



YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD
2014
IAN LOY

Born in 1980 in Singapore, Ian Loy began his passionate pursuit of theatre and performance at LASALLE College of the Arts, with the support of the Georgette Chen Arts Scholarship, and graduated with a Diploma in Drama with Distinction (2002). During those formative years, he trained with the Asia-in-Theatre Research Centre (ATRC) under the tutelage of Elizabeth de Roza and the late William Teo. The two mentors gave him breadth as a performer and director through physical theatre and the ability to create authentic expressions for all audiences, especially younger ones.

A versatile, original and energetic all-rounder, Ian's portfolio as a performer includes the sensory theatre play *City of Dreams* directed by Peter Rederof of Sycamore Works (2000) and semi-physical ATRC production *Equus* by Peter Schaffer directed by Chris Cheers (2000). He was nominated for Best Ensemble together with his cast mates from The Finger Players for *Cat, Lost and Found* (2009), as well as in *Turn by Turn we Turn* (2011) at The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards.

In 2009, Ian founded MySuperFuture Theatrical Productions, a company that produces theatre for and with young audiences. He was a partner with Esplanade's PLAYtime! from 2009 to

2013, conceptualising and directing more than 10 original productions which were well-received by young audiences, parents and teachers. His positive and spirited personality has also inspired many other theatre practitioners to join him in PLAYtime!, expanding the collaboration between artists as the collective continues to grow today. Through his commitment and contributions to PLAYtime!, Ian has created quality children's theatre for the professional scene, as well as for the wider community. He collaborated with Australia's Patch Theatre Company on the *mOOn balloon* Project (2013) that boasted five sold-out performances at Esplanade's annual children's festival, Octoburst. Ian also has collaborated with established theatre companies' education arms such as that of The Necessary Stage, Cake Theatrical Productions, JoyArts and Dramabox.

Ian is also known as a skilful facilitator through his work with at-risk communities and the annual joint project with UBS Singapore that creates programmes and performances for special education schools. With a genuine interest in the development of other individuals, Ian continues to be engaged not only in the development of his professional craft but remains passionate about contributing to education and community projects.



PLAYtime!: *Hello Yasmin* (2014)
Photo credit: Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay



PLAYtime!: *Let's Play Pretend* (2014)
Photo credit: Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay



PLAYtime!: *Hello Ely* (2012)
Photo credit: Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay



Octoburst: *mOOn balloon* (2013)
Photo credit: Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay

A CONVERSATION WITH IAN LOY

Tell us about your earliest memories of encountering the arts. Who or what were your key influences?

The first time I had an encounter with the arts was when my mom brought me to my very first theatre play when I was in primary school. The play was titled *Lao Jiu* and I was immediately engrossed with the performance: the actors, the lights, music and the storyline. I was spiritually placed on stage, taking up the same space, feeling the same emotions charged by the very words and actions the performers expressed. It stirred a change in me that very night one that I could not explain.

When I entered LASALLE College of the Arts, I encountered my mentor, Elizabeth de Roza. She introduced me to the late William Teo, who became my grand mentor within the company of ATRC. William Teo's teachings, philosophy and his brand of theatre enthralled me. It taught me about theatre having healing and spiritual purposes, connecting the environment of art to its people, and causing an authentic transformation.

I remember that with every performance by ATRC, William or Elizabeth tasked me with making tea. The tea had to be tasty as it was served during the pre-show event. Once, after I had just

served a member of the audience, William came over to ask me if I knew the name of the person whom I had just served, which I did not. He said to me that one had to find out the name, and one had to know, since the connection and performance starts when the audience first enters the space even before the performance. Each show ended with a reception served by a few others and myself while William himself prepared the food. This taught me the true essence of interactions between the performers, director and audience, creating genuine and meaningful post-show thoughts and expressions. I was overwhelmed by his meticulous overview of such within his practice of theatre. And his principles have stayed with me even till this day.

After my grand mentor passed on, Elizabeth de Roza continued to be my mentor. I remember her teaching me that the manner with which we treat the stage should be one of humility and full of gratefulness as it is never an entitlement to have access to the stage, but a privilege. These two people are the theatre giants in my life that have shaped my beliefs and principles in theatre practice. If you talk about influence, these two deserve the absolute credit for what I am today.



What are some of the biggest challenges you face as an artist?

Challenges are always there to make you or break you, but it depends on how you handle them.

Theatre for young audiences was something new in the industry at the beginning of 2009. With the support of the Esplanade, I was given ample space to research and develop creatively through the process of PLAYtime!, and that spurred me on. Through it all, I have had my share of ups and downs but they have now become milestones for me to reflect on. Additionally, these milestones have certainly transformed into launch pads for greater success in my future.

Facing criticisms and comparisons to foreign works are inevitable, but I believe in keeping faith with the type of theatre I bring to the industry. Finding the right team to work with is also another challenge of mine. It is important to have like-minded people on the team as well.

What do you aspire for your audience to take away from your work?

I want children to interact with the show together with their parents, and to have audiences captivated by simple soulful storytelling and of course, I want to create those sincere and authentic moments that leave audiences with contented hearts, as if something has changed within them somehow.

If approached by an up-and-coming artist who wished to learn from your experience, what advice would you give to him/her?

Always stay hungry for what you pursue, and always build stamina to fuel your passion. Lastly, stay humble to constantly learn.

"Talent is a gift, but character is a choice." - John C. Maxwell

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

"I am thankful to God without whom, all this would not be possible."

My mother on her allowing me to enrol in LASALLE College of the Arts.

"Mother - you really want to go to this SCHOOL! (Shouting)

Me - Yes I want to! (Slams the door)"

The next morning that crumpled registration paper had her signature on it and it gave me that theatre education that changed my life.

My loved ones, especially my wife Angela and my children, Jude and Gwyneth for their unwavering support, inspiration and belief in the work I do.

Sandy Phillips, Jeffrey Tan and the late Christina Sergeant, hope I have done you proud.

My grand mentor, the late William Teo, who showed me the sacredness of theatre.

Also my mentor, Elizabeth de Roza, who taught me the ways of theatre and the importance of character over talent through my formative years as an artist.

Natalie Hennedige, Sharon Tang, Chong Tze Chien, Jian Song, Beng Tian, Benjamin Ho and Jean Ng. Thank you all for your encouragement and advice.

The Esplanade and the PLAYtime! team for their relentless support and faith in a young artist like me since 2009.

Thank you NAC and the Specialist Panel for the recognition, this will be a start for other young artists who aspire to practice theatre for young audiences to receive the same attention in future.

Lastly, thank you all the children, students, teachers, parents, partners and all who have crossed paths with me through theatre.

Ian Loy