

LECTURE-PERFORMANCE HANDOUT

A PARTICIPANT'S NOTES ON

NINETEEN SIXTY-FOUR

THE VAULT 1.1

PRESENTED BY CENTRE 42

22 SEPTEMBER 2014, 8PM

LECTURE OUTLINE FOR **NINETEEN SIXTY-FOUR**

Contexts and Frame

- The year that was 1964
- Writing in English in the 1960s

A White Rose At Midnight · Act 1

- Hua Min Meets Ching Mei, his flatmate's sister, who is visiting.

Excerpt from an interview with Lim Chor Pee on why he wrote *A White Rose At Midnight*

A White Rose At Midnight · Act 1

- Hua Min continues the conversation with Ching Mei.

Excerpt on the early history of English Medium Schools in Singapore

When Smiles Are Done · Act 1 Scene 1

- Chong Kit sleeps in on Sunday. His friend Raju visits him. They shoot the breeze.

Serene Chen responds to the character of Chong Kit

When Smiles Are Done · Act 1 Scene 1

- Chong Kit makes fun of Raju.

Serene Chen reflects on her first responses to *When Smiles Are Done*

A White Rose At Midnight · Act 2 Scene 1

- Hua Min falls asleep before going into a party. Su Ling and Ching Mei play a trick on him.

Excerpt from a 1961 Straits Times report on Shirley Wong

A White Rose At Midnight · Act 2 Scene 1

- Muthu confronts Hua Min about the two slips. Hua Min is non-plussed.

**Excerpt from a critical study
on Lim and Goh by Krishen Jit**

When Smiles Are Done · Act 2 Scene 1

- A raucous scene from *The Queen's Bar*
 - revelers party with the girls.

**Excerpt from a 1960 Singapore Free Press
article on Cabaret Girls**

When Smiles Are Done · Act 2 Scene 1

- The revelers make a bet.

**Nora Samosir responds with her
memory of the Perempuan Cabaret**

A White Rose At Midnight · Act 2 Scene 2

- Ching Mei talks about her past as a nightclub singer,
 - Hua Min confesses his love for Ching Mei.

Casey Lim responds with a video montage

When Smiles Are Done · Act 3 Sc 1

- Jenny wants to Marry Raju. Mr and Mrs Wong wants
 - Chong Kit to stop the marriage.

**Excerpts on the 1964 riots
Excerpts from an article about Singapore
English Language Theatre by Terence Chong**

A White Rose At Midnight · Act 3

- Wong talks to Ching Mei about her feelings
 - for Hua Min.

**Excerpts on early independent Singapore Government's
attitude towards the English Educated**

Final Scene from *A White Rose At Midnight*

Final Scene from *When Smiles Are Done*

SCENE-BY-SCENE DESCRIPTION

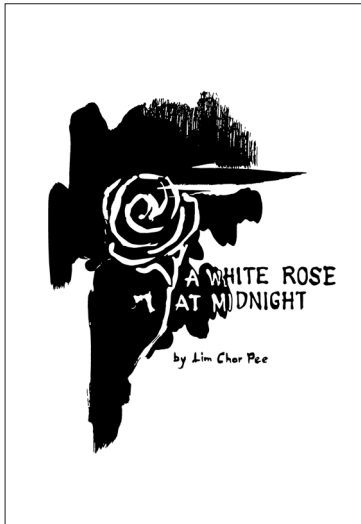


Image credit

Original copyright: Lim Chor Pee

Original programme cover design: Betty Lau

A WHITE ROSE AT MIDNIGHT

by **Lim Chor Pee**

Act 1

The audience is introduced to Wong and Hua Min who share a flat. Hua Min is an associate lecturer at the local University and Wong is an assistant manager in a foreign firm. Enters Wong's sister, Ching Mei, from Peninsular Malaysia, she will be attending Nanyang University. Hua Min and Ching Mei share their differences and their difference of opinions. Enter Muthu and Sharmini – friends of Wong and Hua Min. Muthu and Sharmini are a couple. Muthu tells Hua Min that Ching Mei used to work as a nightclub singer. The audience is next introduced to Su Ling, a young Chinese girl educated in England and has recently returned to Singapore. Su Ling reveals that she and Hua Min attended the same school during Form VI. She shows interest in Hua Min.

SCENE-BY-SCENE DESCRIPTION

Act 2 Scene 1

Two weeks later. Wong waits for Hua Min to come home so he can use Hua Min's car. It is past midnight. Hua Min falls asleep on the settee. Su Ling and Ching Mei enter the flat after one another and leave misleading 'evidence'. Muthu confronts Hua Min about the incriminating evidence. Hua Min reveals he has feelings for Ching Mei.

Act 2 Scene 2

One week later. The friends gather at the flat. The audience is introduced to Heyworth, a Korean War Veteran from the USA. The friends take Heyworth to task on his ideas of the Orient. Hua Min confesses his feelings to Ching Mei.

Act 3

One week later. The friends gather for a party. Ching Mei and Su Ling come clean about them leaving their slips with a sleeping Hua Min. Hua Min pursues Ching Mei and presses for her response. Ching Mei insists that the differences between them cannot be reconciled. Ching Mei reveals that she will fly to the USA with Heyworth and work as a Radio singer. Ching Mei bids Hua Min and Wong farewell. Ching Mei admits to her brother that she has feelings for Hua Min before she departs. Some time passes. Hua Min hears from the radio of a plane crash of a flight bound for the USA. Ching Mei appears – she did not leave. They embrace.

SCENE-BY-SCENE DESCRIPTION



Image credit:
Original copyright: Goh Poh Seng
Original programme design: M. Goh & Lim

WHEN SMILES ARE DONE

by **Goh Poh Seng**

Act 1 Scene 1

It is Sunday. Wong Chong Kit, a clerk, is sleeping in. He has a cheeky spat with his mother over his sleeping in. Enters Raju, Chong Kit's friend. From their conversation, the audience realises that Chong Kit is, in Raju's words, an expert kidder. He takes nothing seriously and pokes fun of everything. His sister, Jenny and her friend Madeline returns. Chong Kit makes fun of them.

Act 1 Scene 2

Jenny takes Chong Kit to task about his irresponsible attitude. Chong Kit rebuffs her. Enters Mun Sor, Chong Kit's friend. They get ready for a night out.

Act 2 Scene 1

At The Queen's Bar. The drunken crowd of locals and foreigners gather for a good night out. Chong Kit flirts with Mary, one of the bar girls while Mun Sor chats up Rosie. After the crowd leaves, Mary chats with Liz. Mary tells Liz that she wants money and a comfortable life – and doesn't really care who she marries to get it.

SCENE-BY-SCENE DESCRIPTION

Act 2 Scene 2

Raju visits Chong Kit. Raju reveals that he wants to marry Jenny and asks Chong Kit to support him in his bid for her hand. Chong Kit appears disinterested and non-committal. Raju leaves in a rage.

Act 3 Scene 1

Back in the Wong's flat. Chong Kit's Mother, Mrs Wong is upset over Jenny's impending marriage to Raju. Chong Kit tries to mediate the matter but his Mother insists that he persuades Jenny to give up the idea. Jenny is adamant on marrying Raju. Chong Kit continues to sit on the fence - incurring the wrath of Jenny and Mrs Wong.

Act 3 Scene 2

Chong Kit meets Mun Sor and Rosie at the Esplanade, Elizabeth Walk. It is nine months after the previous scene. In their conversation, we learn that Jenny has married Raju and has given birth to a child. Mrs Wong has reconciled with the marriage and is happily tending to the baby. After Mun Sor and Rosie leaves, Chong Kit delivers a monologue as he talks to the fishes swimming in the Singapore River. He reveals that Mary is pregnant with his child. Now he has to announce to his mother that he must marry her.

ABOUT THIS COLLABORATION

When it all started.....

1984

**Nora Samosir —
Bumboat
Singapore
Arts Festival
Actor**

1990

**Robin Loon —
M. Butterfly
TheatreWorks
Production
Assistant**

1990

**Casey Lim —
The Lift
Action
Theatre
Actor**

1994

**Serene Chen —
Kampong
Amber
Music &
Movement**

'FIRST CONTACT' ROADMAP

1990	1991	1993	1994
<i>ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER</i>	<i>BERNARD'S STORY</i>	<i>LONGING</i>	<i>KAMPONG AMBER</i>
NORA SAMOSIR ACTOR		NORA SAMOSIR ACTOR	NORA SAMOSIR ACTOR
	CASEY LIM ACTOR	CASEY LIM ACTOR	
ROBIN LOON PLAYWRIGHT	ROBIN LOON STAGE MANAGER	ROBIN LOON WRITER	
			SERENE CHEN ACTOR

The 'roadmap' documents the first encounters among the 4 artists, arriving at the 2014 collaboration on *Nineteen Sixty-Four*. Each production and contact contributed to how they work with one another today. Here are their reflections on their collaborative journeys and responses towards their significance:

Nora

"*Casting Back* (2012). It was the first time 3 of us – Casey, Robin and I have worked together. And it was the only time I worked with Christina Sergeant. The subject matter of the piece as the title suggests is historical and with the pun on 'cast' it was about actors looking back at their acting careers; so it was very personal and yet quite public."

1998	1999	2001	2007	2014
<i>HUNGRY</i>	<i>PIE</i>	<i>WATCHING THE CLOUDS GO BY</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>NINETEEN SIXTY-FOUR</i>
	NORA SAMOSIR ACTOR		NORA SAMOSIR ACTOR	NORA SAMOSIR ACTOR
CASEY LIM DIRECTOR	CASEY LIM DIRECTOR			CASEY LIM DIRECTOR
		ROBIN LOON PLAYWRIGHT	ROBIN LOON PLAYWRIGHT	ROBIN LOON PLAYWRIGHT
SERENE CHEN ACTOR	SERENE CHEN ACTOR	SERENE CHEN ACTOR	SERENE CHEN ACTOR	SERENE CHEN ACTOR

Serene

“This is a hard one. I think it would be *DNR* (2010) because it involved Robin and me from the very beginning. We pitched the ideas to Esplanade. We wanted to do something different. It was more for ourselves and we wanted to collaborate on our own terms. Not easy, of course. But ownership was higher, mistakes more internalised, successes were also celebrated in a more muted, introspective way.”

Robin

“*Watching The Clouds Go By* (1993) was my most memorable creating experience in the Writers Lab, and the first time I found a connection between story/history and theatre. Also, it was in the 2001 staging that I first worked with Serene Chen.”

Casey

“*男男自语 A Language of Their Own* (2012). As a director working with Robin in translating the beauty of intense emotions across language. I remember tears and heartbeats.”

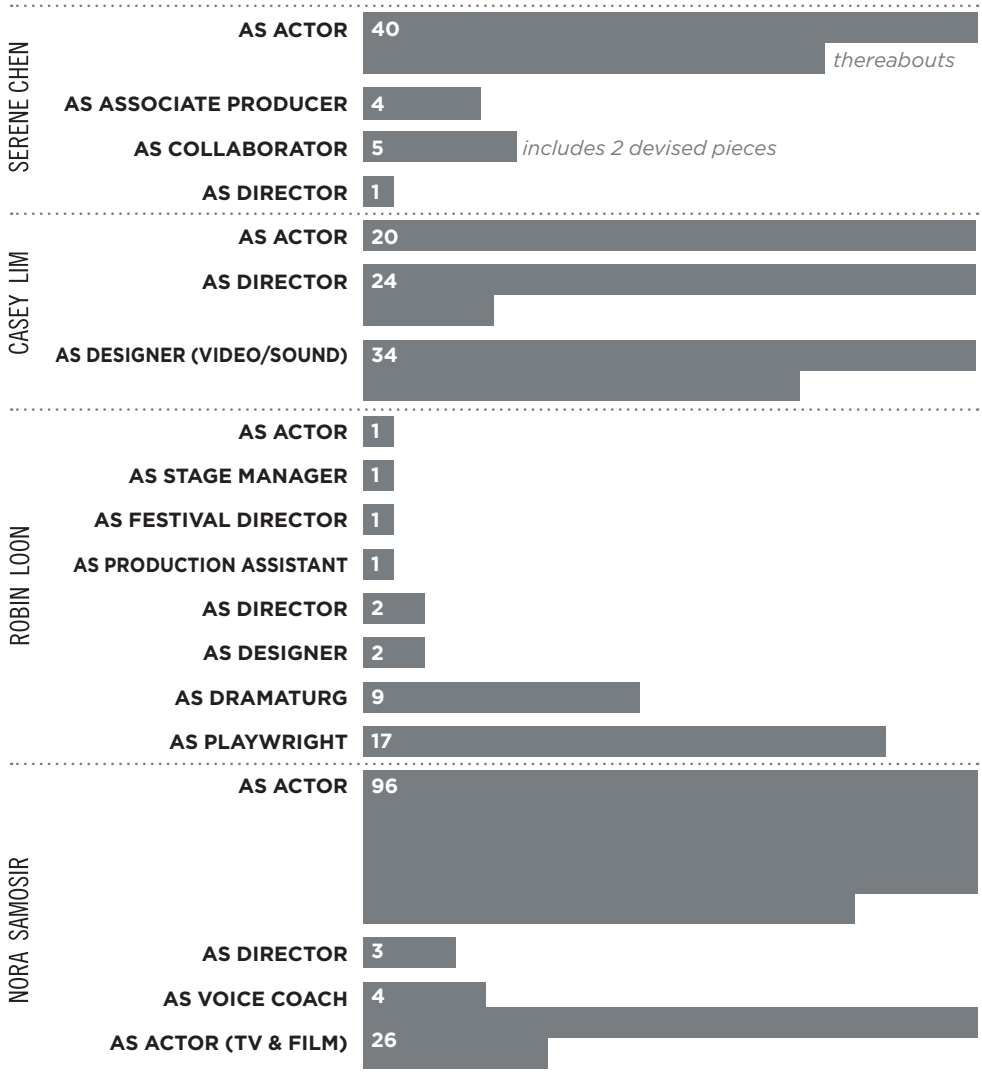
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Serene Chen is a generally sleep-deprived mummy, who *bao-ga-liaos* acting and teaching.

Casey Lim is the current Executive Director of Centre 42, waiting to retire to a nearby island for peace and quiet.

Robin Loon is a playwright, dramaturg and senior lecturer in Theatre Studies. He still aspires to be rich and famous.

Nora Samosir enjoys travelling, teaching theatre studies, treading the boards and telling people what to do, in no particular order.



(Looks nervously around the Black Box.)

“Since there’s no one else except you and us fishes, I can tell you a secret or two. It’s not easy getting this programme going, and we need your feedback (to keep getting better at it). ... Why don’t you think about it? Post us fishes a letter. Now I’m afraid you must be off. Got to join the rest for some supper. Goodnight.”

Post us a letter, or:

Email us at info@centre42.sg

Leave us a message on www.facebook.com/Centre42

Tweet to us at www.twitter.com/Centre42



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. The Vault 1.1—Nineteen Sixty-Four is the first of an on-going series presented by Centre 42.

PRESENTED BY

