

School of Drama Monthly Events April 2014

TS Eliot says “April is the cruellest month”, and it is amongst the busiest months of the year for the School of Drama as it passes into its final series of annual year productions, auditions and selection of candidates for the forthcoming new academic year. It is also the period in which the School welcomes External Academic Reviewers and Examiners. This year has an added dimension to that work has been in preparing toward the 30th Anniversary of the Academy with the Inter School production.

School Productions

The second of the School’s graduating directors’ projects this year took place in Academy Studio Theatre with Strindberg’s seminal naturalistic masterpiece. Tang Wai-ho (BFA 3, Directing major) gave a clear and clean modern reading of the play in a contemporary setting with period costumes. He displayed evident talent in his work with the actors and there is little wonder that he has already been offered work by Hong Kong Repertory Theatre. The production, *Miss Julie*, was performed in the Theatre from 9th to 12th April.



In rehearsal is award winning director Roy Szeto (Senior Lecturer in Directing)’s and Poon Wai-sum (Resident Playwright and Discipline Leader in Dramatic Writing)’s new production, *The Happiest Day I Lost*. Previewed in Taiwan at our sister School in TNUA last November the production is completely new, reworked and re-written for the School of Drama.

The magical realism of Poon Wai-sum’s play and Roy Szeto’s direction of the graduating cast is greatly enhanced by the physical and choreographic work of Allen Lam, well known artist and choreographer and part time teacher of movement in the School.

The production will open in the Academy Studio Theatre on 19th – 24th May 2014.

MFA and BFA students join forces in our first presentation of a production, *The Wild Party of Yu Xuanji*, at the showcases of Drama Education institutions’ annual events this year in 7th Asia-Pacific Bureau Directors’ Conference & Theatre Festival (APB) in Shanghai and 1st World Theatre Education Convention with 3rd Asian Theatre Schools Festival (ATEC) in Beijing. The School hopes that this is a fitting regional marker to the Academy and the School’s 30th Anniversary.

Written by MFA graduating student Deng Feier, directed by MFA student and alumnus Lam Ying-kit, and performed by BFA students Chan Ka-wai, Moa Ship-wing with exchange student Li An-chi from Taipei National University of the Arts, the story of *Yu Xuanji* will be given in a short dramatized form and performed in Putonghua at these prestigious events. This year for the first time the School of Drama will enter the Drama Schools' competition. Supervisor Poon Wai-sum will represent the Academy at the events in Shanghai and Beijing and Chair of the School of Drama, Prof Ceri Sherlock will attend ATEC in Beijing as one of its Board of Directors.



In the meanwhile, the no little matter of the Inter-School Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* has taken considerable time and focus of the School of Drama. In addition the School decided to make this a "450th anniversary Shakespeare Project" and explore the text in its fullness as both an Inter School production and a School of Drama Project (workshop production) to benefit fully from the opportunity. Given that the School has given up its major graduating production Drama 2 in favour of the Academy Lyric Theatre show. Students nonetheless have to fulfil their graduation assessment requirements in performing full-length roles and demonstrate character journeys (which the project accomplishes). A major benefit has been in using the opportunity of the Lyric Theatre as teaching space. The scale and size of the stage, the use of technology such as radio mikes, complex stage machinery, flying and more

precision lighting as well as working with others of different disciplines has been a unique opportunity especially for those graduating who have never, in their time at the Academy, been able to explore such a canvas or perform in arguably the best theatre in Hong Kong.

In contrast therefore the same students will also work on the Shakespeare play for performance in the Academy's smallest space, Drama Black Box. They will perform a workshop production of *The Taming of the Shrew* with Shakespeare's text given in Cantonese in a week of performances from 26th May to 31st May at 7:00pm with a matinee at 2:30pm also on the 31st May.



Meanwhile, preparations gather pace for the Graduates' Showcase sponsored by Shun Hing Education and Charity Fund to be performed in the Academy Dance Studio 1 on 24th June at 7:30pm.

School & General Activities

Shakespeare Birthday Party on 26th April:



Achievements

Once again the School of Drama faculty and Academy alumni dominated the 23rd Hong Kong Drama Awards. Roy Szeto (Senior Lecturer in Directing) won the Best Director Award for *The Emperor, his Mom, a Eunuch and a Man* written by Poon Wai-sum (Resident Playwright and Discipline Leader in Dramatic Writing) and presented by Hong Kong Repertory Theatre. It also won a number of other awards including Top Ten Most Popular Productions, Best Overall Performance, Best Supporting Actor (Tragedy / Drama), Best Costume Design and Best Make-up and Image Design. It was also voted as one of the Top Ten Most Popular Productions in Hong Kong for the year as was Tony Wong (Lecturer in Acting)'s *The 39 Steps* for Chung Ying Theatre Company and the Chair of the School of Drama's production of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* also presented by Hong Kong Repertory Theatre.

Tony Wong's production of *The 39 Steps* also won Best Actress Award (Comedy/Farce) award for alumna Wu Lai-ying, Best Sound Design and Best Score. Prof Ceri Sherlock's production of *The Cherry Orchard* also won Best Set Design for TEA alumna Siu Wai-man and Best Lighting Design for TEA alumnus and Academy's Senior Lecturer (Theatre Lighting), Leo Cheung.

Academy alumni were nominated in every category an indication of the vibrant and important impact HKAPA has on the theatre industry in Hong Kong.