

HOTEL Pre-show Notes

By Audio Describers Seren Chen, Shalni Doshi, Roger Jenkins, and Grace Lee-Khoo

Introduction

Welcome to this introduction to **HOTEL**, an immersive, multi-generational epic spanning a hundred years of Singapore history, presented by Wild Rice.

The Audio-described Performance

The show consists of two parts, presented over an afternoon and evening. The audio described performance is on Saturday, 1st July, with Part 1 starting at 2.30pm, and Part 2 starting at 7.30pm. A Touch Tour will commence at 1.15pm, an hour and fifteen minutes before Part 1. Part 1 runs for about two hours and forty-five minutes, including a 15-minute intermission, and will be described by Roger Jenkins and Grace Lee-Khoo. Part 2 runs for approximately two hours with no intermission, described by Seren Chen and Shalni Doshi.

Synopsis

A hotel in Singapore is opened at the turn of the century, when the island is still a jewel in the crown of the British Empire. Each day, new faces appear and swiftly disappear – guests and staff alike.

Every decade, six in Part One, five in Part Two, we check-in to meet the hotel's residents: Indian mutineers, Cantonese nannies, Malay film stars, Japanese soldiers, trans sex workers, wedding guests, suspected terrorists, and more. They live out pivotal moments in their personal lives, as empires die and new ones are born from their ashes. Even though the chambermaids clean up after them, readying the room for the next guests, traces of the past persist. Time reveals its cyclical nature, and a single moment of decision haunts the generations that come after.

Spanning a century and performed in nine languages, this ground-breaking theatrical event highlights the eclectic energies born from the collisions between the old and the new, East and West, tradition and modernity.

Creative Team

HOTEL is written by Alfian Sa'at and Marcia Vanderstraaten. It is co-directed by Ivan Heng and Glen Goei. Wong Chee Wai is the set designer, and Alberta Wileo, the lighting designer. Multimedia design is by Brian Gothong Tan. Costume design is by Theresa Chan. Sound design is by The Gunnery. Ashley Lim is the hair designer, and Bobbie Ng is the make-up designer. The prop master is Joyce Gan, and the stage manager, Anne Lee.

Cast, Characters, and Costumes

To tell the stories of many different characters across a whole century, *HOTEL* features a cast of 14 actors, each taking on multiple roles.

As part of the ensemble, they are dressed as hotel staff, whose uniforms differ from part to part. In Part One, the uniforms are black and white. The women wear a black-based ensemble with a knee-length black skirt, accompanied by a white maid's apron over it, while the men's black uniforms are studded with white buttons down their sides. In Part Two, the hotel's uniform has changed colour scheme to gold and red, with all hotel staff wearing muted yellow slacks and a matching button-up jacket trimmed in maroon.

However, when the actors play actual hotel staff, from bellhops to chefs and laundry personnel, the uniform changes slightly depending on their role, but maintains the relevant colour scheme.

A great variety of people pass through the hotel, and their dressing reflects both their position and the era they live in. In one scene, **Yap Yi Kai** plays Ah Ying, a maid to a Penang household who reunites with an old hometown friend, played by **Pam Oei**. While Pam's character wears the laundrywoman uniform of the hotel, Ah Ying wears a button-down top and pants in matching blue and white florals, of the sort we associate with grandmothers nowadays.

In another, **Koji Miyoshi** wears an olive green army uniform with three medals pinned at his breast to play a Japanese Colonel during the occupation. The Colonel has to make a painful decision for one of his Captains, Captain Matsuda, played by **Moo Siew Keh**, who had formed a relationship with a Malay woman named Sharifah, played by **Munah Bagharib** wearing a yukata in pale pink, dotted with small red flowers.

Another scene brings us to the height of disco, during the 70s, where we follow two trans women with voluminous wavy hair in long flowy dresses played by **Brendon**

Fernandez and **Dwayne Lau** over a psychedelic evening. The play is not all serious realism - for example, **Rebecca Ashley Dass** appears in this scene as one of their mothers, dressed as Mother Mary in a blue and white floral nightgown, complete with a veil and electric halo.

A quick rundown of a few other highlights: **Ghafir Akbar** plays P. Ramlee, a 50s movie star, and alongside him is **Siti Khalijah Zainal** as Azizah, one of his fans. **Jo Kukathas** shapeshifts from an old spiritualist in one scene to an OBGYN in another; **André Jewson** from a colonial plantation owner to an American party boy; **Oon Shu An** from the hotel's first female room service manager to a frazzled bride; and **Ivan Heng** from an opinionated politician to an equally opinionated dying man.

By no means are these an exhaustive list of their roles. With nine languages at play, there are sometimes entire acts conducted in languages other than English. When characters are not speaking in English, surtitles appear above the space, and your describer will read the translation overdubbed over the dialogue.

Set and Setting

The Wild Rice theatre features a thrust stage, about six by six metres, that extends out into the audience so seats are not only in front of it, but also on its sides. Two catwalks extend diagonally out through the audience, through which actors may enter and exit.

The whole play takes place in a room in a luxury Singapore hotel over a period of 100 years. The bathroom is not seen, but is accessed via the wings on the right.

The back wall of the set stretches the full width of the stage and to a great height. This wall is a light beige as it functions as a screen during every scene change, when a projected montage of Singapore newspaper headlines and archival photographs and videos indicate each particular time period. In the wall's centre at stage level is a pair of double doors which, when opened, offers a glimpse of a short corridor leading to a T junction with another Hotel corridor.

In the early years, the room features two single beds set with a lamp between them in the back left. After the first intermission, they are switched out for a double bed, which from then on remains the only permanent feature of the room, albeit with different bedsheets as we go along. Other individual pieces of furniture are wheeled or carried into position in highly choreographed, often complex sequences by the hotel staff during each scene change.

Most of the furniture, such as a wardrobe, coffee table, desk, tv set - whose designs also serve to create a sense of the time period - is placed on the edges of the stage: Up right or on the two catwalks bottom left and right, leaving the main bulk of the stage bare. When a rug is present, it is then placed in the centre.

In Part One, furniture is only placed stage centre in a few scenes. In the third scene, in 1935, a round dining table and five chairs are used for an unusual gathering; in the 1945 scene following that, tatami mats are set out; and in the final scene of Part One, the double bed is brought forward as it sees some action.

In Part Two, the projected wallpapers and bedroom decor, from bed covers to framed art continue to change over the decades. As we experience the groovy art deco influence of the 80s, 90s chinoiserie and the muted florals of the 2000s, the interior design of the room remains consistently tasteful and inviting.

Access Information

Wild Rice aims to provide an excellent experience and service for all patrons who may require additional support to access our venue and enjoy our events.

Wild Rice at Funan is located on the 4th floor of Funan Mall, at 107 North Bridge Rd, Singapore 179105. The nearest parking option is in Funan Mall itself.

For Public Transport options, the nearest Bus Stops are 04249, Opposite the Treasury; 04168, After City Hall Station Exit B; 04149, Grand Park City Hall; and 04223, Old Hill Street Police Station.

The nearest MRT station is City Hall, on the East-West and North-South lines.

The touch tour will commence at 1:15pm, an hour and fifteen minutes before the 2:30 show. Please have your mobile device and headset with you. The Box Office is located on the fourth level, close to the lifts near the North Bridge Road entrance. Say hello to the friendly Box Office manager and they will gladly assist you.

Wild Rice at Funan and Funan Mall are assistance dog friendly. They are also accessible for wheelchair use, and an accessible toilet is available on the same floor as the theatre, near the lifts.

If you require a wheelchair space, would like to learn more about transferring options, or have any other questions, do contact our venue team at 6971 1051.

The bar will be open before and after the show, as well as during intermission, serving a variety of beverages and snacks. Only food and drink from the bar can be brought into the theatre.

We look forward to welcoming you and hope you have a wonderful time with us!