

**WILD
RICE**



YOU ARE HERE

22 APRIL – 2 MAY 2021

THE NGE E ANN KONGSI THEATRE @ WILD RICE

SYNOPSIS

This is where you are always home. This is where you are never home.

Pooja Nansi was born in India and came to Singapore at the age of one. Her story and her history bear the weight of travellers past – from her parents' decision to settle in another country, to her grandparents' border-crossing romance. Her answer to the question, "Are you Singaporean?", is infinitely complicated. After all, where and how do you even begin to testify on behalf of the ghosts in your blood? And how do you speak when you do?

Through a tender, illuminating mix of her trademark poetry and storytelling, Pooja attempts to find a place for her family's messy sprawl of stories in orderly Singapore. *You Are Here* transforms faded family photos, snatches of song, hazy childhood memories, and even the tiniest daily microaggressions, into a meditation on migration, love and the pleasures and anxieties of belonging. As Pooja soon discovers, a map doesn't provide you with answers – it only suggests where you should begin.

You Are Here was first performed to great acclaim as part of Checkpoint Theatre's *What I Love About You Is Your Attitude Problem* in November 2015. Thereafter, it was staged at Kalaa Utsavam – Indian Festival of Arts in 2016. This new revival has been rewritten and updated in collaboration with award-winning theatre director Edith Podesta and team.

IMDA Advisory: 16 (Some Mature Content and Coarse Language)



MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Audience,

There's a quiet, brilliant magic to Pooja Nansi's one-woman show that moved me to laughter and tears when I first watched it at The Esplanade in 2016.

In telling her own deeply personal story, she invited everyone listening to contemplate our own. We all have a history of migration to Singapore – however forgotten or far in the past. Pooja inspired me to want to know more about my parents and grandparents' love stories, and my own family history.

It also made me reflect deeply on my relationship with Singapore (it's complicated!), and what makes it home.

Over the years, in the tradition of ancient oral storytelling, Pooja has retold her story to suit different occasions. We are proud to present this intimate incarnation at The Ngee Ann Kongsi Theatre. Created with director Edith Podesta and a team of intrepid travellers, this is both a fireside chat and a multisensory experience that blurs the boundaries of spoken-word poetry, theatre and multimedia to make the familiar strange, the invisible seen, and the personal public.

You Are Here is the second show in our Epic Journeys season – a quartet of deeply intimate shows that are nonetheless epic in scope, each one exploring the journey we all take to find a place where we belong. A home.

Thank you so much for coming. Through the alchemy of chance, choice and fate, *You Are Here* to share in this experience today. We are deeply grateful for your presence, and hope you enjoy the show.

IVAN HENG

Founding Artistic Director
Wild Rice



**“Poetry lifts the veil
from the hidden beauty
of the world, and makes
familiar objects be as if
they were not familiar.”**

Percy Bysshe Shelley, from *A
Defence of Poetry and Other Essays*

MESSAGE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT & PERFORMER

As the title of this work hints, I find myself in a completely different place in my life each time I revisit it. This show is about my family, but it is also about the small moments of courage and the journeys – both emotional and physical – that exist in all families. It's about exploring what the past has to teach us as we step into our futures.

This has never been a one-woman show. I want to thank the incredible creative and production teams, current and past, who have supported the making of this work and made me feel so taken care of.

A special shout-out to Edith, who is the director of a girl's dreams; Joel, who has seen this show through it all; Ramesh and Mervin, who deep-dived so beautifully into my mind, no questions asked; and Marilyn and Anne, who showed up with a wheelchair.

To my mother, who swooped in to mother my daughter so I could spend time with these stories.

Thank you also to Wild Rice, from the bottom of my very full heart, for offering this show a home in your beautiful space.

Every moment of this show belongs always to my grandparents – Malti and Mangal Nansi and Padma and Ram Dave – and to my parents, Bela and Shekhar Nansi, who are quite simply – everything.



POOJA NANSI

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thank you, Wild Rice, for giving me the opportunity to direct *You Are Here*. Thank you to the creative and technical team on this show. And thank you to all those who work in the Wild Rice office.

Last, but certainly not least, I am grateful to Pooja and her family for allowing me to be a part of their world for a time.

EDITH PODESTA



THE POLITICS OF THE PERSONAL

Pooja Nansi's *You Are Here* is an important example of the personal made political through performance. How does Pooja's show fit into a long historical tradition of autobiographical performances written and performed by and about women?



These days, the seemingly 'personal experience' is deployed so overwhelmingly in contemporary mass media that it is easy to forget that – prior to the feminist movement of the 1970s – the 'personal' remained firmly private.

As soon as the phrase 'the personal is political' was coined, women performers and artists began to turn to their own experiences, using these as primary resources in making art.



In a 'pre-confessional' era, simply placing the 'personal' literally centre stage was in itself a radically political act for the following reasons:

- + The fact that women were creating their own self-representations of 'woman' in place of male representations was implicitly political.
- + The fact that women were the subjects of their own art, rather than the objects, was political.
- + The fact that women were re-defining and re-inventing 'woman' was political.
- + The fact that women were transforming (and thereby controlling and changing) their lived experiences into creative products was political.
- + The fact that women were revealing previously hidden or silenced female experiences was political.
- + The fact that this revelation simultaneously revealed that the previously considered 'neutral' art was, in fact, equally gendered was political.
- + The fact that, through drawing on personal experience, women were forging and practising new forms of performance was political.



- + The fact that these performances (which required only the 'self') were cheap to make, and therefore economically viable, was political.
- + The fact that the work may have raised the consciousness of the spectators was political.
- + The fact that the work intended to engender community was political.

In these ways and more, Pooja's show – indeed, any show that features a solo female performer drawing on her own personal, lived experiences – is political. It is part of a long tradition in which the simple telling of a woman's story, in public and with an audience, marks a courageous departure from the norm.

OUR TEAM



POOJA NANSI Playwright / Performer

Pooja's third and latest collection of poetry, *We Make Spaces Divine*, was published in January 2021. Her key performance work includes *Thick Beats for Good Girls*, which explored the intersections between feminism, identity and hip hop. She was a recipient of the National Arts Council Young Artist Award in 2016. She is also the co-founder of Other Tongues, a literary festival of minority voices, and is the current festival director of the Singapore Writers Festival.

Where did your ancestors come from?

Various parts of India

Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?

My parents

Why did they come to Singapore?

My father found a job that brought him here on a professional contract.





EDITH PODESTA Director

An award-winning theatre-maker, choreographer and actor, Edith studied Acting and Movement Studies at Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Arts, and holds a Master of Fine Arts from LASALLE College of the Arts. She wrote, directed and starred in *BITCH: The Origin of the Female Species* (M1 Fringe Festival) and *Leda and the Rage* (The Esplanade), which were both named Production of the Year at the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. Edith is currently Associate Artistic Director of Young & Wild, a division of Wild Rice. For eight years, she served as Programme Leader of the B.A. (Hons) Acting course at LASALLE.

Where did your ancestors come from?

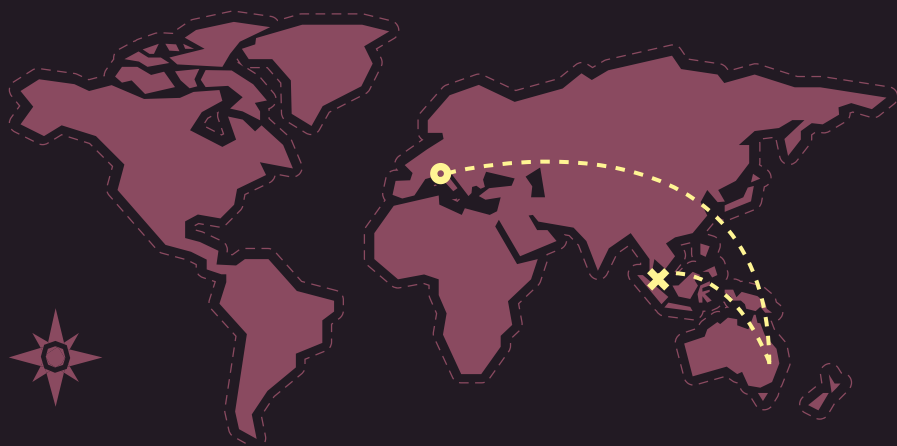
John Podesta emigrated to Australia from Genoa, Italy, establishing an ice cream company in Sydney in 1880.

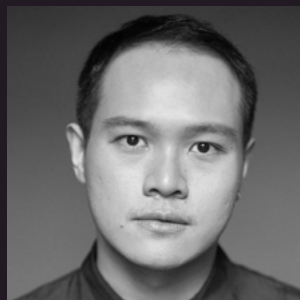
Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?

I am!

Why did you come to Singapore?

I was already interested in the region's traditional theatrical art forms, so I was happy to come teach at what's now known as the Intercultural Theatre Institute.





JOEL TAN Dramaturg

Joel's plays, which include *Mosaic*, *Tango* and *The Way We Go*, have received acclaim for their incisive and lyrical interrogation of life in Singapore and beyond. He also works in creative non-fiction, film and audio.

Where did your ancestors come from?

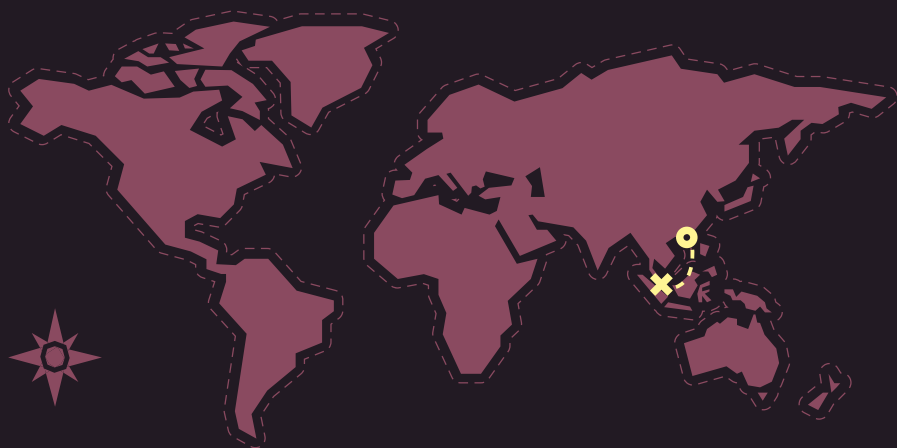
Hainan Island, China

Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?

All of my grandparents were migrants to Singapore.

Why did they come to Singapore?

To escape poverty.





RAMESH KRISHNAN Sound Designer

Ramesh's career as a sound designer began in 2004, when he collaborated on Marseilles-based artist Mathieu Briand's *Derrière Le Monde Flottant* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Lyon. In 2009, he took on *Quest for Immortality* and *Singapore 1960*, exhibitions held at the National Museum of Singapore, for which he created original compositions by re-arranging historical recordings into experimental soundscapes. Ramesh received the President's Design Award in 2010 for his work on *Quest for Immortality*.

Where did your ancestors come from?

Goa, Western India, and Bawean, East Java

Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?

My grandparents on both sides!

Why did they come to Singapore?

For better opportunities and a fresh start.





MERVIN WONG Multimedia Designer

Mervin is a composer, new media and sound artist, and multimedia designer. His studio, Theemptybluesky Productions, specialises in the end-to-end production and design of remarkable experiences. Mervin's alternate identity is the electronic producer, PLANESWALKER, whose recent credits include a commissioned performance as part of the Singapore International Festival of Arts' Sound Social Series (2020), as well as *Grains*, a sound installation that was part of the Shifting Between group exhibition for Singapore Art Week 2021.

Where did your ancestors come from?

Guangzhou, China

Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?

As far as I know, my maternal grandmother.

Why did they come to Singapore?

To seek out a better life.





MARILYN CHEW Stage Manager

Trained under wonderful mentors and colleagues, Marilyn is a freelance production stage manager for theatre. She enjoys working with new artists on projects with social causes, as well as those that help expand her knowledge of theatre production. Marilyn's recent credits include *Café* (Wild Rice), *Grandmother Tongue* (Wild Rice), *Amma's Sarees* (Esplanade's PLAYtime!), *FIVE* (Intercultural Theatre Institute), *What If* (M1 Peer Pleasure) and *Prism of Truth* (GroundZ-o). She is grateful that *You* (the audience) *Are Here* and wishes you a pleasant time at the theatre.

Where did your ancestors come from?

Guangzhou, China

Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?

My grandparents.

Why did they come to Singapore?

This was around the 1930s, so they probably left China to look for a better life – and saw the opportunities Singapore offered!



CREDITS

CAST

Pooja Nansi

CREATIVE TEAM

Playwright **Pooja Nansi**

Director **Edith Podesta**

Dramaturg **Joel Tan**

Lighting Designer **Wild Rice Technical Team**

Sound Designer **Ramesh Krishnan**

Multimedia Designer **Mervin Wong**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer **Koh Bee Bee**

Production Manager **Melissa Teoh**

Technical Manager **David Sagaya**

Production Assistant **Angela Ee**

Stage Manager **Marilyn Chew**

Assistant Stage Manager **Anne Lee**

Technicians **Ahmad Hafriz Bin Berkath,**

Muhammad Azhar Bin Azman & Sim Khet Kheng

Dresser **Tiffany Chai**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THANK YOU!

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ABOUT WILD RICE

Wild Rice was founded in 2000 by Ivan Heng, an internationally acclaimed and award-winning theatre practitioner, and is recognised today as one of Singapore's leading professional theatre companies.

Its mission is to provide an open forum for the shared experience of theatre: celebrating our diversity; reflecting on the problems and possibilities of our times; and presenting productions that inspire, challenge and entertain.

A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of Wild Rice's creative work, which is first and foremost a celebration of Singapore's theatrical talent. By producing and touring productions that are distinctively local in flavour and yet universal in vision and concerns, the company creates memorable experiences for audiences in Singapore and across the world.

The company's exciting and varied programming for the main stage includes:

- + New and original works
- + New productions of the Singapore repertoire
- + New interpretations of world classics

The company's mission to build a theatre culture also extends to the wider community through the following divisions:

- + Wild Rice Academy and First Stage, which offer drama and training programmes to nurture young talents from the ages of 5 to 12
- + Singapore Youth Theatre, which develops and empowers young people aged 13 to 17 through theatre
- + Young & Wild, which identifies and develops Singapore's young theatre professionals from the ages of 18 to 30

Wild Rice is committed to touring its shows internationally to raise the profile of Singapore theatre, to create an international awareness of its unique productions, and to engage its artists and collaborators in creative dialogues with the international arts community. Its distinctively Singaporean productions have won great acclaim in major international arts festivals in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand and Russia.

Wild Rice @ Funan is the company's new home in the heart of Singapore's civic and cultural district. This groundbreaking performing arts complex promises to be an iconic destination theatre for Singapore, one dedicated to creating and presenting the best of Singapore theatre, while nurturing the artists and audiences of tomorrow.

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Amanda Chong	Koh Shixin	Audrey Phua	L Wang
Gerald Chong	Koh Woon Teng & Alan Ng	Phua Chun Hong	Wang Wei-lung
Joelle Choo	Joyce Kok	Alan Quadros	Lucy Wilkinson
Christina	Kok Wai Mun Jessie	Quah Kung Yang	Bee-Eng Wong
Ms. Chua Yi Wen	Lee Chuang	Sangeeta Razu	Wong Family
Chuo CS	Edward Lee	Nathalie Durot Ribette	Joanna Wong
Cole C Casper	Dr. Jack Tsen-Ta Lee	Jeff and Stacy Ryan	Kai Wong
Paula Craigie	Joanne Lee	Mayumi Saito	Winnie Wong
Clémentine Culet	June Lee	P. Jordan Seah	Jennifer S Wu
Mona and Parag Desai and Family	Kevin Lee	Shirley Sim	Siti Maryam Yaakub
Dessy	Sharon Lee	Susan Sim	Weicheng Yang
Derrick	Lee Yean Lay	Fedelma C Smith	Joanne Yee
Mal Das	Yida Lee	Yvonne Soh	Glynisia Yeo
Mark Ehrke	Leigh	Soo Kuo Tong	Kelvin Yip
Almira Farid, Azura Farid and	Sumerry Leonardi	Stephen and Jean	Yiyan
Faizah Jamal	Candice Leong	Su Yuhan	Margaret Yoong
Fazylah	Cedric Leong	Alicia Tan	Ms. Pat Young Siew Rang
Robert Fok	Leong Fengyi	Carrie Tan	Yves Meyer
Dawn Foo	Jimmy Leong	Derrick Tan	Yvonne
Fanny Foo	Lucia Leong Yong Wah	Don Tan	
Carolyn Fu	Lim-Ang Family	Francine Tan Law Corporation	
Gabriel Fu Bojun	Nat Lim	Ivee Tan	
	Lim Rui Sheng	Kaylene Tan	

We also wish to thank our new Angels whom, due to printing deadlines, we have not been able to include.

HELP US SECURE THE FUTURE OF SINGAPORE THEATRE

Please kindly consider being an Angel.

At Wild Rice, we have always believed in the importance of creating theatre that explores and represents who we are, in all our rich diversity. We hope *You Are Here* has shown you how we are shaped by the stories and histories of those who have come before us.

You can help us survive the COVID-19 crisis and enable us to keep doing the work we do. Despite being able to operate at only 30% of our capacity due to safe distancing measures, we remain committed to creating world-class Singaporean theatre that everyone can enjoy. If you are in a position to do so, we would greatly appreciate your support.

As a leading Singapore theatre company, Wild Rice has blazed the trail for over two decades in the relentless pursuit of excellence. Our Angels' support has helped us to create and present the best of Singapore theatre; reach out to more than a million audience members here and around the world; and nurture and develop the artists and audiences of tomorrow. As one of the largest employers in Singapore's arts industry, we provide gainful employment to hundreds of artists and theatre professionals every year.

Last but not least, our award-winning, independently-run venue has brought unprecedented visibility and prominence to Singapore theatre, while also creating a home for the performing arts where all are welcome.

If you share our belief in the power of theatre as a force for good and for change, please consider coming on board as a Wild Rice Angel. Your vital contribution will enable us to look to the future with courage and confidence, and achieve all that we set out to do.



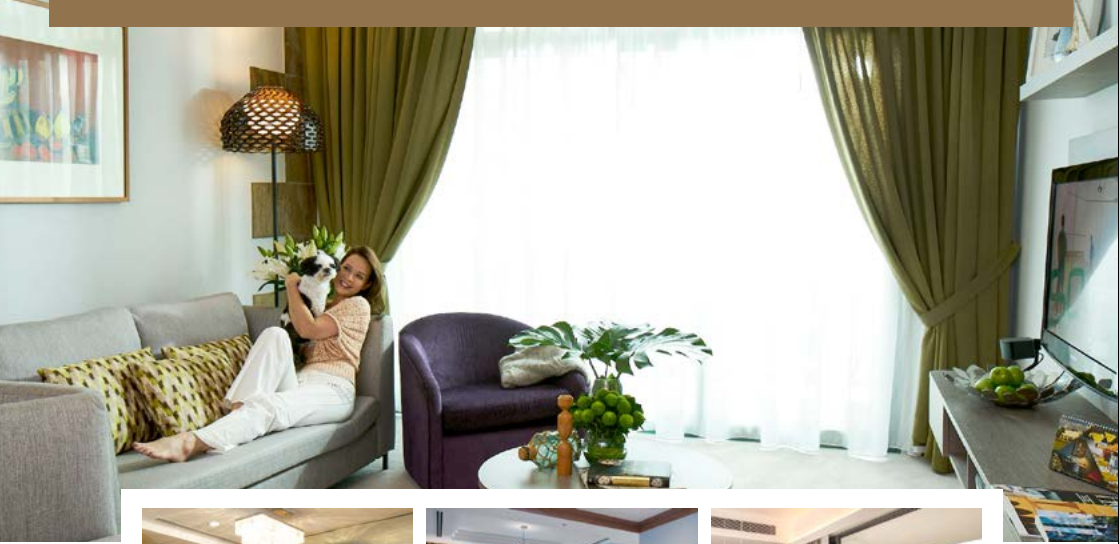
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NEXT

A woman with short black hair, wearing a tiara and a rainbow-colored qipao, is the central figure. She is making a 'shh' gesture with her right index finger. The background is a vibrant pink with various colorful balloons, including blue ones with rainbow manes and pink ones with smiley faces. There are also green and white striped balloons and some green heart-shaped balloons. The overall theme is celebratory and LGBTQ+.

FAGHAG

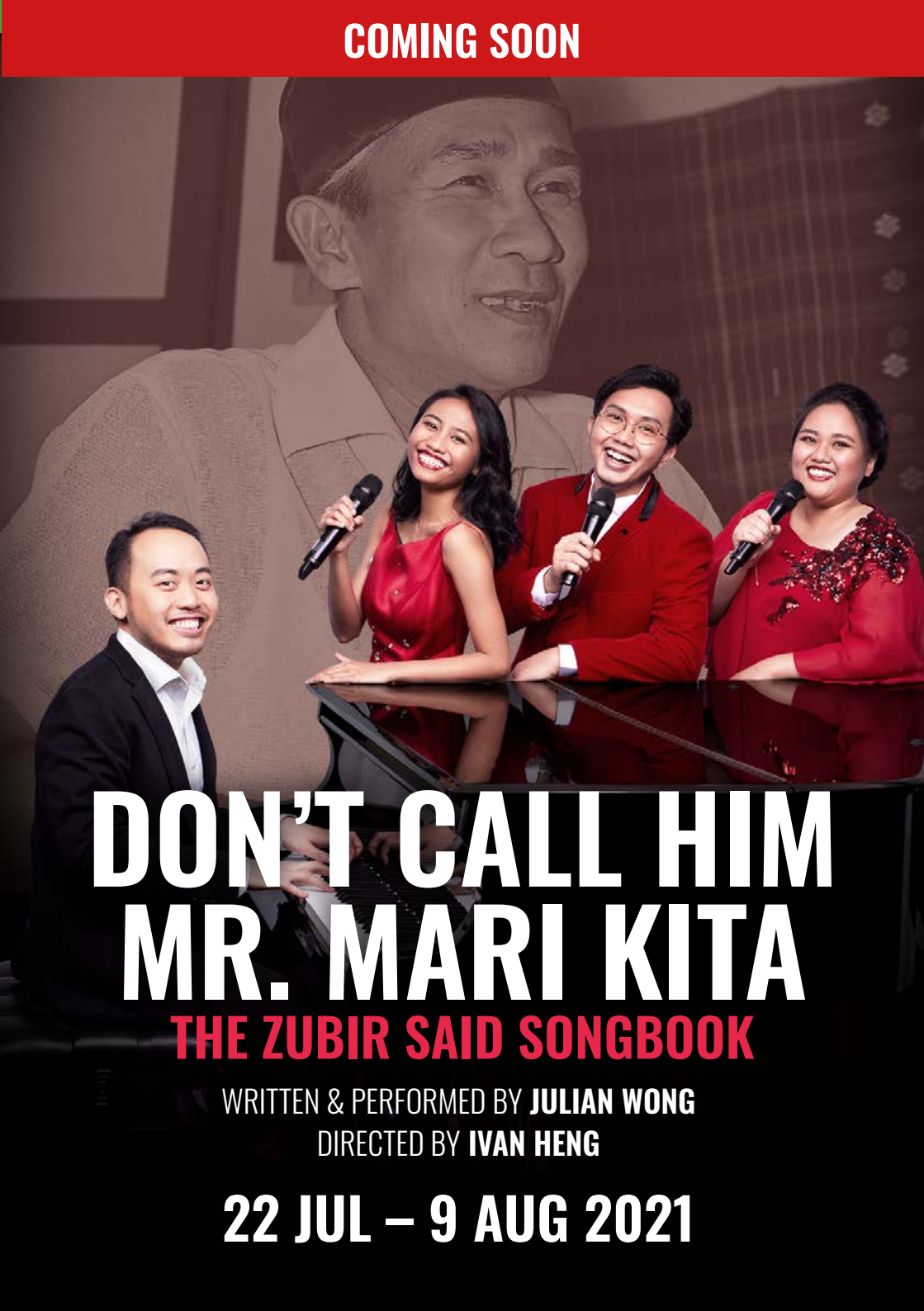
WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY **PAM OEI**

DIRECTED BY **IVAN HENG**

MUSIC DIRECTION BY **JULIAN WONG**

FROM 3 JUNE 2021

COMING SOON



DON'T CALL HIM MR. MARI KITA

THE ZUBIR SAID SONGBOOK

WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY **JULIAN WONG**

DIRECTED BY **IVAN HENG**

22 JUL – 9 AUG 2021



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