

Broadway Beng! 5 - Benging You Back to Basics

Dream Academy

10 – 27 October 2013, Drama Centre Theatre

Production information

Dream Academy Productions is a private theatre production company established by local actress and comedian Selena Tan in 2000. The company is well known for its series of popular stand-up comedies, featuring music and satire; the most popular being stage productions of *Dim Sum Dollies* and *Broadway Beng*. *Broadway Beng! 5* is the fifth in this series and features Sebastian Tan, with his unique brand of humour, as Singapore's Beloved Broadway singing, 'Hokkien-Speaking', 'Hamsun' Ah Beng.

In the last 7 years, Broadway Beng has "pia" (strike) with you, "chio" (laugh) with you and "jio" (invited) you from a small theatre in Robertson Walk until he "Jiak Liu Lian" (eat durian) with you at the Esplanade. This year, Broadway Beng is Benging you Back to Basics at the Drama Centre.

Under the direction of Selena Tan, music direction by Elaine Chan, and choreography by Jacqueline Pereira, Sebastian Tan's critically-acclaimed, stand-up musical comedy material is supported by five experienced musical comedy ladies plus a younger self, played by child actor Ian Lee.

Songs were adapted and arranged by Elaine Chan and included:

Out here on my own - As if we never say goodbye - 情難忘 qing nan wang - 干一杯 gan jit pui - 超級白 *Super white - Papa can you hear me* - 阿爸的話 ah pa ey wey - *We are the champion* - 世界第一等 se kai te yi ding - *Simply the best - Domino Dancing - Strange Love - Square rooms* - 無言的結局 Wu Yan De Jie Ju - 為何你愛著別人 wei he ni ai zhe bie ren - 愛你無條件 ai li bo diao kia - 你怎麼說 ni zhen me shuo - *Steam Heat - 風真透 hong jin tao - Grease - Summer nights - Sandra Dee - Hopelessly devoted to you - Grease lightning - Beauty school dropout - Sandy - The one that I want - We go together* - 朋友 peng you - ai pai jia eh yia

(Synopsis and Theme)

Sebastian Tan will be sharing his heart with his fellow heartlanders. Talking about life with mother, his father and his aunties and uncles, about the price of pork and the rise of his ... libido, "benging sexy back".

In these tough times in Singapore, Broadway Beng is more Beng for your Buck!

CAST

Broadway Beng	.....	Sebastian Tan
Mini Broadway Beng	.....	Ian Lee
Chio Buu	.....	Denise Tan, Judee Tan, Jacqueline Pereira, Mina Kaye, Siti Khalijah

MUSICIANS (The Band)

Keyboard 1 & 2	.....	Elaine Chan
Acoustic Bass/Electric Bass/Chinese Flute/Western Flute	.....	Colin Yong
Drums/Percussion/Trumpet	.....	Rizal Sanip
Acoustic Guitar/Electric Guitar/Keyboard 3	.....	Joshua Tan

PRODUCTION

Director	.....	Selena Tan
Producer	.....	Kelvin John Lim
Music Director	.....	Elaine Chan
Choreographer	.....	Jacqueline Pereira
Art Director	.....	CK Chia
Set Designer	.....	Priscil Poh
Lighting Designer	.....	Adrian Tan, Dorothy Png
Costume Designer	.....	Mothar Kasim
Sound Designer/ Engineer	.....	Shah Tahir
Hair Designer/ Stylist	.....	Ashley Lim
Make Up Designer	.....	The Make Up Room
Production Manager	.....	Tara Tan
Stage Manager	.....	Jasmine Teo
Assistant Stage Managers	.....	Alycia Renee Finley, Keira Lee
Lighting Programmer	.....	Clement Cheong
Followspot Operators	.....	Lee Kong Shen, Don Guo
Surtitles Operator	.....	Tricia Tang
Wardrobe Mistress	.....	Nurhidayah Mahadi
Dressers	.....	Tabby, Nurul Izzatul
Stage Crew	.....	Nureen Raidah

Photos of Cast and Production (appearing in the documentary photographs)



Elaine Chan



Alycia Renee Finley



Nurul Izzatul



Mothar Kasim



Mina Kaye



Siti Khalijah



Ian Lee



Keira Lee



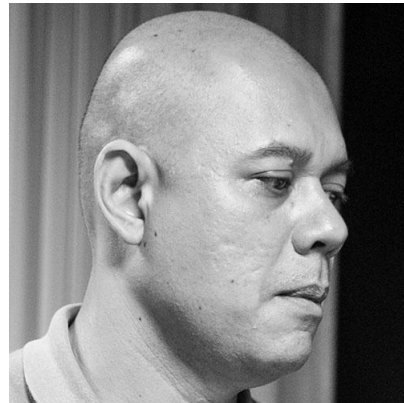
Ashley Lim



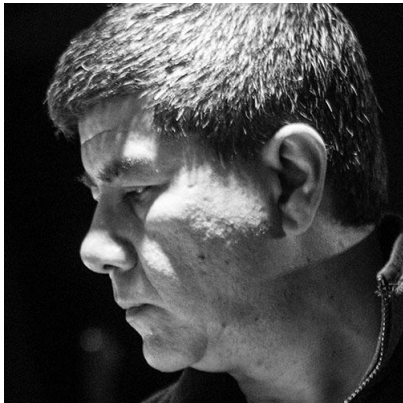
Nurhidayah Mahadi



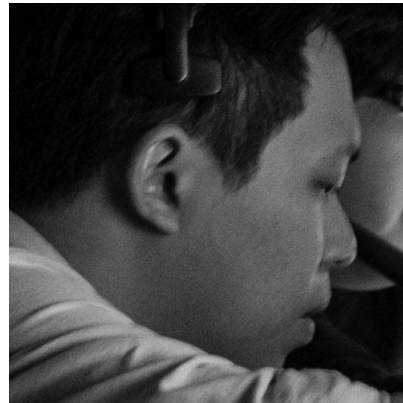
Jacqueline Pereira



Rizal Sanip



Shah Tahir



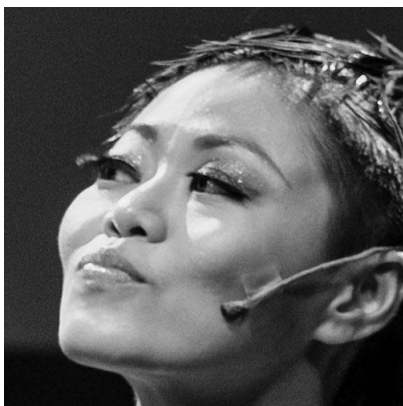
Adrian Tan



Denise Tan



Joshua Tan



Judee Tan



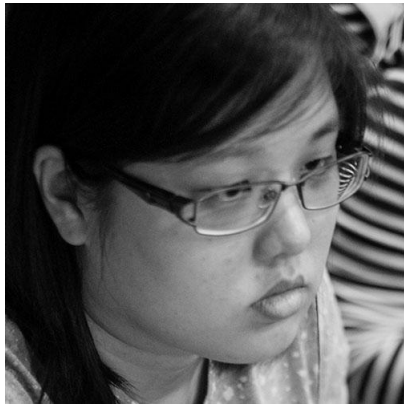
Sebastian Tan



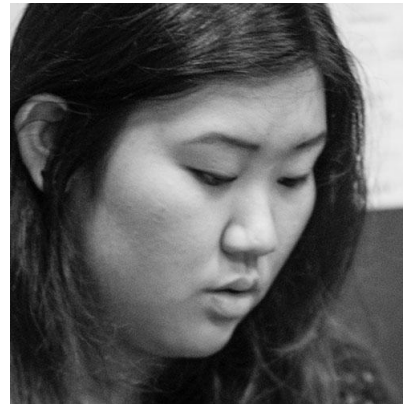
Selena Tan



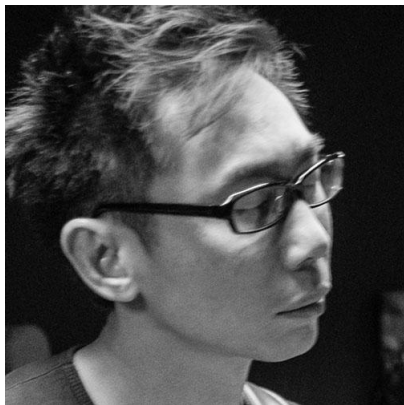
Tara Tan



Jasmine Teo



Victoria Wong



Colin Yong

PROCESS NOTES

Dream Academy's *Broadway Beng! 5 – Benging You Back to Basics*, by Christoper Fok

Rehearsal on **11th Sep 2013**, Dream Academy's Rehearsal Room at 203A Henderson Road #02-01 Henderson Industrial Park, 4pm - 6pm.

- Circular configuration around the keyboard. One of the actresses goes through a portion of the songs in Chinese. Using her handphone to record the portion she will practice on later.
- The musician on the keyboard incites fun in a portion of the song, the beat reminds her of a hip hop beat.
- The musician and the actress are trying to coordinate the actress's own singing ability with the high notes. Scene 20: Friends medley.
- Finale song. The choral ending as an added on refrain of the character's thought.
- There is the usage of lyrics in both Chinese and Hokkien.
- A bigger finish if everyone harmonizes with Sebastian, instead of tagging on another phrase.
- The issue of which would be a bigger finish.
- Maybe a Broadway tune instead of another Chinese tune.
- Or continuing the Chinese tune as a sing-along. Using a well-known Chinese song.
- If it is a Broadway tune, it needs to be a closing medley, Sebastian suggests.

- They start to search for a Broadway tune that is upbeat and has the theme of friends in it.
- The stage manager, Jasmine, plays the Chinese song on the stereo to remind the cast of how the song originally sounds.
- They start to create false endings.
 - But the issue of trying to keep it within 1hr and a half. The best bet is around 1hr and 15 mins.
- Trying to change the lyrics for *Those were the Days, My Friend*.
- The rehearsal is interrupted by a birthday cake for Kiera. There is a jovial atmosphere.
- They continue to string together all the ending songs, just to find a proper ending.
- They extend the ending song first then would be able to cut it when possible.
 - Trying to revisit some of the older songs as well, to create a rounded ending.
- The actors are able to contribute and organically create.
- Dynamics between Sebastian and the director, Selena.
 - *How do they come to making decisions?*
- The actors sight read scores.
- How do the actors cope with singing Hokkien and Chinese when it is not their first language?
 - *Does the music help in their absorption of the lyrics?*
 - *Do they have help in the notation?*
- Singing the land before time.
- Inputting the grease phrase “tell me more, tell me more” due to the chord similarity.
- Discussion of the meaning of the lyric.
- Looking at the repetition of portions of one of the Chinese songs as an over-repetition. Discussion of maybe inserting the lyrics of another song.
- There is the discussion of retaining of a portion of the Chinese song that is a crowd favourite.
- Elaine, the music director, counts out loud the timing for the false starts.
 - They discuss the hilarity that might happen at the end of the song or the medley, the audience doesn’t clap as usual. A sudden demand to ask the audience to clap, will also incite laughter.
 - Sebastian’s singing of the main lyrics while the ensemble actresses sing the harmonies.
- The cast sings the finale song once through with all the false ends for recording. One actress simulates the awkward clapping by the audience. 5 mins 20s.
- They have finished the finale.
- They are now at the sports medley. (Scene 9)
 - Elaine is telling the Chio Bu’s the melodies to create the harmony.
- The actors periodically use their phones to record melodies as notes.
 - The musician indicates to each of the actresses their own transposed melodies from the harmonization.
 - They are singing ‘Don’t Stop Believing’.
- Elaine is tackling flourishes in the song.
 - Transitions between the Singlish song to the Chinese song.
- The actresses use pencils to make notations on the scores.
- Elaine gives Siti the option to sing another guitar part. This is to give more body to the medley, she suggests to Siti to sing the guitar part more distortion. From the song, ‘Cause you’re simply the best.’
- Due to the absence of the actress Jackie, Elaine wants to give the missing actress tones that are nearer the melody line.
- Trying out a duet canon, that segues the lyric ‘*Simply the Best*’ from the song ‘*Don’t Stop Believing*’.
- Elaine’s communication of phrases is very clear. The actresses are very quick to catch the tunes.
- Elaine is trying to create more colours for the other actresses.
 - Sebastian is trying to retain portions of singing flourishes from the original songs.
 - There is a very diplomatic process with Elaine that works towards creating a dynamic medley.

- They try out different variations of the medley trying to find a balance between dynamism and clarity.
- Elaine wants to a cannon effect, but there is a struggle for clarity in the process.

NOTE: Main contributions from the cast, are from Denise, Sebastian and Judee. Mina and Siti are more restrained in contributing.

- Some of the singing that starts small to a crescendo happens naturally.
- For a cleaner end to the medley, they suggest bouncing on the note to create finality.
- The repetition of the note for 'Don't Stop Believing' sounds messy as it progresses; Elaine looks to remedying that, especially the continuous off-beats. Elaine instead asks Denise and Siti to sing the baseline.
 - They listen to the Glee version of the song as a group and remark that the Glee version is so overproduced, where the singers are recorded separately, and then the separate tracks are then placed together. Unlike those on stage who need to have the innate timing to pull of the song.
- The actresses suggest that the syncopation be sung slower first and then sped up. Elaine also notes that the note sung is too breathy and prolonged, thus creating the stray in beat.
- They break for dinner.

Rehearsal on **18th Sep 2013**, Dream Academy's Rehearsal Room at 203A Henderson Road #02-01 Henderson Industrial Park, 2pm - 6pm

- Selena Tan and Sebastian are discussing about jokes and edits to the script.
- Looking at contemporary references for jokes as puns for Hokkien words.
- There is a repartee of collaborative discussion and editing of the material. The familiarity between the creatives holds to the easy ebb and flow of creation. It is noted that their long history together goes a long way towards a tight script that is edited for the masses, in terms of hilarity.
- Selena takes note of how jokes must be set up, and the punchline must be a response or turnover of the set up for the existence of wit.
- Sebastian remarks that there is a need to avoid certain repetitions from previous productions.
- The stage manager who understand Hokkien, edits the script concurrently.
- Dance rehearsal
 - Siti is practicing a new phrase in movement, while Mina and Judee go through movements from a previous dance rehearsal.
 - Go through the grease song first. Grease number.
 - Trying to find a way to pace the songs with the dancing, especially since the actresses will be singing the songs at the same time.
 - The actresses get down the phrase of the dance first and then looking to changing positions if possible. They look to their character representations for that song first to find an appropriate interpretation for their positions.
 - The choreographer looks at staggering the positions as some of the actresses act as boys in this song.
 - The 'boys' have a different movement in the midst of the phrase of song.
 - The choreographer, Jackie, who is also acting in the play, takes into account safety, so she suggests a slide back for the back row to avoid kicking each other.
- Grease lightning song.
 - The use of physical comedy interlaced with the dance moves.
 - They need the props to continue more of the dancing and blocking.
 - Siti speaks with Jackie about what they start off in the scene as, as boys instead of girls.
- Sebastian finishes some line edits of the script with Selena and proceeds to learn the 2 dances just taught by Jackie.
- Sebastian discusses with Selena whether it would be appropriate to do a certain sequence of dance moves.

- There is a living collaboration as both dancers and choreographer add or subtract to dance moves. Hinging these edits on the aesthetics of the move as well as the capabilities of the dancers. i.e. A cartwheel by Mina.

NOTE: The hard cement of the rehearsal venue doesn't seem to invite more contemporary dance moves - as that would involve hard contact with the unpadded floor.

- They spend some time to make sure that the dance phrase has a strong emphasis/punctum.
- Jasmine introduces the set to the cast.
- The floor is indicated with different coloured tape as a floor plan of the set to scale so the actors will be performing/rehearsing to an illusionary set for the moment.
- Jackie does another phrase of dance from *Grease*.
- "Tell me more, tell me more", a lyric from the *Grease* song, needs to be sung in a story telling mode, which asks the character Danny played by Sebastian for more of the story, but the issue is that Sebastian is a part of the main melody.
- There is the dichotomy of what they should sacrifice for a better portrayal of the meaning of the lyric in the current dance sequence. They decide to leave the breaking or restructuring of the song to next time, when they meet Elaine, the music director.
- Sebastian is also to wear a two-face costume, one on each side and they negotiate as different characters depending on which profile Sebastian faces to the audience. There is the added layer of the two characters being different genders as well.
- *Summer Night* song from *Grease*.
- The actors are blocking the summer night song according to the presence of the set.
- 'Hand Jive' video is looked at by Jackie to reaffirm her own knowledge of the dance moves.

Rehearsal on **2nd Oct 2013**. Dream Academy's Rehearsal Room at 203A Henderson Road #02-01 Henderson Industrial Park, 2.30pm - 6pm

- Sebastian is creating a conversation with the little boy who is acting as the younger Broadway Beng. They are also running lines in Hokkien as well. The boy is about 8 years old.
- The rehearsal venue is set up with instruments near the back under the costume wardrobe, so they can practice with instrumental accompaniment.
- The boy knows Hokkien from his grandfather and is dressed in his school uniform at this point of time. His name is Ian Lee.
- Selena, the director is asking about the marking on the floor to take into account the cyclorama.
- Selena explains the joke to Ian about how when you get older, you tend to lie about your age. They are trying to explain the reaction that Ian should make in order to get a laugh from the audience.
- Selena says that Ian's response about the 'Manager' is throwing her off. She then explains to Ian about what the phrase means. About how it switches attention from the continuation of the joking repartee that is already set up between Sebastian and Ian.
- Sebastian makes Ian repeat a few Hokkien phrases a few times over, to make it easier for Ian to remember.
- From a line repetition on the chair, which Ian is sitting on, they move to a standing position. Selena directs from the side about Ian's acting. Comments on standing still and directing his own responses to the audience which is the row of mirrors in the rehearsal venue.
- The rehearsal room is also currently now filled with all the costumes and props needed for the stage.
- Sebastian says a line in Hokkien and then repeats it in English, in a smooth transition to facilitate understanding by the audience.
- Elaine is teaching Ian when to sing at the end. Selena sits next to the standing boy.
- Selena is directing Ian when to sing as well, making sure he smiles during portion when he doesn't sing, and to keep his eyes wide open as well.
- They decide to not let Ian switch octaves because it is harder for him to sing. Selena indicates that when Ian opens his mouth wider, it becomes easier to be heard as well.
- The actresses practice the closing as well. Song: *Ai Pia*.

- While they cast sings *Ai Pia*, the wardrobe mistress and costume designer are categorizing and rearranging the additional costumes according to their sequence in the performance. As it is a musical, there are 3 full racks of costumes that will clothe the whole cast. More, the costume designer is directing the wardrobe mistress at the same time.
- Moe is telling the wardrobe mistress how to effectively coordinate a quick change for the more ornate costumes, as well as to make sure they lay on the person properly as per the design of the costumes. The proper way to take it off the person so as to not damage the costume.

*At this period of time, the musicians arrive one after another in preparation for a full run.

- Selena directs Ian in the movement on stage during the singing of the English translation of *Ai Pia*. She reminds Ian to smile during the performance.
- The costumes also include footwear appropriate to each of the costumes. There is also a design need for the shoes to be capable of vigorous dance moves.
- Elaine, the music director uses earphones to do some prior practice to the full run, while the cast still practices *Ai Pia*.
- The Hokkien responses also amuse Moe, the costume designer who hears the exchange between Sebastian and Ian for the first time. It speaks of the comic timing and the comic talent of Ian.
- Selena has a very hands-on approach when rehearsing, stepping in for the sick Judee Tan, who is absent.
- To facilitate the quick change, both the shirt and pants are attached together, so the actress can step into the costume like an overall.
- After weeks of rehearsal, Selena tells the cast to act with their backs to the mirror so as to wean them off the comfort of being able to subtly change their body postures from the sight of their reflections. Selena requires this weekend's rehearsals to be facing away from the mirrors.

* The costumes are also arranged according to each of the cast members for easy access. The cast is currently miking up with various wireless mikes in preparation for the full run.

* The actresses are currently trying on each of the costumes to get familiar with putting them on.

- Sebastian practices one of the dialect songs with the accompaniment of the band. While Moe dances about him with quite skilled dance moves with pirouettes. The cast and crew use opportunities to have a bit of fun in the midst of it, and it lends a jovial atmosphere to the production.

- The actresses dress in first costumes for the full run.
- The prop manager makes small repairs to the yellow toy car at the back.
- Selena sits on stage right near the front of the mirrors to take notes on the full run.
- The full run starts at 4.30pm. Not all the cardboard props are done as of yet.
- A stage assistant uses an umbrella to indicate the curtains, because of the lack of one in the rehearsal venue, a very innovative use of whatever is at hand.
- While Sebastian does the storytelling portion in the front, the actresses have the time to change.
- Selena periodically claps and laugh during the run, almost placing herself as the ideal audience so as to ascertain what portions need to be improved.
- The actors must also imagine special light effects for the moment, in anticipation to the actual venue, with its improved performance capabilities.
- The song 'simply the best' has changes in the dance moves for the actresses. That has more relation with the lyrics. More as an ensemble that showcases Sebastian more.
- Mina Kaye couldn't sit down with the costume on, which would probably have to be adjusted later on.
- The actresses have a host of at least 4 costume assistants to help with the change of costumes.
- The stage manager reads Judee's lines while handling the special sound effects.
- Selena's impressive memory of cues for the script makes her very attuned to mistakes made by the cast and also the musicians. In her corner, she doesn't have the script with her at all, just recycled paper to write director's notes.
- Sebastian loses grip of the hammer during the Justice Bao scene, Siti K takes it off the stage, while Sebastian continues the scene as if nothing strange happened.
- Grease the musical has been localized.

- Sebastian takes short water breaks at the back in between scenes.
- All the false endings that were there in the previous rehearsal have been done away with because of the insertion of the new young actor, Ian Lee.
 - It has been changed instead to the song *Ai Pia*.

Rehearsal on **9th Oct.** Drama Centre, 1pm - 10.30pm (A day before opening)

- The actresses are now currently putting on makeup in preparation for hair with Ashley.
- There was also a technical delay, problems with mikes as well the day before. So because of that, there might be an eventual delay of the full run at 8pm. Thus far, the actresses are supposed to have hair and makeup at 1.15pm. But because Ashley has to handle so many wigs and with the technical delay. The actresses are just diligently putting on makeup currently so that they will be on stand-by to be called up for an eventual tech run.
- Bobbi Ng did make up for them. But she will be attached to Sebastian for the production, while the actresses will do their own makeup after seeing the demonstration yesterday.
- So after make-up will be hair with Radio City.
- Judee had a flu virus last week, with an eye infection from yesterday, but she is here also putting on make up. This eye infection might have been an allergic reaction to something, Judee says.
 - Judee did Broadway Beng 1 & 4.
- Ashley is now attaching streaks of dyed hair to Sebastian's head in the hair and make-up room. The room itself is populated with wigs on the floor and on the stands. The wigs are also placed on stands on the ledges above the dressing room tables. About 50 wigs in total.
- The ones on top of the dressing table, 14 wigs in total.
- It's 4 years since number 4.
- The hair extensions are placed interspersedly all along the skull. They are clipped on using hair clips, Ashley uses wax to also shape the hair, to give it form and volume.
- Ashley has created a wig that can be ripped off in order to reveal two different wig heads.
- Jackie's hair is placed into a tight bun so as to facilitate the quick change of wigs.
- Ashley got into the hair business because of William Teo. Who he met in the 80s. William Teo got Ashley to do hair for *Rashomon*.
- The SM is also doing repairs and maintenance to the big feathered fans.
- Ashley is now doing hair for Mina. After which the actress will proceed to get herself miced.
- The band is on the second floor split into two with a camera feed of Elaine so that the cast can see her conduct.
- The actors are now doing mike tests. The cast also sings a song so that Shah can adjust the frequencies so that there won't be feedback.
- Most of the costumes that are needed for costume change have been situated stage left with prop pieces as well for the tech run. Which is basically the running of cues. Costumes needed for immediate change in the next scene are laid out on chairs, so that the actresses can change quickly into them.
- The stage hands/prop managers are now pre-setting all props for the first run.
- Because Ashley is still preparing the wigs, they've decided to go without doing the grease number. They will break for dinner and thereafter come back and do a dress run and then come back and run the whole show.
- The first number went off well but without Denise.
- Selena stops the tech run, doing a start-stop. To give notes on changes. From cutting short the slow-motion running sequence, to notes on blocking for Sebastian on stage left.
- In order to serve the text/joke of looking like Darth Vader for Sebastian, Selena proposes a second afro wig to be placed on Sebastian before switching to the one initially planned for the scene.
- Denise enters during the scene; having just arrived. she is not in makeup or costume.
- The actors can't find the seamless hidden compartments in the set, an issue of flawless workmanship.
- Selena discusses with Adrian, the lighting designer about how to make the laser lights more prominent.

- Selena gives notes after the scene in the disco, changing the line cues and blocking of the props.
- The sound cues are the too slow and need to be faster.
- The two actresses are told not to block the banners on stage.
- They talk about transitions and trying to get cleaner and faster cuts between scenes.
- Stage rights doesn't have too many costumes and wigs, unlike stage left, which has a larger backstage area.
- The 'steam hot' section by the chiobus; the lights are to be changed into something sexier.
- The dimsum hats keep falling off during the number. Due to the hats being too small, in addition to the wigs worn by the actresses.
- The cast has problems with doing the quick change as they are trying it out for the first time.
- The grease musical has a lot of costume changes, they are trying to squeeze the entire musical into a short frame of time.
- Ashley is to add a yellow ribbon onto the Sandy portion in order to distinguish the two different wigs on Sebastian's head.
- Judee is feeling sick and has requested to just walk through the cues. Dedication to the performance.
- They've decided to go through the show till midway only.
- Backstage left, they use individual chairs to divvy up the costumes for each of the actresses.
- They fold up half of the skirts to make it easier for the actresses to put them on.
- The wigs have two tables to themselves.
- There is a strong team of costume and wardrobe people who help with the quick changes.
- The previous rehearsal note of Sebastian appearing under the curtain on his belly is correct.
- Stage hands/stage assistants receive the props that the actresses pass to them. So that the actresses can go back on stage quickly.
- The actresses are quickly directed by the stage assistant to deposit their props to the table before going off to the changing area.
- The neon lights light up the body suits worn by the actresses.
- Each actress has one wardrobe assistant to help them into the next costume.
- While the cast performs one scene, backstage, costume and hair get ready for the next quick change, by checking that the clothes are in the right place and which wigs are to be on which actress.
- While the actresses are busy putting on one piece of clothing, Ashley is busy placing wigs on their heads.
- As the actresses are busy taking off their costumes, there is a sense of trust that their wardrobe assistant will hand them the correct wig and costume.
- The actresses wear two layers of dresses, one for the next scene and one for the current in order to facilitate the quick change.
- Judee eventually goes onto the performing the mid full run despite her sickness.
- Shah is in charge of switching on each of the mics as per their usage so that when they enter backstage to change out of costume, they won't be heard.
- The interspersed long monologues by Sebastian allow the actresses to have enough time for their quick changes, as well as to touch up their make-up.
- The 'steam heat' song is a throwback to the Dim Sum Dollies franchise. It is of no surprise, as it proceeds after the nostalgic song sung by Sebastian who sings in tribute of his father who had passed 12 years ago as per the script. So 'steam heat' is in a sense is a tribute to Emma Yong, one of the original Dim Sum Dollies.
- There are stage hands behind both ends of the set to place the props in hidden compartments for the cast to take them.
- As the actresses have to sing backstage at points, everyone keeps as silent as possible while changing.
- The popper doesn't pop at the end of the love song medley, which is another item in which the stage managers must make sure does not happen for tomorrow night's opening show.
- A quick change backstage is likened to a F1 pitstop.

Researcher: Christopher Fok, 2 Jan 2014

General Editor: Aubrey Mellor, 10 May 2014