

CENTRE 42 presents  
THE VAULT

汐 / SEA

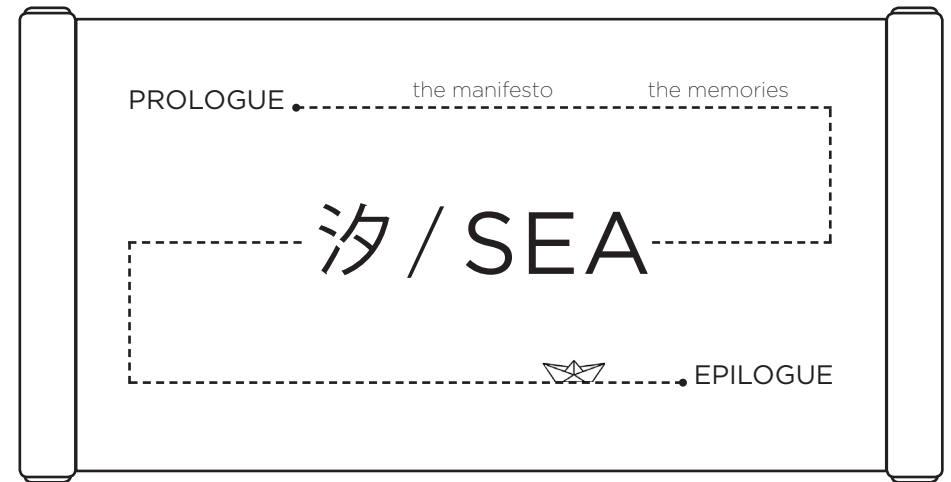


**PROGRAMME HANDOUT**

23 NOVEMBER 2015, 8PM

## PROGRAMME

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## THE ARTISTS

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CASEY LIM ..... DIRECTOR

ROBIN LOON ..... PLAYWRIGHT 《汐》

SERENE CHEN ..... FONG SU FEN

ZELDA TATIANA NG ..... FONG SU FANG “TARCY”



*Serene Chen and Zelda Tatiana in Sea (1997). Credit: The Necessary Stage*

*汐/Sea* is a performance-presentation which revisits the short play *Sea*, a phantasmagoric journey through the lives of two sisters – the elder Su Fen and her younger sibling Tarcy – who cannot live with or without each other, but are always with and without each other.

The sisters journey out at sea in a small boat together is filled with short, strange, whimsical conversations, drifting between past and future events, broaching topics of life and death.

Written by Haresh Sharma, *Sea*'s only staging was in November 1997 by The Necessary Stage as part of a double bill called *Moving Home Stories*. The production was directed by Kok Heng Leun and starred Serene Chen and Zelda Tatiana Ng as the sisters.

*Straits Times* theatre critic Elizabeth Kaiden said the sibling relationship portrayed by the two actresses “resonate[d] beautifully”. Ben Munroe from *Business Times* praised Kok's direction, highlighting the production's “rhythmic pace [which allowed] an undulating ocean to guide the ups and downs of the sisters' emotions”.

Dr. Robin Loon and Casey Lim both watched *Sea* in 1997 and remember it fondly. With the memory of the production firmly etched in his mind, Loon wanted to rejuvenate Haresh's text by rewriting the play in Chinese.

For Loon, translation is a creative practice as it involves engaging and experimenting with the source text. He called his translated work 《汐》 because the Chinese character both refers to and sounds like its English counterpart “sea”.

Tonight's performance-presentation is directed by Casey Lim, and features Chen and Ng who reprise their roles as the sisters. The actresses will perform a combination of Loon's 《汐》 and Sharma's original English text.



In *汐/Sea*, the artists engaged with *Sea*'s text in two ways: translation and memory. These two methodologies are familiar to Dr. Robin Loon and Casey Lim as the pair have used them before, albeit separately in different productions. *汐/Sea* is the first time they have combined the two techniques.

Loon and Lim teamed up in 2012 to stage 《男男自语》, a Chinese translation of Chay Yew's gay romance drama *A Language of Their Own*. Loon watched Lim's production of the original work in 2006 and was mesmerised by the poetic quality of the language.

Loon then wrote 《男男自语》 as an experiment of language and culture, deliberately retaining the play's American characters, setting and pop culture references to draw attention to the translation. Lim's direction in the 2012 production further highlighted the translation, for example, with wall projections of the original English text. Writer Ng Yi-Sheng found the “new tensions” that arose in 《男男自语》 from the translation “interestingly problematic”, and declared the production “a fine interpretation” worth restaging.

The pair also worked on another production called *Casting Back* for the Esplanade's 10th anniversary, which used memories to piece together the history of Singapore theatre.

Loon wrote the script for *Casting Back* based on the recollections of theatre veterans Nora Samosir and Christina Sergeant. The production was played by the two actresses as well and directed by Lim. *Straits Times* theatre critic Corrie Tan called *Casting Back* “an earnest and deeply felt tribute” to Singapore theatre.

*汐/Sea* combines these two methodologies: one part is a performance of the translated text interspersed with the original, and the other is a reflection of what the artists remember from the 1997 production of *Sea* and that period in Singapore history.



*Serene Chen and Zelda Tatiana rehearsing for 汐/Sea (2015). Credit: Merissa Tang*



In writing 《汐》, Dr. Robin Loon had to re-engage and re-evaluate *Sea*, both through the text and his memory of the 1997 production. Translation is more than just swapping out words for their equiv-

alents in another language. A lot of decisions have to be made over what makes the translation and what gets discarded or even re-interpreted – choices about tone, rhythm, meaning, and historical and cultur-

al nuance, to name a few. For the translator, there actually is quite a bit of leeway for experimentation. Translations can differ widely depending on the knowledge and intentions of the trans-

lators. This is why translation is a creative practice in and of itself. Below are excerpts of Fen's and Tarcy's speeches from Hareh Sharma's *Sea* and Loon's 《汐》.

FEN: I can call the hospital on my handphone. Who can I talk to? His parents will slam the phone down on me. Don't blame them. Maybe I should call home. And leave a message on my answering machine. Hi. This is me. I'm on a boat. Maybe you'll get this message. They say the ears are the last to go. Hi. This is me. Did I turn off the tap? Are there anymore eggs? Maybe you're home. Maybe everyone is wrong and you're home. [Pause] Hi. This is me. You can go. But can your ears stay behind?

纷: 我可以打手提电话到医院。可是, 是谁接电话?他爸妈定会挂断我的电话。算了吧。也许我应该打电话回家。在我应答机上留言。你好。是我。我现在在一条船上。也许你会收到这项讯息。听人家说, 人死之前, 听觉是最后一个消失的知觉。你好。是我。我把水龙头关上了吗?家里还有鸡蛋吗? 也许你在家? 也许每个人都错了, 而你安然无事坐在家中。[PAUSE] 你好。是我。你可以走了。但你把耳朵留下, 好吗?

TARCY: Tiger. Tiger. Come, eat me. Eat me, then I will help you find other people to eat. When I die, they will put umbrella at my grave. Then can protect me. Protect me from the sun, the rain. Can protect me from other animals. From people also. Then nobody dare to disturb me. I like umbrella. So lady-like. Very nice. I want white colour, with lace, red lace, at the side. Like princess, or queen. [She struts] Tiger come. Tiger. Come tiger. Come.

塔熙: 老虎。老虎。来, 把我吃了。吃了我, 然后我会帮你找其他的人让你吃个饱。我死以后, 他们会在我的坟前把伞。伞子可以保护我。保护我免受日晒、雨淋。可以保护我免受其他动物侵食。可以保护我免受人的欺负。从此以后, 没人敢打扰我。我喜欢雨伞。担伞好有淑女气质。美极了。我想要一把白色的雨伞, 有红色的蕾丝花边。就像公主, 或者女王。[SHE STRUTS] 老虎你来。老虎。来虎。来吧。

## 8 QUESTIONS WITH THE ARTISTS



	SEA		LANGUAGE			THE 1990s		
	Are you a Fen or a Tarcy?	If you were lost at sea, what 3 items would you want to have with you?	What language do you think in?	What language do you prefer to speak in in everyday life?	What language do you prefer to perform in?	What were you doing in the late 1990s?	What is your fondest memory of the late 1990s?	What would you rather forget about the late 1990s?
<b>ZELDA</b>	Tarcy	I'm very practical. And I've work on the sea before... So, 1. An emergency flare 2. A mirror 3. A knife	English and Mandarin	English, Mandarin and Cantonese, sometimes Hokkien	Mix of English and Mandarin	I was with TNS as Actor/Facilitator in an ensemble. That was my FIRST full-time job in theatre! Before that, I was working with SAFRA as Prog Exec, then SAFRA Radio as Producer/Presenter - Dongli 88.3FM, which is now Jia883.	Being a full-time actor with TNS was a dream come true! Besides <i>Sea</i> , there were two other productions which I will never forget - <i>Pillars</i> and <i>Galileo [I feel the earth move]</i> . I think these plays can never be re-staged due to their devising process. We had very tiring and tough rehearsals and we all learnt a lot from one another! You can't imagine how tough it was. The cast would lie down on the floor to sleep or rest, even during a 15-20min break. How about that? But it will be with me forever. Forever.	Nothing. Whether is it good or bad. I believe that the brain has a 'natural selection'... One will remember what you wanna remember and forget what you need to forget. So, I will not know when I have forgotten... right? But whether is it good or bad, it's part of our memory, part of our lives on earth, our journey. So it makes us full and rich. Not empty.
<b>SERENE</b>	Fen	1. Fresh water! 2. Big umbrella! 3. Float (the swimming board type, not noodle or blow-up type)	English	English	Depends	Starting a job, getting used to life without formal education.	Being debt-free, having time to do things for myself...	Some questionable fashion choices.
<b>ROBIN</b>	Both	1. A Swiss Army knife 2. Drinking water 3. GPS beacon	English and Mandarin	English	English	Deciding whether to go into the arts or into academia.	Writing <i>Destinies of Flowers In The Mirror</i> AND <i>Workhorse Afloat; GTG (Got to Go)</i>	1997 Asian Financial Crisis.
<b>CASEY</b>	Neither	1. An electronic position indicator beacon 2. Gallons of 100-plus, lots of it 3. Army rations	English	Cantonese	Mandarin	Theatre-making.	Theatre-making.	Nothing, I want to remember everything.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



**CASEY LIM** is now re-learning the stories of the land, new stories, after having drifted away to islands and islands for so many years. He decides his bio is a fresh blank page.

**ROBIN LOON** is a senior lecturer in Theatre Studies at the National University of Singapore. A founding member of Centre 42, he is also its chief consultant for programme development. Dr. Loon is a playwright, dramaturg and avid Singapore theatre researcher. He is currently working on new methodologies of play-writing, content incubation and a book on Singapore theatre.

**SERENE CHEN** is an actress and a teacher. She is also a mother to three children. That explains why she is mostly sleep-deprived and talks loudly. She is lucid when she is performing though. She is pleased to say that the first professional play she ever performed in was in Mandarin and produced by The Necessary Stage. It was not “Sea”.

**ZELDA TATIANA NG** is a theatre practitioner with over three decades’ experience working in various aspects of theatre and with almost all major established local theatre companies. She is a Theatre Training & Research Programme alumna and is currently working on her directorial chops in The Finger Player’s *Watch This Space* programme.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Centre 42 would like to thank Haresh Sharma and The Necessary Stage for helping to make *The Vault: 汐/Sea* possible.

*Sea* was originally created by The Necessary Stage.

If you would like to leave us some feedback or have questions to ask about tonight’s performance-presentation, here are some ways to get in touch with us:

### EMAIL

[info@centre42.sg](mailto:info@centre42.sg)

### TWITTER

[twitter.com/Centre42](https://twitter.com/Centre42)

### FACEBOOK

[facebook.com/Centre42](https://facebook.com/Centre42)





## THE VAULT: HOW DID YOU MEET TINA?

DEC 5, 8PM, CENTRE 42 BLACK BOX

*How Did You Meet Tina?* is a performance-presentation created and directed by Chong Tze Chien that traces the legacy of the late Christina Sergeant via archival footage and images as well as recreated interviews with her collaborators, friends, family and students.

Free admission. Register at [bit.ly/Vault\\_Tina](https://bit.ly/Vault_Tina) to secure a seat.

## IN THE LIVING ROOM WITH TAN TARN HOW

DEC 7, 8PM, CENTRE 42 BLACK BOX

Join Dr. Robin Loon in the Living Room as he chats with Singaporean playwright Tan Tarn How about the creation of his plays, which include *The Lady of Soul and Her Ultimate 'S' Machine*, *Undercover*, and *Fear of Writing*.

Free admission. Register at [bit.ly/LR\\_TanTarnHow](https://bit.ly/LR_TanTarnHow) to secure a seat.

Head to [centre42.sg](https://centre42.sg) and [facebook.com/Centre42](https://facebook.com/Centre42) for more information.

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THE VAULT

THE VAULT revisits and remembers Singapore works dating back to our early theatre years, refreshes them through the responses of artists and collaborators, and retells them in a contemporary manner.



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