

## Theatre Studies Research Day

*Featuring research in progress by graduate students and faculty members of the NUS Theatre Studies Programme*

Thursday, 16th April 2015, 9.30 am to 5.30 pm

Graduate Reading Room, Level 5, AS5, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Schedule	
9.30 – 9.55am	BREAKFAST
9.55 -10.00	Opening Address <span style="float: right;">A/P John Philips</span>
*SESSION 1 Chair: A/P John Philips	
10.00-10.30	On Leaning In: Listening to Social Change in Burma/Myanmar <span style="float: right;">Matthew James Yoxall</span>
10.30-11.00	Money to Burn: Performance of Excess and Deficit in Daoist Popular Practices in Contemporary Singapore <span style="float: right;">Alvin Lim Eng Hui</span>
11.00-11.30	TEA BREAK
*SESSION 2 Chair: Dr Edna Lim	
11.30-12.00	Digital Archiving and the Rise of the ‘New’ Spectator <span style="float: right;">Shreyosi Mukherjee</span>
12.00-12.30	Naturalism and Asian performances of Shakespeare <span style="float: right;">A/P Yong Li Lan</span>
12.30 – 2.00	LUNCH
*SESSION 3 Chair: Dr Graham Wolfe	
2.00 -2.30	The Talents in My Passport: An Inquiry into the Asymmetries of Performance and the Creative Economy <span style="float: right;">Luis Felipe Cervera Noriega</span>
2.30-3.00	The Singapore Story: Memorialisation and storytelling after Lee Kuan Yew <span style="float: right;">Ella Parry-Davies</span>
3.00-3.30	Rubbish in the Rural: The “Excesses” of Capitalism and its Spectacle in China’s Alternative Cinema <span style="float: right;">Edson Ng Li-Chun</span>
3.30 -4.00	TEA BREAK
*SESSION 4 Chair: Dr Liang Peilin	
4.00-4.30	The Puppet Theatre of Slamet Gundono: Discarded Objects, Contested Narratives <span style="float: right;">Miguel Escobar Varela</span>
4.30-5.00	How Lecoq’s Moves Lead to Language <span style="float: right;">Dr. Maiya Murphy</span>
5.00-5.30	Collective Translation and Authorship in Theatre Translation: Experiments in Translation Workshops <span style="float: right;">Dr. Ken Takiguchi</span>
5.30	Closing Remarks <span style="float: right;">A/P Yong Li Lan</span>

\* Papers are 20 minutes long. 10 minutes are allocated for Q & A after each presentation.

## **On Leaning In: Listening to Social Change in Burma/Myanmar**

**Matthew James Yoxall**

In Yangon, Burma/Myanmar, social change can be heard within the composition of the city's developing 'soundscape'. Due to recent political and social reforms, the city is becoming noisier. What does this noise explain about the direction in which change is heading? How does the current "aural architecture" affect the attentive listener's auditory experience? Listening, as an engaged act of 'paying attention' to the environment is knowledge bearing, and informs how local theatre makers attune themselves to social change. For the practitioner-researcher, leaning in to listen to the lives of these theatre-makers provides sensory data from which to develop new critical perspectives.

## **Money to Burn: Performance of Excess and Deficit in Daoist Popular Practices in Contemporary Singapore**

**Alvin Lim Eng Hui**

This paper examines the symbolic transactions of spirit money or "hell notes" used in Daoist popular practices—a few Singapore dollars can be exchanged for a million hell dollars. I observe that the burning of hell notes is now tied to another exchange: Singaporeans ask for lottery numbers as part of their burning ritual. The burning is sometimes followed by a shout of "Huat!" (to prosper or become rich) in anticipation of "striking rich" in the draws. Burning spirit money is believed to be reciprocated by the deceased when they bless the giver with multiplied real money. This connection reflects a circuit of transactions that defines the updated ritual process in significant ways.

## **Digital Archiving and the Rise of the 'New' Spectator**

**Shreyosi Mukherjee**

My own evolution as a user of technology and digitized media is the starting point of this paper. The paper primarily focusses on the digital archive, practice(s) of digital archiving, and how these inform the current research on intercultural spectatorship. It also reviews intermediality as a spectatorial modality and how that impacts the overall viewing experience of the spectator. The paper takes an in-depth look at the scholarly practises that govern the formation of the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A) and how digital archives like A|S|I|A lead to the creation of a new category of spectators.

## **Naturalism and Asian performances of Shakespeare**

**Yong Li Lan**

A common thread that runs through the great diversity of East and Southeast Asian productions of Shakespeare in the last thirty years is naturalism, and its association with a notion of 'traditional' Shakespeare performance. Both in translation and adaptation, Shakespeare productions in the region have engaged the historical regime of naturalism in their countries by drawing upon elements from indigenous forms; these productions have increasingly toured to the West as the source of that regime. I compare the strategies adopted by *Ninagawa Macbeth* (1985) for making naturalism beautiful, with the disruption of character action through rhythm and dance in Mokwha Repertory Company's *Tempest* (2012).

## **The Talents in My Passport: An Inquiry into the Asymmetries of Performance and the Creative Economy**

**Luis Felipe Cervera Noriega**

By taking my own experience as a Mexican migrant in Singapore, this paper explores the ways in which passports become an index of the talents an individual must possess and practice. The paper suggests that

although there is an equivalence of sorts between what Filipinos, Bangladeshis and Indonesians are to Singapore and what Mexicans are to the United States, the 'talents' that each migrant individual will be expected to show are largely dependent on local configurations and history. In that sense, the paper argues that as much as it is necessary to identify what a performative inquiry can do to better study migrant workers at large, it is also imperative to identify the asymmetrical performativity that 'a talent' will assume in different locations. In doing so, the paper seeks to contribute to the larger conversation about the intersections of labor, performance, and globalization.

## **The Singapore Story: Memorialisation and storytelling after Lee Kuan Yew**

**Ella Parry -Davies**

The potency of late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs – grouped under the title *The Singapore Story* – is predicated on their invocation of storytelling itself as a vernacular register. The *Singapore Story* is perhaps the most resonant inflection of the title in terms of cultural meaning-making in relation to nationhood. The "story" of this title is emblematic of the co-opting of storytelling itself, extracting it from a dialogic register into the monoglot singularity of a privileged teller. In doing so, it supplants other available storytelling in Singaporean popular culture, and manifestly in certain key moments which I discuss here: the replacement of Speaker's Corner with a Lee Kuan Yew memorial; and the arrest of Amos Yee. In this paper I will discuss the figure of Lee Kuan Yew 'the Author', and its actualization in the supplanting of Speaker's Corner and other instances of dissident speech with an author/ized State narrative.

## **Rubbish in the Rural: The "Excesses" of Capitalism and its Spectacle in China's Alternative Cinema**

**Edson Ng Li-Chun**

The breakneck speed of transformation experienced by China in recent years has resulted in the frequent cameo appearance of an uncanny subject in her alternative cinema – rubbish. Consumerism sparked by China's embrace of its own brand of capitalism has resulted in "excesses" which have seen her rural spaces being increasingly overtaken by garbage. Largely concerned with the Party's rhetoric on progress and its inability to handle the by-products of this economic 'miracle', a new breed of filmmakers are presently seeking to capture an alternative vision of mainland China. Although their attempts are politically charged and have met with much controversy, these works remain, I argue, largely 'wasted' as a result of the visual spectacle that is created and the manner in which these films are produced and circulated.

## **The Puppet Theatre of Slamet Gundono: Discarded Objects, Contested Narratives**

**Miguel Escobar Varela**

This paper explores the work of Javanese actor, puppeteer and musician Slamet Gundono (1966-2014). In his performances, Slamet used discarded, everyday objects and materials (mud, dried grass, cooking utensils, condoms and food) to explore environmental destruction, the role of women in Javanese society and religious intolerance. His performances were based on personal, often controversial interpretations of well known stories, from the Mahabarata epic to the 19th century literary work *Serat Centhini*. By analyzing three of his performances, I argue that Slamet's attention to discarded objects playfully subverts the value system of Javanese culture, enabling oppositional readings of traditional narratives.

## **How Lecoq's Moves Lead to Language**

**Dr. Maiya Murphy**

This presentation uses cognitive science to untangle one specific aspect of the pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq: movement in relationship to language. By applying the work of cognitive scientists, cognitive philosophers, and cognitive linguists, Lecoq's prioritization of movement over language comes into view not as a stylistic choice, but as a cognitive one. I conceive of the pedagogy's approach to movement and language as functioning on two

levels – the basal and the executional, where the basal level prepares the performer for all kinds of creative tasks while the executional level teaches the performer how to use language in the context of specific styles.

## **Collective Translation and Authorship in Theatre Translation: Experiments of Translation Workshops**

**Dr. Ken Takiguchi**

Authorship in theatre can never be a straightforward matter. If we consider the performance on stage as the only and final work of theatre, all who are involved in the creative process should be considered the “authors” of the theatrical piece. This shared and collective authorship is a unique characteristic of theatre, and the script translator will of course share in the authorship of the work if translation is involved in the process. In practice, however, the power relationship among the “authors” is hardly equal. This paper analyzes a practice-based research project that aimed to reconsider the relationship between the translator and the other “authors” in theatre translation, consisting of workshops for translating Huzir Sulaiman’s *Cogito* into Japanese, held in Japan and Singapore in 2012 and 2013 respectively.