

For immediate release

THE THEATRE PRACTICE'S GROUNDBREAKING CHINESE ROCK MUSICAL *LIAO ZHAI ROCKS!* HEADS TO SHANGHAI THIS MARCH

Liao Zhai Rocks!, an original Singapore Chinese musical by The Theatre Practice (Practice) is making its international premiere in Shanghai, as part of the inaugural Shanghai International Musical Festival 2019, from 28 - 31 March.

The festival is the first professional musical festival of its kind to be held in China, and Practice will be performing six shows over four days at SAIC · Shanghai Culture Square.



Not only is this Practice's first time bringing an original Chinese musical to an international stage, they are also setting a new record for the most number of performances of an overseas original musical in the festival.

Mr Richard Fei, Deputy General Manager of Shanghai Culture Square Theatre Management Co Ltd., had high praise for *Liao Zhai Rocks!* after watching it in Singapore three years ago. As one of the festival co-organisers, Fei commented at the festival opening ceremony last November, "*Liao Zhai Rocks!* is one of the best original musicals I've seen."

"To have *Liao Zhai Rocks!* gain recognition from our peers in the industry is a great boost of confidence for us," says Artistic Director Kuo Jian Hong.

Liao Zhai Rocks! first premiered in 2010 to raved reviews from audiences. Six years later, with accumulated experience and time to re-engage with the material, Practice returned with an enhanced production in 2016, with slight adjustments to the plot development and lyrics.

Practice's first large-scale overseas tour

For this tour, Practice will be bringing a total of 70 members, including staff, creatives, production team, cast and musicians to Shanghai. This is unprecedented in Practice's history of international tours, which affirms their commitment to ensuring the high quality of the show in their first tour of a large-scale production.

“We decided to bring the whole company as we saw this as an opportunity for everyone to learn and grow in our practice,” says Kuo.

Liao Zhai Rocks! also marks a number of firsts for Practice. This production is Playwright Wu Xi’s first attempt at writing a musical. Drawing inspiration from the myriad of stories in Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* and using his fantastical imagination, *Liao Zhai Rocks!* is Wu’s distinctive interpretation of this literary classic.

This production also marks the beginning of Practice’s long-term relationship with local music talents Eric Ng and Xiaohan. This songwriting duo worked together seamlessly to compose and write lyrics for all 23 songs in the musical, skillfully expressing the different facets of love in all its complexity, amalgamating the classic literary expressions of the East with elements of rock music from the West in a unique combination.

“Back then, our creative vision was to draw from the rich narratives of Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, and juxtapose it with the rawness and ferocity of rock music,” adds Kuo, “It was a completely unlikely combination that somehow magically seemed to work.”

***Liao Zhai Rocks!* returns with a strong cast**

The Shanghai version of *Liao Zhai Rocks!* will see the 2016 original cast Joanna Dong, Inred Liang, Ethel Yap and Sugie Phua reprise their lead roles.

Singapore jazz vocalist Joanna Dong’s popularity has been on the rise in both Singapore and China for her lingering vocals since her participation in *Sing! China* (2017) where she was mentored by Jay Chou, and came in as second runner-up. She has since been busy with her album preparations, solo concerts and hosting television programmes.



The Shanghai tour marks Dong’s return to the theatre stage, taking on the role of the vixen fox Ying Niang for the third time, but her first time performing in a musical in Shanghai.

Amidst his busy schedule, Taiwanese musical heartthrob Inred Liang returns to reprise his role as the charming scholar Sang Xiao. In the 2016 run, Liang impressed the crowd with his charismatic acting and solid vocals.

Sugie Phua is also no stranger in the Singapore entertainment scene and has been a familiar face in the local theatre scene. He made his theatre debut through *Liao Zhai Rocks!* in 2010, and he has



since performed in countless theatre productions, including hit musicals *Lao Jiu: The Musical* (The Theatre Practice), *December Rains* (Toy Factory), and *Monkey Goes West* (W!LD RICE).

Local singer-songwriter Ethel Yap, who has been active in the local English theatre scene, took on the role of the water spirit Feng San Niang three years ago, marking her first major role in a Chinese theatre production. With her unique vocals and having

performed in Practice productions numerous times, Ethel is gaining recognition among Chinese theatre audiences in Singapore.

A big highlight of *Liao Zhai Rocks!* this year is the character of King Yama, the capricious lord of the Underworld who derives amusement from tormenting souls of the deceased in inventive ways. Ric Liu, who played the role of Sang Xiao in the 2010 production, returns to take on the role of King Yama this time. Unlike the suave and flirtatious scholar Sang Xiao, King Yama controls the fates of the main characters and is a mercurial figure that is sure to send chills down your spine.

Audience can look forward to see how Liu breathes new life into this iconic character, which will be one of the most challenging characters to play. With a new costume design by costume designers Saksit Pisalasupongs and Phisit Jongnarangsin from Tube Gallery (Bangkok), enhanced by the creative talents of local hair designer Ashley Lim and The Make Up Room, King Yama's new look will definitely be a sight to behold.

Singapore, let's rock!

At the start of ticket sales in December, 300 season ticket packages for all six musicals part of the Shanghai International Musical Festival 2019 - Original Chinese Musical Season, were sold out in just one hour.

Tickets from ¥ 480 – ¥ 80 are available online at www.shcstheatre.com. As the Shanghai ticketing service utilises a membership system that requires a local Chinese phone number to register, Practice will be the main ticketing channel for Singapore audiences who wish to purchase tickets.

Details on how to purchase tickets through Practice will be announced on Facebook and Instagram next week - @thetheatrepractice. More information on *Liao Zhai Rocks!* can be found on www.practice.org.sg/liaozhairocks2019

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Fast Facts

Title: *Liao Zhai Rocks!*
Dates: 28 - 31 March 2019
Time: 8pm (Thu – Sun), 2.30pm (Sat – Sun)
Venue: SAIC · Shanghai Culture Square (36 Yongjia Rd, Huangpu Qu, Shanghai, China)
Language: Mandarin
Ticket Prices: 480 – ¥ 80 (Approx. S\$97 – S\$17)
Duration: Approximately 2 hours
No. of shows: 6
Ticketing: Through The Theatre Practice (details to be announced)
Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgXIFQwrq0s>

About Liao Zhai Rocks!

Can once in a lifetime happen twice?

The scholar Sang Xiao falls in love with the fox spirit Ying Ning, but is deceived by the water spirit, Feng San Niang. When Sang Xiao is poisoned and cast into the underworld, Ying Ning must brave the wrath of King Yama, the king of Hell, to rescue her true love and change their destiny.

Inspired by *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, a collection of classic Chinese stories by Qing dynasty writer Pu Songling, *Liao Zhai Rocks!* tells a supernatural tale of forbidden love through the explosive force and gritty rawness of rock music.

Directed by The Theatre Practice's Artistic Director Kuo Jian Hong and helmed by Joanna Dong (*Sing! China*), this epic rock musical redefined the musical theatre genre in Singapore with its unexpected fusion of classic Chinese stories and a blistering score by Mandopop luminaries Eric Ng and Xiaohan.

Liao Zhai Rocks! will make its China debut in 2019 as part of the SAIC · Shanghai Culture Square's Shanghai International Musical Festival.

About Shanghai International Musical Festival 2019

The Shanghai International Musical Festival 2019 is organized by the Shanghai Huangpu District Government and Shanghai Grand Theatre Arts Center, together with the Huangpu District Culture Bureau and Shanghai Culture Square Theatre Management Ltd. Their mission is to create an arts festival with a global outlook, to enhance the development of Shanghai's cultural innovation and establish Shanghai's branding as the arts capital of Asia. There are four key segments in this festival: a showcase of six original Chinese-language musicals; a musical theatre development symposium; an incubation project to develop new original Chinese-language musicals; and a singing competition centered on songs from musicals.

Liao Zhai Rocks! will be presented as part of the SAIC Original Chinese Musical Season 2019. SAIC Shanghai Culture Square is China's premier theatre for musicals, bringing in a number of classic foreign musicals each year and having organised the Original Chinese Musical Season for seven consecutive years. There will be six productions featured in this season: *The Search of Sound* (Mainland China); *My Farewell Lady* (Taiwan); *Art School Musical* (Taiwan); *Liao Zhai Rocks!* (Singapore); *Long Johns and Rolling Pin* (Mainland China); and *Ba-Dun* (Mainland China).

About The Theatre Practice

The Theatre Practice (Practice) is Singapore's longest-standing professional bilingual theatre institution. Artist-driven and deeply progressive, Practice strives to be an arts space in Singapore that consciously nurtures and empowers people who care about humanity. Over the past 53 years, we have developed and presented a vast critically-acclaimed multi-genre repertoire that reflects the complexities of Singapore's diverse cultures.

Practice today is a cultural force. As a bridge between cultures, we have brought practitioners of diverse backgrounds together for exchange, and provided platforms for international works. As pioneers in Arts Education in Singapore, we have nurtured leaders in the Singapore arts scene, and

inculcated the love for the arts in generations of youths.

Under current Artistic Director Kuo Jian Hong, Practice continues to shape our cultural landscape as the definitive voice in Singapore theatre. Deeply influenced by the importance of play in art-making, Practice has become the embodiment of the irrepressible spirit and fearless experimentation of play under her leadership.

Artistically diverse and constantly relevant, Practice will always engage in the ceaseless exploration of new frontiers.

The Theatre Practice is an Institution of Public Character, a recipient of the National Arts Council's Major Grant 2017-2020, and a member of the Singapore Chinese Language Theatre Alliance.