13 Shaolin	<i>Starring Shaolin Monks</i>	Bigman Productions

Selected School Productions (As Director)

2010	Huff!	-	Serangoon Junior College
2007	Joseph & His Dreams	<i>Awarded GOLD.</i>	Orangedot & SYF
2007	Scruples	<i>Awarded SILVER.</i>	Qwerks & SYF
2006	Hip-Hopera	<i>Co-Directed with Jeremiah Choy</i>	NUS Theatre Studies Programme
2006	Sing To The Dawn	<i>Based on the book by Min-Fong Ho</i>	CHIJ St Theresa's Convent
2006	Clash	-	St Margaret's Secondary School

Selected Theatre (as Actor)

2008	Disturbing Mavis	<i>Lead</i>	People's Choice Award
2007	Hitting (On) Women	<i>Supporting Lead</i>	Action Theatre dir. Samantha Scott
2006	Fairy God Father	<i>Lead</i>	Indig-NATION, dir. by Jeremiah Choy
2005	Ten Brothers	<i>Mother (Lead)</i>	Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble
2004	Poetry In the Flesh	<i>Ensemble</i>	STAGES
2004	Passion Play	<i>Girl (Lead)</i>	STAGES
2003	Hearing Voices	<i>Ensemble</i>	Theatreworks
2002	Arty Party	<i>Ensemble</i>	Theatreworks
1999	Antigone	<i>Antigone(Lead)</i>	Royal Holloway, University of London
1999	Elements	<i>Mother(Lead)</i>	Ingot Arts
1999	35@2000	<i>Debbie Tay (Lead)</i>	Action Theatre
1999	Tortoise & The Rabbit	<i>Lead</i>	Theatreworks
1998	Walking Into Doors	<i>Lead</i>	The Necessary Stage
1998	Mama Looking For Her Cat	<i>Ensemble</i>	Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble

1998	Got To Go..Play Till Dawn	<i>Ensemble</i>	Theatreworks
1997	Ba-Bu-Ba-Bah		NUS Theatre Studies Programme
1996	Flying Circus Project		Theatreworks

Selected TV & Film Productions (As Actor)

2009	Dirty Bitch	<i>Doctor (Lead)</i>	Sun Koh
2007	The Swimming Instructor	<i>Substance (Guest)</i>	Action Theatre
2005	Early Morning Awakening	<i>Emily Gan(Lead)</i>	Freestate Productions
2005	Incredible Tales	<i>Small Mamasan</i>	P5 Productions
2004	More Than One	<i>Sister (Supporting)</i>	MTO Prod, London College of Printing
2004	Urban Conversations	<i>Lead</i>	Aporia Films
2003	Why Should We Employ You?	<i>Lead</i>	Singapore Polytechnic
2002	Phua Chu Kang	<i>Director (Guest)</i>	Mediacorp Studios
2002	All My Presents	<i>Girlfriend</i>	Wee Li Lin for Digital Compassion'02
1999	Molotov Cocktails	<i>Girl (Lead)</i>	Heman Chong for TNS
1999	Lunch Time	<i>Girl (Lead)</i>	Wee Li Lin

Selected Television Commercials (As Actor)

2007	Launch of Hi-Def TV	<i>As Self</i>	Panasonic Hi-Def TV
2004	The One in the Shower	<i>Lead</i>	Olympus
1999	Max Fan Talk	<i>As Self</i>	Cinemax

Selected Celebrity Endorsements/Sponsorships

2010	Stop Sex Trafficking	<i>As Self</i>	The Body Shop
2010	Dermalogica Skincare	<i>As Self</i>	Leonard Drake
2009	Hermes PS I Silk You	<i>As Self</i>	Hermes
2009	Dew Water	<i>As Self</i>	Food Xervices
2009	MAC Cosmetics	<i>As Self</i>	MAC Cosmetics
2009-	Kim Robinson Hair Salon	<i>As Self</i>	Kim Robinson

Selected Events (As Host)

2010	F1	Various Locations	F1
2010	Nat'l Sustainability Conf.	National Univ of S'pore	National Univ of S'pore
2010	Apple Epicentre Launch	Marina Bay Sands	Visibility & Apple
2010	Zespri	Various Schools	Health Promotion Board
2010	Sony Ericsson	AMK Hub	Sony Ericsson
2010	Nescafe Launch	Various locations	Nescafe
2009	FLA Opening	Suntec City	FLA
2008	Lead Offering	UBS	UBS
2008	Launch of Ambiscene	Suntec City	Philips
2008	Launch of CNG	CNG Mandai	CNG
2007	S'pore Acrylic D&D	Carlton Hotel	S'pore Arcylic Pte Ltd
2007	Philips Arcitec	Various locations	Philips
2007	K9 Kulture Opening	K9 Kulture Kampus	K9 Kulture
2007	SMRT Challenge	<i>Various locations</i>	SMRT
2007	S'pore River Raft Race	<i>Co-hosted with DJ Jeremy Ratnam</i>	Singapore Polytechnic
2007	Kaplan Official Opening	<i>Kaplan City Campus</i>	Kaplan Inc
2007	Asia Life Awards & Dinner	<i>Swissotel</i>	Asia Life Insurance
2007	Kaplan Roadshows	<i>Various locations</i>	Kaplan Group
2007	Lam Soon Product Launch	<i>Various locations</i>	Lam Soon
2007	J Steel Company Dinner	<i>Meritus Mandarin</i>	J Steel Pte Ltd
2006	SMRT Awareness Launch	<i>Various SMRT locations</i>	SMRT
2006	POSB Opening	<i>Co-hosted with Kym Ng</i>	POSB
2006	End of Year Bash	<i>Q Bar</i>	Entrepreneur Organisation(EO)
2006	Picket & Rail Xmas Fair	<i>Parkway Parade</i>	Picket & Rail
2006	Ride SMRT, Go Places	<i>Various locations</i>	SMRT
2006	Launch of Go Green	<i>Various locations</i>	Singapore Environment Council
2006	Singtel Christmas Fair	<i>Suntec Convention Centre</i>	Singtel
2006	Dopod Launch	<i>Jewel Box, Velvet Underground</i>	Dopod International
2006	Sony Vaio Launch	<i>OUB Centre</i>	Sony Singapore
2006	Sony Microvault Launch	<i>Orchard Cineleisure</i>	MTV Asia
2006	May Day Rally	<i>Suntec Convention Centre for 7000 pax inc PM Lee, MM Lee, Ministers of State, Ministers Hosted rallies for SM Goh, Mr George Yeo, Mr Lim Swee Say and</i>	Orangedot Productions for NTUC.
2006	Election'06 Rally		People's Action Party

		<i>various MP Elects, Ministers of State and Ministers</i>	
2006	SM Goh Chok Tong Dialogue	<i>Host</i>	People's Action Party
2006	Mattel March Madness	<i>Host</i>	Mattel
2006	Philips InfraRed Launch	<i>Host</i>	Philips
2006	Caribbean by the Bay	<i>Host</i>	Keppel Bay
2006	Singapore River Raft Race	<i>Host</i>	Singapore Polytechnic
2006	Uniquely Singapore Race	<i>Host</i>	NTU and Singapore Tourism Board
2005	Sony Style X Microvault	<i>Host</i>	Sony
2005	Fun Galore with Mattel	<i>Host</i>	Mattel
2005	Philips Trade Launch	<i>Host</i>	Philips
2004	National Day Ceremony	<i>Host</i>	Singapore Polytechnic

Scholarships and Awards

2005-2010	Full PhD Tuition & Research Fellowship	-	National University of Singapore
2000-2002	Full PhD Tuition & Research Fellowship	-	University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
1999	Overseas Study Grant	-	National Arts Council

Other Awards & Honourable Mentions

2009	Rising Personality Award	<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Pernod Ricard</i>
2008	People's Choice Award – Disturbing Mavis	<i>Lead Actor</i>	<i>Short & Sweet Singapore</i>
2008	Awarded Associate Artistic Directorship	-	<i>Action Theatre</i>
2007	Mr Singapore Grand Finals	<i>Judge</i>	Mr Singapore International
2007	PAYM Policy Forum "Living & Staying Overseas: Home Away from Home"	<i>Panelist/Speaker</i>	People's Association Youth Movement
2007	YP Forum with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew	<i>Guest</i>	Young PAP
2006	Life Theatre Awards 2006 Nomination	<i>Best Director</i>	Singapore Press Holdings
2005	Awarded Full Research Fellowship and Scholarship	1 st Candidate awarded.	NUS
2005	CNA Audition Me – Travel Host	<i>Top Ten</i>	Channel News Asia
2004	Discovery Asia Search for Host	<i>Asia's Top Three Finalist</i>	Discovery Travel & Living
2004	Perfect 10 DJ Hunt	<i>Top Ten Finalist</i>	Radio Corporation of Singapore
2000	Awarded Full Research Fellowship and Scholarship	First Singaporean Woman to be awarded this honor.	UCLA
1999	Valedictorian of MA (Theatre)	<i>Top Scholar (Distinction) in MA cohort</i>	University of London, Royal Holloway
1998-1999	Producer Presenter	<i>GOLD 90 FM</i>	Radio Corporation of Singapore

Training

2005-2010	PhD Theatre	National University of Singapore
2000-2002	PhD (A.B.D) Theatre	University of California, Los Angeles, (UCLA), transferred to NUS.
1999-2000	MA (Distinction) Theatre Studies	Royal Holloway, University of London
1995-1999	BA(Hons)English Language & Theatre Studies	National University of Singapore
1993-1994	A'Levels with "S"-Level Distinction in Literature	Anglo-Chinese Junior College
1989-1992		

THE PERSON TO WATCH

THE HOT SEAT



A CRITICAL MONOLOGUE

Loretta Chen, the director of critically acclaimed plays like the *Vagina Monologues*, talks about courting controversy and promoting arts entrepreneurship.

TEXT SUZANNE WONG PHOTO TAN WEI TE
ART DIRECTION CHUA KWEE PENG
CHAIR ELD CHAISE LOUNGE BY GIORGETTI
SHOT ON LOCATION SPACE FURNITURE

One should not court controversy just for the sake of creating a controversy, but it must be an issue that needs to be addressed and it takes research, time and commitment to create a coherent argument and then presenting it in a form of "entertainment".

Indeed, being a director takes guts. And being a controversial one at that requires a healthy sense of self, a supportive network system of family and friends who believe in you, a deep sense of humility, a keen appetite for adventure and an immense capacity for humour.

I hope to see the art equivalent of Spring Singapore which could be established to help younger artists. For starters, there could be the increasing use of "entrepreneurial" rhetoric in tandem with the arts to encourage young artists to see themselves as "arts entrepreneurs" as opposed to the perennial "starving artists". We have been very successful in creating a sexy, vibrant image of scientists in Singapore, and can do the same in highlighting artists as social or arts entrepreneurs.

I also hope to see greater competitiveness of small creative companies versus big corporate players. Various corporations also venturing into the "live" medium, thereby threatening the viability of these smaller theatre companies.

Finally, I hope the theatre audiences will keep growing, as it is their presence that spurs us on to greater altitudes. Is that too much to ask for five years? We always work towards and hope for the best. ☺



LORETTA CHEN
Artistic director of
theatre company
Zebra Productions

Loretta Chen
Sees life as
a theatre scene



life! people

THE STRAITS TIMES MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2008 PAGE 82



Wild thing

The world is my playground but as the erst Singapore is home. It shapes and moves me. I know the nuances of the city, its people and the history
Theatre director Loretta Chen left

8 QUESTIONS WITH Loretta Chen

First, an Annabel Cheng play. Now, *The Vagina Monologues*. Loretta Chen is big on taboos

See her
on page 82

Theatre director Loretta Chen, 41, is a political animal who pushes boundaries — as and off the stage.

Her controversial play about Singaporean jazz star Annabel Cheng, *24*, got people talking when it was staged in April last year.

She is also an active member of the Young PAP and posed questions about membership to Minister Lee Kuan Yew at a youth dialogue last year.

Chen was recently mentioned by Dr Tan Hui Poo, mayor of North West District, to be in the North West Community Development Corporation's executive committee.

Her current project is Eve Sinder's feminist play, *The Vagina Monologues*, which opens on Wednesday. The play also marks the inaugural show of her new company, Zebra Crossing.

Here is a little-known fact: She is also the baby sister of television actor Edward Chen.

"As a 10-year-old, I used to tag along to all his filming sessions," chuckled Chen, who is 14 years younger than her brother.

"That was what got me hooked on performance: seeing my big brother turn up to someone else as a screen."

Born to a clerk and a housewife, Chen, who grew up in a two-room flat in Tanglin Hill, calls herself "a complete outsider".

"My dad was 41 and my mum was 39 when they had me. Eric, my second eldest brother, is only three years apart from Edward," said Chen.

She went on to study theatre studies at the National University of Singapore, where she now teaches part-time while pursuing her doctorate on queer performance staged in Singapore.

In 1999, she headed to University of London's Royal Holloway for her master's, before starting on her doctorate at the University of California in Los Angeles where she lived for over two years.

She returned to Singapore in 2000 and went on to garner a Life! Theatre Awards nomination for best director for *The Brothers*, a cheeky retelling of a Chinese folktale about 10 siblings who each possess a different superpower.

1. What draws you to controversial plays?

I am drawn to material which is overlooked in mainstream society and I question why people react to it that way.

The subjects often centre on historical personalities such as strong women, as well as issues I feel very much for.

2. I hear you are quite open-minded. Is that why you are dressed in all white today?

Yes, my partner told me it is my lucky colour. I just thought, what the heck, I bought a white set, lots of white clothes, then white shoes and white bag to match.

When I was harboring thoughts of starting a theatre company, I got up for-

ture told by a temple in China that said I should start my business with my close friends, which I did.

3. Why name your theatre company Zebra Crossing?

Laughs! I have a theory for that. We spend a lot of time on the road, where people have little patience or much time.

As urban strategists, however, traffic cannot be ruled and only people matter. No matter how important the driver is or how big the car, you have to stop for the pedestrian.

Zebra Crossing will produce all sorts of theatre, from Broadway musicals to newly commissioned works.

4. What does theatre mean to you?

I spent 1 year studying in California in 2000, my partner complained nobody there is a man, helped me deal with the very difficult time. I was able to look at it as if it was a scene from my life's play.

Sometimes, when something realises itself, happen to you, you need to be able to distance yourself and look at it with some objectivity.

5. What was your childhood like?

I grew up in a working-class family but I always had enough even though we were not very rich. The house was full of love.

I never felt poorer than my classmates, who were always letting off on holidays to the United States or Europe.

I had nine good friends and birthday parties at McDonald's. Thinking back, all those meals have cost my parents quite a bit but their great love for us is far more so than anything.

6. What do you think makes a strong woman and do you think of yourself as one?

To me, a strong woman is someone

who says she can do anything, she gets her mind set. Sometimes, it takes time enough to be able to say you are wrong or you are not good at something.

As a director, I rely on my collaborators. I have ideas but need talented people to carry them out. We discuss and discuss without them behind us.

7. What made you join the Young PAP?

If you want to make a change, you have to actively make it and that means working within the political system.

Some people get quite disheartened, cynical and feel powerless because they keep criticising from the outside.

I say: keep in and fight for what you believe in. Theatre is a great platform for me to be politically aware and actively involved while still being creative.

8. Complete this sentence. If I could live my life all over again, I would...

Not change it at all. I needed to go through my life the way I did.

On a lighter note, however, I wished I went for my brother's operation earlier. I am going for it next month but now my feet look funny.

loretta@zxc.com.sg

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
2008 will be sold out and not strong language
Who: Julia Davion
When: Wednesday to Sat 12 (except Mondays and Sundays) at 8pm, 10pm, 12pm
Where: Drama Centre Theatre at National Library Building
Tickets: \$27 to \$27 (incl. Sales Tax) go to www.zxc.com.sg or call 6346 2021

Show Star Bucks

Big spender or penny-pincher? Stars speak their mind on money matters

Failed business was wake-up call

REPORT: KWOK KAR PENG
karpeng@ph.com.sg

LAST December, on her birthday, local creative director Loretta Chen found out she had lost close to \$200,000 in a business venture.

In an interview with *The New Paper* last week, the 34-year-old said she had started the business with her elder brother Eric and a close friend in 2008.

She was responsible for the creative aspect of the business and another person was hired to handle the finances.

However, the business folded in months after it was set up.

The theatre director – who directed plays such as *251* (2005), *Postcards from Rose* (2007) and *The Vienna Monologues* (2008) – didn't want to name the company or the person involved in causing the losses.

According to previous media reports, Chen was also one of the partners in theatre group *Zebra Crossing Productions*.

It stragled the musical *Victor/Victoria* last November, which left it \$1 million in debt.

Chen and her brother Eric subsequently quit the group.

Bounced back

Even though Chen has since bounced back from the failed venture, she cried during this interview.

It was the first time she had discussed the incident since it happened, she said.

"I lost cash and confidence. I was such an artist that I never even looked at the finances," said Chen.

"The hardest was feeling I had let my brother and good friend down. They trusted me and therefore invested the money."

The three of them lost \$400,000 in all.

The former Nominated Member of Parliament called it a very expensive lesson in business and human relations.

She added that she was about to start legal proceedings against the person who caused the losses when she found out that her mother had a brain tumour the size of a tennis ball.

Chen decided to drop the lawsuit and spend her time and money taking care of her mother instead.

"I just stacked it all up and bore the failure quietly. After I decided to take care of what's most important to me, I strangely found the confidence to get better," she said.

"It was the best decision I've ever made."

She has got past the failed venture and started her own creative consultancy company 369.

Now she makes sure she keeps track of every cent that goes into and out of the business.

It also helps that her current business partner makes her check the accounts.

One of her latest projects is directing a Christmas musical, *Love In Shoes Now*, which stars Cynthia Lee Macquarrie, Amy Cheng and Claude Girard.

The show comprises three acts, each lasting 30 minutes.

Each act will be performed for a week at the Orchard Central shopping mall, and the full story will be played out over three weeks from Dec 1 to 23.

Chen – who has a financial adviser – is especially thankful that the people she worked with in her failed venture trust her enough to work with her again.

She sets a target for herself to earn a five-figure sum every month, out of which she saves at least five per cent.

Another 20 per cent of her monthly income goes into investments and 10 per cent to charity.

The remaining 65 per cent is used for paying insurance premiums and for personal expenses, including a budget of \$2,500 a month for shopping (often on *Chanel* and *Prada* bags, shoes and accessories).

Six months' buffer

She lives with her parents and pays for their daily expenses.

Nevertheless, Chen added, if there are big expenses like their parents' hospital bills, all those things will share the cost.

Actor Edmund Chen is her elder brother.

She makes sure she keeps aside enough money to serve as a buffer six months.

Added Chen: "My parents brought us up well. We were never rich and we worked very hard for what we have."

"They taught us a can-do spirit, to work hard and save. But besides having a healthy bank account, it's very important to have a bank of gratitude and appreciation which you can draw on on dark days."



FRESH START: Loretta Chen now keeps track of every cent that goes in and out of her current business.

THE PICTURE: GARY FOO

EXECUTIVE LIFESTYLE
Venice Biennale,
Singapore Biennale
PAGES 28,32



MALAYSIA
Abdullah may not
seek re-election
PAGE 14

BE INSPIRED
Zap for daily inspiration.
Win a Nikon Digital
Camera! PAGE 9



THE BUSINESS TIMES

SINGAPORE \$5 cover online at <http://www.businesstimes.com.sg> A SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS PUBLICATION CO REGD NO 198420060 MCA (P) 197802000 Friday, September 15, 2008

including radio single *The Patchy Song*
Just one of the *On Your Feet* concert takes place on Sept 24 at 8.30pm. Tickets from \$22.50 to \$35.

Indie Rock And Roll
ROCK and give with The Fire Fights, Serenitee Rock and Phantasmic, some of Singapore's finest independent bands. The night will feature some of their newest work, along with hits from their previous albums.

Radio Rock and Roll takes place on Sept 25 at 8.30pm. Tickets from \$18 to \$20.

The *Indie Music Fest* will also feature several live acts during a 20-day celebration, including local favorites Niala, Micaela Thorneo, The Goodfives and many more.

The *Indie Music Fest* takes place at *Theatre at The Substation* and *The Rosewood Stage of the Arts House* from Sept 19 to 28. Tickets can be bought through www.guestsunder.com.sg. For the full programme schedule and more information, visit www.indiefest.com.sg.

Interaction between neighbours
ACTRESS (left) from Singaporeans live in HDB flats, there is usually very little interaction between residents in buildings only metres apart. After *Seasons* Collaborator and the residents of Jooong West Street 81 try to bridge that gap by presenting a work about neighbours discovering one another. "This has never in the world away from the norm," says Casterton. "I was interested in re-examining a stereotypical social between neighbours." Casterton reported 30 residents who live in HDB blocks to video tape one another. "This project lets people explore their curiosity about their neighbours," she explains.

Along West Street 81 will be shown at the *Substation Gallery* from Sept 19 to Sept 22, from 11am to 5pm. Admission is free. For more information, visit www.substation.org.

Compiled by AMANDA DE GUZMAN

Adding a transforming touch to a seminal play



Chen: Her transformed *Evil* is best from a monologue into several dialogues between several cast members rather than the traditional three.

By BEN MURROE

IN THE 12 years since *The Nightingale* premiered, it has already appeared in various guises in Singapore but the creative team behind this latest staging is confident that you won't have seen anything like this before.

For a start, director Lorretta Chen has transformed Eve Eisler's text from a monologue into several dialogues between several cast members rather than the traditional three.

Eisler's seminal play *Evil* merely deals with issues surrounding women and the treatment of women, including sex, non-maternalism, abuse and rape, and it has not been without its critics over the years for its controversial scenes and messages.

The creative decisions that have been made with this latest production, by Chen, are apparently designed to enhance the relevance of this play to a Singapore audience.

"I have said people who physically embody the roles set I see them, such as a black woman and a transsexual, and I have seriously chosen a multi-racial cast," explains Chen on her choice of actors, which includes Bethina Chin and Luke Lee Pin.

Chen explains that the idea of increasing the cast size adds a sense of the universal nature of the issues raised by the monologues, which you do not get when just one person is doing all the talking. "There are literally no stage directions in the text, but I split the dialogue that was written for one person between two or more actors," she says.

Add some music, dance and video to the production, and you have some idea of what you are in for. "Some will agree and some won't," she says of her approach to the play. "But then, I am not looking anyone to agree with me and theatre is a good place to talk about those issues."

Before parents start complaining even before they

have seen the work, Chen's approach has the playwright's blessing, given just before rehearsals were due to start, following some tense correspondence with the agency. Perhaps ironically, given a title and subject matter bound to rub some people the wrong way, there has been little or no resistance from the

MCA in the staging of this project. "The word 'vagina' is just suggestive at all; it's pretty straightforward," says Chen. "But many people do find it objectionable, which made me realise that this project is needed to show that this is not a derogatory word."

— *Journal Centre Theatre* Oct 2-12

POWER AND MYSTICAL ANCIENT GEM BEADS OF TIBET AND EXTREMELY PRECIOUS AND RARE. IT IS A SPECIAL SUBSTANCE OF NON-HUMANS. MY LATEST COLLECTION: MAFASHTI PRECIOUS TWELVE EYE GEM BEAD

Extreme Hand!

The game of enormous twelve-eye gem with length 7cm and diameter 1.5cm. It is the most perfect shape that I have ever seen. Beads are made of 12 different stones. The gem is also a precious mineral. It is a good piece of jewelry. With her, women "includes a lot of new features of Tibetan Aggs for wood and stone".

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herworld interview

Class act

Talented and nurturing, Lorretta Chen wields a strong influence on those she meets. The controversial artistic director tells GLADYS CHUNG how a brush with death gave her a new perspective on life and theatre.

"Lorretta's a famous actress. She can play the girl-next-door as well as a villain!" — *Interviewer Gladys Chung, after the play 'Evil' at the Substation Theatre*

"Lorretta suspects the values and contradictions of a narcissist as much as a woman's." — *Lorretta Chen, in her play 'Evil' at the Substation Theatre*

"She knows how to work with her strength. She takes what you have and makes it better." — *Interviewer Gladys Chung, after the play 'Evil' at the Substation Theatre*

"I realised I could rewrite the story of my life. It was like, 'wow, own! Do I want to continue making?' And the answer was 'GO'." — *Lorretta Chen*

"The *Nightingale* directed by Lorretta was the most successful play of my acting career." — *Lorretta Chen*

Her World, 2009

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PLUS 46 FRIDAY OCTOBER 3, 2008 TODAY

A lively, comedic take on a quiet classic

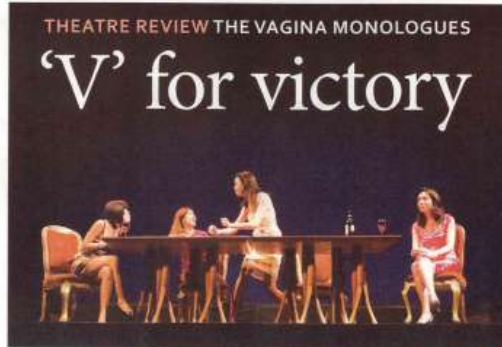
MAYO MARTIN
mayo@mediacorp.com.sg

YOU'VE seen one, you've seen them all, the saying goes. Not so with this version of *The Vagina Monologues* (TVM).

Despite this reviewer's initial doubts on the wisdom of choosing an arguably over-exposed piece as an inaugural production for new theatre company Zebra Crossing, director Loretta Chen has admirably eschewed conventions for a unique take on TVM (which is not an easy thing considering how notoriously hands-on the playwright Eve Ensler is).

Instead of three performers, there are nine. Sombre and minimalist? No, thank you, we're having fun.

Hence, monologues are shuffled around, public service announcements flashed onscreen along with video interviews of three prominent theatre personalities on motherhood, a clinical "vagina workshop" is re-imagined as an army boot-camp led by a hyperactive drill sergeant



with a French accent, shrill "schoolgirls" descend on the audience waving their (unused) sanitary napkins, and, seemingly out of nowhere, someone actually does a sexy pole dance. Naughty, naughty ...

Barring uneven scene transitions, (opening night jitters, most likely) TVM

was without a doubt a lively theatrical ride. There was a conscious effort to localise the experience, with phrases in Tamil, Malay and Chinese dialects thrown around.

That said, the flashy approach tends to occasionally distract, diffusing some of the more intimate, disturbing moments

of what is by nature a confessional piece of text.

Despite a few over-the-top moments, new talent Elaine Ng showed a flair for the comedic with her scene depicting the various ways of moaning.

Soul singer Asha Edmund's own spiels on, er, hair "down there" and how to pronounce "c*t" were tight and snappy. Transsexual Elinina recounting a transformative experience was a bit too dramatic but intense, nevertheless.

My favourite was veteran actress Loke Loo Pin deadpanning her way through a monologue as a dignified old lady recounting her first sexual awakening. Too shy to even say the word "vagina", she flashes a "V" sign instead - which could very well stand for the word "victory", too.

While Chen's approach was a little too much for a play whose power lies in the intimacy that monologues offer, we're inclined to give it a "V" sign for being fun and, more important, fresh.

The Vagina Monologues runs until Oct. 12, 8pm, at Drama Centre Theatre, National Library. With 3pm matinees. Tickets from \$37 to \$57 at Sistic. Rating: R+8.

Today, Oct 2008

THE BUSINESS TIMES

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Friday, February 13, 2009

Hilarious mix of sex and mayhem

By AMANDA DE GUZMAN

"UBIQUITOUS", a term derived from Joe Orton, the British playwright responsible for *What the Butler Saw*, has become synonymous in theatre-speak with the outrageously risqué. While the Singapore version of the play was given a makeover by director Loretta Chen to tailor it to local socio-cultural sensitivities, it thankfully retains the delicious, dark absurdity that Orton became known for.

The play opens with the unexpected seduction of the lovely, innocent Geraldine Boo (Elizabeth Tan) by the charismatic, overly lascivious Ang Gerald (Chew). Boo is hoping to get a managerial position with the renowned production, and during the interview, he gets her to strip to her underthings on the pretence that he is assessing her.

The show's link to the look, sex, words and postmodernism movements is a string of mishap incidents involving mistaken identity, madness, and cross-dressing that follow in deftly quick succession.

What could have developed into chaos is kept in check by a capable cast and Chen's sure direction. The heartfelt laughs from the audience come from Chen's revelations, which took the form of several geographical and cultural in-jokes. These "stinger" moments were sharply and gleefully handled by the cast. They are clearly having a fabulous time performing the level and crude farce, and their exuberance is merely infectious.

While enthusiastic, the production lacks polish. The music, mixing between the cast to cut scenes, with minimal verbal exchanges lacking the



Enjoyable: *What the Butler Saw* provides not only a good time, but one that is both clever and risqué enough to stand a frisson up your spine

delicacy of dialogue and the way to deliver his impressive physicality, it is as if he is completely in harmony with the show's landscape of *What the Butler Saw*.

Even with Chen boxing down the over-the-top aspects of the production, *What the Butler Saw* has just enough snuff and dialogue, dealing with various sexual perspectives to satisfy even hardcore Orton fans. *What the Butler Saw* provides not only a good time, but one that is both clever and risqué enough to stand a naughty frisson up your spine.

What the Butler Saw will be performed until Feb. 22 at the Drama Centre Theatre at the National Library Building. Tickets are \$29-\$65 and can be purchased from Sistic at www.sistic.com.sg

The Business Times, Feb 2009



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Friday, November 13, 2009

A gamble that pays off well

By AMANDA DE GUZMAN

CASTING Laura Fygi in the title role/roles of *Victor/Victoria* was a gamble. While she is well known worldwide for her husky tones, she had never acted before and the gender-bending character made famous by Julie Andrews is a difficult place to start - she is a woman pretending to be a man pretending to be a woman.

However, while that premise is enough to make anyone's head spin, Fygi seems completely at ease with it. Her natural stage presence, free of any affectations, is refreshing, charming and encompassing. This is most probably due to what may be perceived as a weakness - her lack of formal theatre training and experience - and the fact that she, like the character she is playing, is also a mature woman taking a chance at something completely new.

The character in question is Victoria Grant, a middle-aged British soprano who has relocated to Paris in hopes of finding success in her singing career. While at a club, she encounters Carroll Todd (the indispensable Matt Grey), gay man about town. After a scuffle involving the bill, they head



Good, raunchy entertainment: *'Victor/Victoria'* is a frothy spectacle that doesn't take itself too seriously and is all the more fun for it

to Todd's apartment, only to encounter Todd's ex-boyfriend, who sees Victoria in his old pyjamas and mistakes her for Todd's new lover. Another conflict arises, but this one gives Todd an idea. Seeing what a convincing man she makes, he persuades her to take on the identity of Count Victor Grazinski, female impersonator extraordinaire. They are soon the toast of Paris and things are going swimmingly until they encounter

King Marchan (Jake Macapagal), a Chicago gangster who finds himself attracted to Victoria, and she to him.

It's a lighthearted, joyous romp through Zebra Crossing's reimagining of 1930s Paris. Forming the essential - and literal - backbone of the production is the stellar orchestra, which does justice to Henry Mancini's rousing score by keeping the production moving at a sharp clip. And while the dancers haven't really settled into Lisa

Keegan's striking reimaginings of Rob Marshall's original choreography, it isn't really skill that is holding them back, but cohesion.

The set designs - gorgeous in their fantastical artifice - move seamlessly into each other and are well suited to *Victor/Victoria*'s best moments, which are usually in the form of the funnier and bigger numbers.

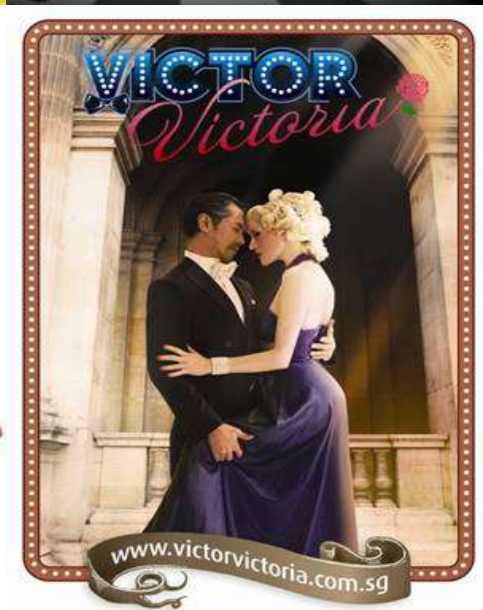
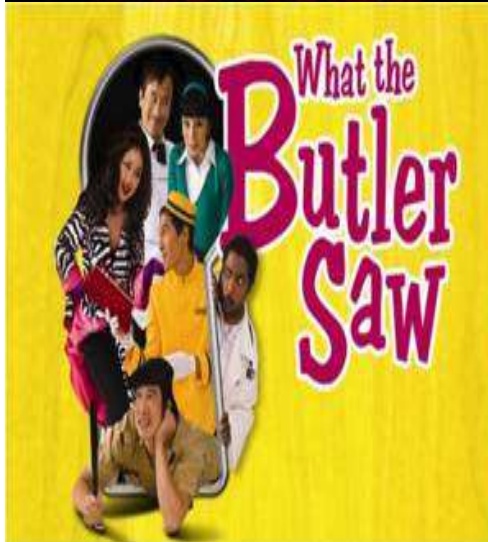
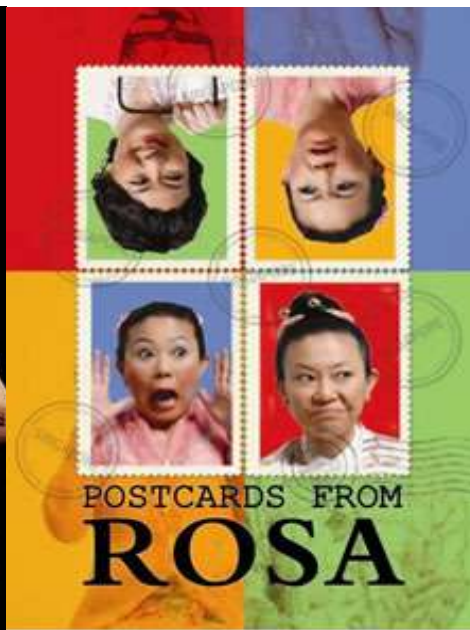
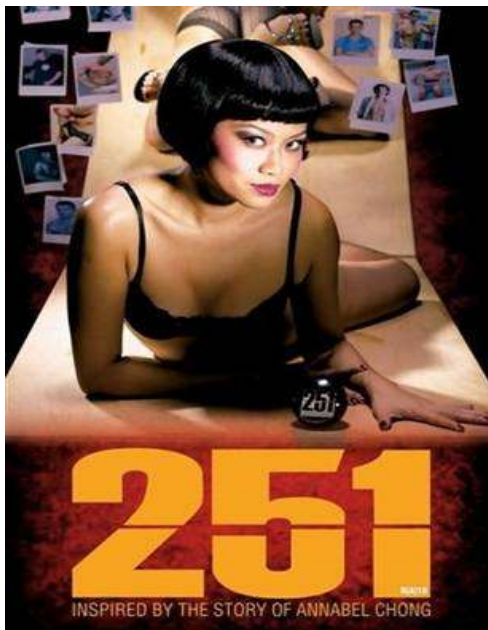
One of these is Fygi's introduction as a female impersonator in *Le Jazz Hot*;

it is here where she is at her stylish best. She is in possession of a confident, sensual maturity, and this famous number is an ideal showcase of it. She also shines in quieter moments, mostly due to her easy chemistry with Grey's Carroll Todd. Theirs is a more compelling pairing than Victoria's romantic one with King Marchan - while Macapagal cuts a dashing figure, he and Fygi don't set off any smoke alarms.

Fygi's easy command of the stage isn't the only surprise of the night. Nicole Stinton, as King's whiny floozy, is fabulous in some of the production's most entertaining sequences: she nearly steals the show during *Paris Makes Me Horny* and only marginally less so during her second number, *Chicago*. Stinton has a great feel for camp and plays Norma like Victoria: a woman playing a man pretending to be a woman. In essence, she seems to be imitating a drag queen in her heightened and hilarious performance.

Both she and Fygi exemplify the whimsical subversion that *Victor/Victoria* excels at. Ultimately, the show is a frothy spectacle that doesn't take itself too seriously and is all the more fun for it.

Selection of Recent Productions



Contact Details



- For Loretta's latest show reel, log on to: www.loretta-chen.com
- For Loretta's MagicBox trailer, log on to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDMmi3KHNhg>
- For Loretta's Singtel I Media launch, log on to <http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.singtelimedia.com/i/about->
- For Loretta's The Body Shop Stop Sex Trafficking Campaign, log on to http://www.thebodyshop.com.sg/en/stoptrafficking.aspx?utm_medium=newsletter2009&utm_campaign=20090&utm_source=74473
- For Loretta's latest television commercial campaigns, log on to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xILuvDz1RMw>
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