

## ***The House of Bernarda Alba***

Wild Rice

12 – 29 March 2014, Drama Centre Theatre

### **Production information**

Wild Rice's has an honoured and successful tradition of producing international classics of relevance to Singapore, often resetting works to better reflect SE Asia – known as the Masterpiece Theatre Repertoire. *The House of Bernarda Alba* was a rare chance to see this last masterpiece from the Spanish playwright, Federico Garcia Lorca. Lorca, also a major poet and pioneer of magic realism, was tragically executed during the Spanish civil war – killed much as was Jose Rizal in the Philippines 40 years earlier: simply for writing words not appreciated by the authorities.

Lorca's works are rarely seen in Singapore and this all-female play a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the skills of Singapore actresses. Further, with Glen Goei as director and Wild Rice Artistic Director, Ivan Heng, as producer, the event was much-awaited and expectations were high. Originally titled *La casa de Bernarda Alba – a drama of women in the villages of Spain* – publicity material made it clear that this interpretation was to be set in a Peranakan household with Bernarda Alba as the matriarch - even more formidable than *Emily of Emerald Hill*, made internationally famous by Ivan, Glen and Wild Rice.

Featuring an impressive acting company, with Claire Wong as Bernarda and Jo Kukathas as Poncia, and further 'stars' as the daughters, the production expanded upon Lorca's original cast list of 19 women, bringing in a chorus of another 27 women as ensemble/chorus – keeping them onstage throughout the action. The adaptation was by Singapore-born Chay Yew, now Artistic Director of Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago with set design by Wong Chee Wai, costumes by Ivan Heng, lighting by Lim Yu-Beng and Sound Design by Jeffrey Yue, quality was in every aspect.

The work was sold as *An Explosive Tale of Suppressed Desires and Jealousies* and in the programme notes, Director Glen Goei is most explicit in naming the main relevant theme – in words that perhaps have never been so boldly stated in arts and public in Singapore.

*A theatre that is sensitive and well-oriented in all its branches, from tragedy to vaudeville, can in a few years change the sensibility of all its people.* Federico Garcia Lorca

*The theatre is a school of weeping and of laughter, a free forum, where man can question norms that are outmoded or mistaken, and explain with living example the eternal norms of the human heart.* Federico Garcia Lorca

(Synopsis and Theme)

One matriarch. Five daughters. Eight years of mourning.

To keep up appearances after the death of her husband, tyrannical mother Bernarda resolves to seal her family off from the world – a decision that effectively compels her five daughters to give up love and happiness for a life of duty and obligation. Within the oppressive confines of the Alba household, tensions swirl and emotions run high. The arrival of a seductive suitor lays bare the bitter rivalries and repressed sexuality that lie at the twisted, tragic heart of Bernarda's family.

*The House of Bernarda Alba* touches on many themes that recur frequently in his work. In the play, Lorca asks several questions about the role of women, the nature of authority and authoritarianism, and the repression of oneself – questions which remain relevant today.

The tyranny of Bernarda Alba over her household was Lorca's response to the actions of the Fascist party in Spain, and the themes of the play would have resonated with its intended audience. And yet,

eighty years after it was written, the play continues to resonate through Chay Yew's sensitive and intelligent adaptation.

The programme notes contain statements on the following themes explored in this production: The Role of Women; Authority and Authoritarianism; the Catholic Church; Keeping up Appearances; Repressing Oneself.

### **CAST (in order of appearance)**

Maria Josefa	.....	Margaret Chan
Blanca	.....	Sharda Harrison
Poncia	.....	Jo Kukathas
Bernarda Alba	.....	Claire Wong
Adela	.....	Glory Ngim
Angustias	.....	Neo Swee Lin
Martirio	.....	Noorlinah Mohamed
Magdalena	.....	Karen Tan
Amelia	.....	Serene Chen
Prudencia	.....	Sharon Lim

### **ENSEMBLE**

Ingrid Bianca, Caroline Chin, Sharon Joy Frese, Sriena Kezia, Sophie Khoo, Jasmine Koh, Deborah Lee, Michelle Lee, Beryl Leong, Janet Liu, Marya Abdul Malek, Irene Ong, Nur Farhana Rosli, Sim Yan Ying, Samantha Soh, Eleanor Song, Divitra Sukumaran, Gladys Tan, Ruth Tan, Dawn Teo, Susan Teo, Maya Tozzi, Tyen Ying Fong, Van Su Yun, Fernanda Wee, Daisy Yeo, Flora Yeo

### **PRODUCTION**

Author	.....	Federico Garcia Lorca
Playwright /Translator	.....	Chay Yew (based on Lorca's play)
Director	.....	Glen Goei
Assistant Director	.....	Marcia Vanderstraaten
Set Designer	.....	Wong Chee Wai
Lighting Designer	.....	Lim Yu-Beng
Sound Designer	.....	Jeffrey Yue (Ctrl Fre@K)
Music Composer /Arranger	.....	Lupus Af Intra
Costume Designer	.....	Ivan Heng
Assistant to Costume Designer	.....	Theresa Chan, Samuel Tan
Movement Coaches	.....	Khek Ah Hock Aaron, Ix Wong Thien Pau
Hair Designer	.....	Ashley Lim
Make-Up	.....	Beno Lim (M.A.C)
Producer	.....	Tony Trickett
Production Manager	.....	Koh Bee Bee
Production Executive	.....	Sazali Hussain
Production Co-ordinator	.....	Deena Shaqinah
Technical Manager	.....	Kenny Wong
Stage Manager	.....	Juraidah Rahman
Assistant Stage Managers	.....	Charlene Poh, Sai Sandhya Silvalingam
Props Mistresses	.....	Charlene Poh, Sai Sandhya Silvalingam
Make-up Artists	.....	Bobbie Ng, Jennifer Koh, Ray
Hair Assistants	.....	Jane Neo, Michelle Wan
Wardrobe Manager	.....	Lim Zhi Ying
Wardrobe Assistants	.....	Melissa Aslam, Belle Pereira Ho, Loo An Ni
Prep Dressers	.....	Valeree Ray Lee, Nur Aainaa Bte Abd Rahman

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



Melissa Aslam



Ingrid Bianca



Margaret Chan



Serene Chen



Sharon Frese



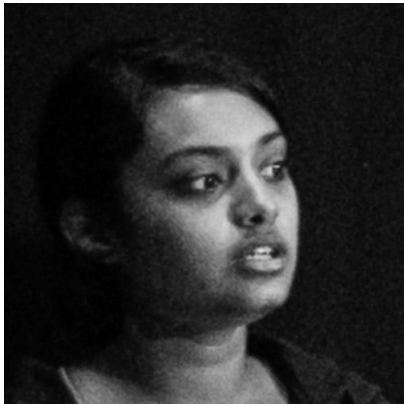
Glen Goei



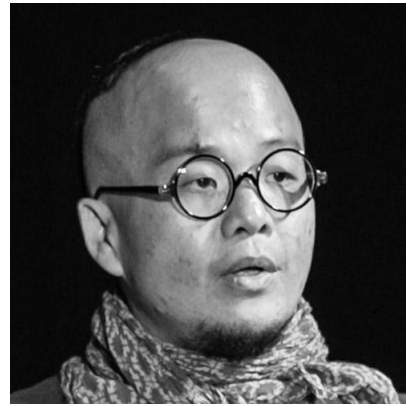
Sharda Harrison



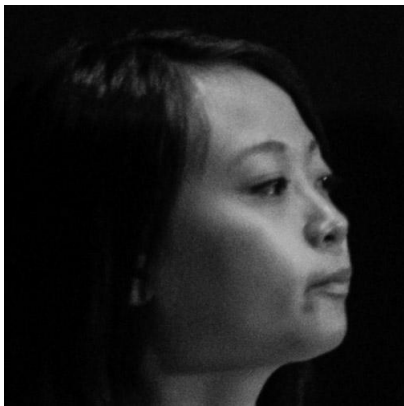
Ivan Heng



Srieena Kezia



Kheck Ah Hock Aaron



Sophie Khoo



Jasmine Koh



Jennifer Koh



Jo Kukathas



Deborah Lee



Michelle Lee



Valeree Ray Lee



Beryl Leong



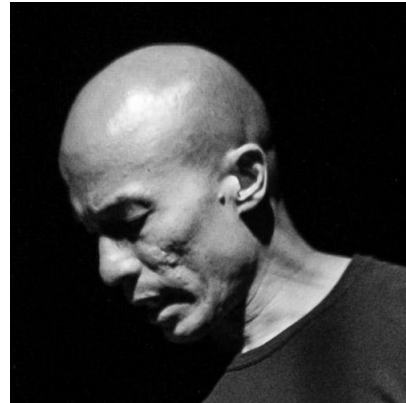
Albert Lim



Ashley Lim



Sharon Lim



Lim Yu-Beng



Lim Zhi Ying



Janet Liu



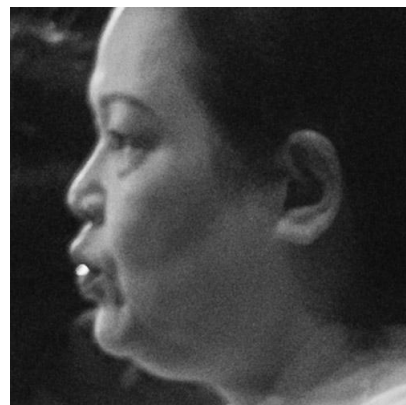
Noorlinah Mohamed



Neo Swee Lin



Glory Ngim



Irene Ong



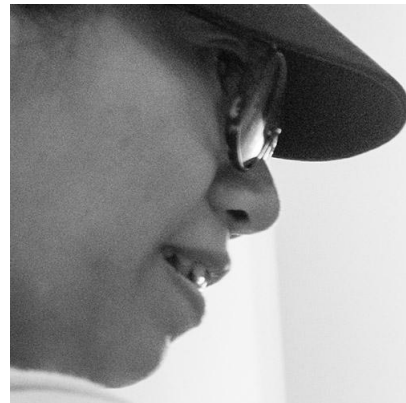
Charlene Poh



Juraidah Rahman



Nur Aainaa Bte Abd Rahman



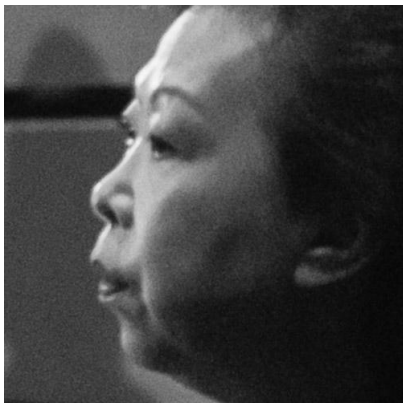
Ray



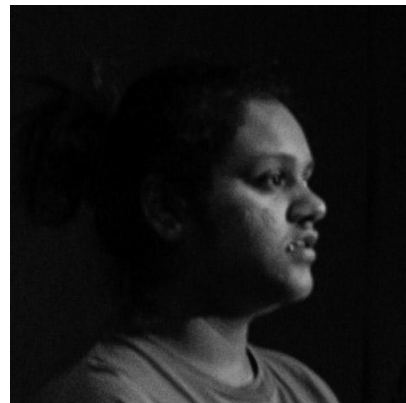
Nor Farhana Rosli



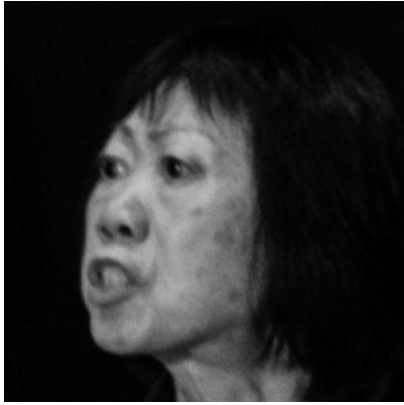
Sandhya Silvalingam



Eleanor Song



Divitra Sukumaran



Gladys Tan



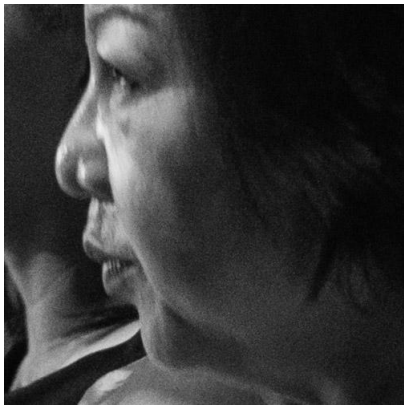
Karen Tan



Ruth Tan



Dawn Teo



Susan Teo



Maya Tozzi



Tyen Ying Fong



Marcia Vanderstraaten





Van Su Yun



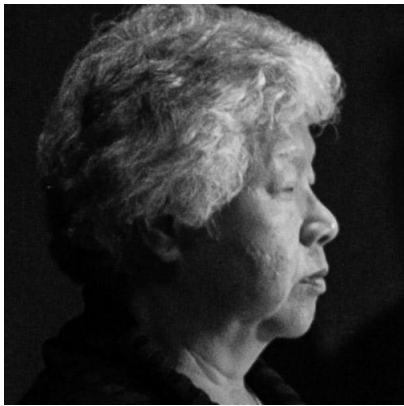
Claire Wong



Ix Wong Thien Pau



Wong Chee Wai



Daisy Yeo



Flora Yeo



Jeffrey Yue

## PROCESS NOTES

### Statements from Wild Rice's programme:

Federico Garcia Lorca wrote *The House of Bernarda Alba* in 1936, completing it just a few months before he was tragically murdered.

At the time, Spain stood on the brink of its Civil War, a battle which would ultimately bring the country firmly under the fascist regime of General Francisco Franco. The stifling oppression would last for decades, until Franco's death in 1975.

Part of Lorca's classic 'Rural Trilogy', which includes *Blood Wedding* and *Yerma*, *The House of Bernarda Alba* touches on many themes that recur frequently in his work. In the play, Lorca asks several questions about the role of women, the nature of authority and authoritarianism, and the repression of oneself – questions which remain relevant today.

### From Artistic Director, Ivan Heng

For over a year, from concept meetings to rehearsals, we've been living with Federico Garcia Lorca's words and ideas. Our fearless director, Glen Goei, has led the charge, inspiring us all with his singular vision of transposing Lorca's family, caught in the iron grip of its matriarch, into a Peranakan household in Singapore. Everything we have done since – from casting three generations of Singapore's most celebrated and accomplished actors (and Jo Kukathas from Malaysia), designing the costumes, set, lighting and sound – has been geared towards bringing Lorca's tale to life in that context.

In the process, we've found ourselves constantly in awe of the enduring power and relevance of Lorca's text. Lorca wrote the play at a point in time when Spain was experiencing extreme political turmoil: the Spanish Civil War broke out in the months after his death in 1936, culminating in General Francisco Franco's dictatorial control of the country. The tyranny of *Bernarda Alba* over her household was Lorca's response to the actions of the Fascist party in Spain, and the themes of the play would have resonated with its intended audience.

And yet, eighty years after it was written, the play continues to resonate through Chay Yew's sensitive and intelligent adaptation. It's precisely why we chose *The House of Bernarda Alba* for our Masterpiece theatre repertoire, in which we aim to showcase the finest plays that have ever been written. As with our previous production of Shakespeare and Wilde, we tried to breathe life into Lorca's work, in the belief that it will transcend the boundaries of culture, nationality and time.

See also the Director's Message (by Glen Goei) in the Programme.

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.* Martin Luther King Jr

### Rehearsal Notes

#### Wild Rice's *The House of Bernarda Alba*, by Marcia Vanderstraaten

I worked on the 2014 Wild Rice production of [The House of Bernarda Alba \(THOBA\)](#), as assistant director. My responsibilities included assistance in dramaturgy, assistance in managing and directing the chorus, as well as general assistance to the director, Mr Glen Goei. As such I was fortunate to witness both main-cast and chorus rehearsals, and observe Glen as he worked at each.

### Pre-Rehearsal Preparation

1. The first production meeting for THOBA was in December 2013. Each of the designers – set, costume, lighting and sound – presented their preliminary ideas for the piece, based on the brief given to them by Glen. The purpose of this production meeting was to streamline the various design concepts according to Glen’s overall vision of the piece. During the meeting, I observed that Glen was open to change depending on what the designers presented. This made for a more collaborative and engaging atmosphere. The meeting concluded with a collective satisfaction over the creative direction.
2. In January 2014 I sat down with Glen to discuss possible inclusions of the chorus in the script. In his original envisioning of the play, the chorus (to consist of around 40-50 women) was to enter the House in Act 1 Scene 4, and after departing, sit in an open circle around the House for the rest of the play. Glen considered it a waste if the chorus was to be only in one scene, so he tasked me with combing the script for other possible entry points. We talked about Lorca’s themes, and the themes that Chay Yew sought to highlight in his adaptation, and we decided that having the chorus represent the judgmental neighbours/villagers would be the most appropriate angle. I was then to work with the chorus to amplify the killing scene at the end of Act 2, and the suicide of Adela at the end of Act 3.
3. The first table-read with the main cast was at the start of February 2014. The production design team was also present. It was an opportunity for them to hear the play in full, and get a better sense of the atmosphere and mise-en-scene of Bernarda’s world. The main cast did this first read without much input from Glen, in order for them to form first impressions of their characters without being influenced in any particular direction.

### Rehearsal Stage 1: Kerbau Road

The first round of rehearsals took place at the Wild Rice premises at Kerbau Road. This venue consisted of two high-ceilinged shophouse spaces with wooden floors and basic (egg-carton) soundproofing. I made a note of this because I realized that as the rehearsal space changed, the actors’ relation to the space and to their characters changed as well. Kerbau Road was suitable for the main cast rehearsals, but as the walls amplified sound a great deal, it was occasionally problematic for the chorus rehearsals.

#### 1. Main Cast Rehearsals:

Glen began the process by getting each actor to develop a backstory to their characters. At one of the rehearsals with Jo Kukathas and Sharda Harrison, the actors shared their characters’ backstories and relation to each other, as well as to Bernarda’s family. Jo and Sharda also shared a bit of their personal histories as it was the first time they were working together. With their backstories developed, Glen proceeded to discuss possible ways for them to approach the material, especially with regard to their characters’ relationships with Bernarda. These ways, as with almost everything in the THOBA process, were subject to change whenever Glen felt they no longer worked.

In terms of tackling the script, the first round of rehearsals was dedicated to familiarizing the cast with their lines and some preliminary blocking. Most of the cast tried to go off-book as early as possible, so that by the time the entire play had been covered at least once, they could go through the second round paying more attention to action and intention. It was in the second round that Glen and the actors referred more to the character backstories to inform their actions, although in some instances it seemed more like the characters’ actions/lines determined the backstories instead.

#### 2. Chorus Rehearsals:

The chorus consisted of 27 women, of ages ranging from 17 to 66, with abilities ranging from amateur to semi-professional to professional. I was assigned to direct them during rehearsals, as Glen had to work with the main cast in rehearsals running concurrently. I did this alongside the two movement coaches, Aaron Khek and Ix Wong.

At the first rehearsal Glen introduced himself, then handed the time to Aaron, Ix and me. Aaron and Ix then led the chorus in warm-ups and simple ensemble games, to help foster a sense of community and teamwork. Subsequent rehearsals saw some of these games and warm-ups repeated, and this helped the chorus members develop greater awareness and sensitivity to one another.

I was in charge also of teaching the chorus to sing at various parts of the play. Based on my recommendation, Glen had decided that they would sing the Latin chant *Salve Regina* as they departed the House in Act 1 Scene 4. Also, he wanted the blessing of Antonio's soul in the same scene to be sung chant-style. With both *Salve Regina* and the blessing (which the main cast had to learn as well), I essentially sang it through once, explained line by line and had the chorus sing each line with me until they got it right. The chorus was also given Youtube links and voice recordings of the *Salve Regina* so they could practice it on their own. Later, when the chorus had to learn an original song for Act 2 Scene 3, we learnt it together the same way, with some help from the composer, Vuk Krakovic. In this part of rehearsals, as in others, I observed that the chorus members went out of their way to help one another learn, and sometimes correct one another's mistakes. This commitment to THOBA, and to helping each other as one whole, was very inspiring to see, especially in a group of women who barely knew one another outside of it.

Aaron and Ix were tasked with teaching the chorus movement. Glen had specific ways he wanted them to flick their fans open, to nod, to titter to each other, and above all, to walk gracefully through the House. Aaron and Ix had the most challenges with the walk, as Glen wanted their steps timed to match the tolling bell (but the bell effect that was used at rehearsal was a) uneven in tempo and b) not the one that would be used eventually for the show). Also, the older ladies had some hip and joint issues that made it impossible for them to walk exactly as Aaron and Ix were instructing. The chorus went through several attempts to remedy the walk, and finally managed to compromise by assigning leads and designating which foot was to move first.

As AD part of my role was to talk to the chorus about the play and their roles in it. We discussed what we felt were the important themes of the play and how the villagers contributed to the stifling atmosphere created by the House. I tasked them to imagine the character they would present as part of the chorus, and come up with their own backstory to support their portrayal of the character. These were the characters they used to help themselves enter, and remain in, the world of the play for each show.

The chorus also devised a movement vocabulary, consisting of six repetitive motions, to be used at various moments in the play. This was later done away with as Glen did not want their movements to distract from the main action on stage.

The most challenging scene we had to work on was the killing scene at the end of Act 2 Scene 2. Our original offering was for the chorus to begin whispering indistinctly at Poncia's entry, and slowly raise their voices to speak individually-determined lines of insults (eg "Whore! Burn the slut! Shame on you!" etc). As Bernarda called out the line "Kill her!" the chorus would rise from their seats in a wave rippling down to the audience, while shouting their lines. However, when practiced with the main cast, the shouting proved too overwhelming and it was reduced to merely calling out the lines. Also, once it was learnt that the chorus would mostly not be visible on stage, the wave was cut out as well. It was quite frustrating to have to do away with what was carefully crafted, but such is the nature of theatre, and learning adaptability goes a long way.

### Rehearsal Stage 2: Drama Centre Black Box

In the week prior to bump-in, rehearsals were moved to the Black Box at the Drama Centre. Here, the sound quality was different – the actors had to project more than at Kerbau Road (exacerbating the throat infections that several of them had come down with). Being a larger space also meant the actors could make more use of it in performance, the movements of which could then be translated to the (even bigger) stage of the Theatre.

This round of rehearsals saw more intensive scene work and several full runs. It was the first time we were able to see the play acted out in a reasonably-sized space, and so much easier for Glen to fix issues with blocking.

### Rehearsal Stage 3: Drama Centre Theatre

We moved to the Drama Centre Theatre two days prior to the opening. Once the set was ready, the SM and ASMs walked the chorus through it. Aaron and Ix ran through the walk of Act 1 Scene 4 with them and the chorus managed to achieve a look that was agreeable to Glen.

As this was the first time Glen managed to see the play with the theatre lighting and the proper sound cues, he made changes to anything he felt did not look or sound right. At this stage of the process Ivan, Aaron, Ix and those of the Wild Rice team who were present also offered their feedback and suggestions, some of which Glen took into consideration. He continued to make slight changes throughout the run of the play – sometimes they were because a certain moment did not feel right or was not well-executed, but sometimes they were simply because he wanted to try something different.

### General Observations on the Direction of THOBA

Glen's general process seems to be more intuitive and measured by the power of the emotional moments of the play, rather than logically ordered and cerebrally driven. Where he has not yet made up his mind about certain approaches, he is very open to suggestions, and even when he has decided on a particular path, he sometimes decides to change it in search of a better expression.

Glen bears a great deal of respect for the playwright and the words on the page, but has no qualms cutting large swathes of dialogue if he feels they are unnecessary or they hinder the action somehow. He has a deep sense of aesthetic and knows exactly how he wants things to look – possibly an extension of his sensibilities as a film director – so the high moments are always well-composed and visually stunning.

As an actor-director he has a special relationship with his actors: he allows them room to develop the presentation of their characters, but will supply them with exact examples of how he wants certain moments to be performed. His method of instructing the actors in this is simply to show them how he wants it done, by doing it himself. I observed that not all the actors understood this way of explanation – some would have benefited more from him helping them to think it through, for example – but they managed to identify the key element of whatever he wanted, and brought it out in their performance.

Where the chorus was concerned, in THOBA, I was held responsible for all their mistakes (no comment meant they had performed well enough to become unnoticeable). Glen kept his interaction with them to a minimum. In terms of providing support and encouragement, Ivan was a great help in keeping their morale up, visiting them to say a few kind words and reminding them that they were doing a great job, which they were (for non-professional actors, they gave a very professional performance). Observing this, I came to the conclusion that one's directorial style, as much as it is determined by one's ability to create and envision a theatrical piece of work, is also very much determined by one's own personality and ways of interacting with others. While the one may not affect the other and vice versa, the director's interactions with everyone on production certainly affects how well they carry out their responsibilities to the show.

Assistant Director: Marcia Vanderstraaten, 9 May 2014

## Rehearsal Notes

### Wild Rice's *The House of Bernarda Alba*, by Christopher Fok

(Please refer to the Cast and Production lists for identifying the roles played by those named below)

**11 Feb 2014 - Wild Rice Rehearsal Room on the Right, 33 Kerbau Road. 3pm - 7pm**

Director Glen asks for warmups.

Noorlinah leads the physical warmups by doing sun salutations, 6 of them.

Jo Kukathas leads the voice warmups, chakra warmups and resonances.

Notes on the venue - The parquet flooring allows for a softer support and the resonance of sound.

The walls are lined with egg cartons to absorb and break up sound.

Lined just near the door are pictures of the costumes and the floor plan of the set.

The floor of the rehearsal studio is taped down with the outline of the floor plan.

The rooms by which all the characters are situated on set are designated by chairs in the rehearsal room.

There is a calendar series of handsome catholic priests from the Vatican, 2014, with an A4 sheet above it written 'Pepe El Romano for the day'.

### Rehearsals:

Top of Act 2, Scene 7. 4 sisters enter. Swee Lin, Noorlinah, Jo, Serene and Glory enter the scene. They still have scripts in hand.

Glen looks at the floor plan as he directs. Juraidah his stage manager knows where the costumes are in the space of the actual space and she advises Glen on where the actors need to be to facilitate quick costume changes.

Glen requests for the scene to be done again, Act 2, Scene 7.

Swee Lin asks for all the costume changes to happen on stage right instead of stage left. Glen agrees to the suggestion, which is linked to the entrances of the characters.

They do the scene once again. Glory, Karen and Noorlinah do not use the script but instead call for lines.

Juraidah has the sound bite of the public talking and murmuring for the added atmosphere.

Glen is addressing where Serene/Amelia is supposed to exit.

Serene asks if they are upstaging themselves for those who have lines near the middle of the scene, because a whole lot of the characters rush to the window when they hear the mummings.

Glen asks for the top of Act 2 to recap the moves. The chairs are placed in a semi-circle. Glen asks for Karen to delay her sitting down for Act 2, Scene 1.

Charlene, an assistant stage manager, stands in for a missing actress.

Glen tells Karen to engage Serene by sidestepping the group entering. He asks Serene to not join the group when entering so that they can move upstage easily.

Claire who is not in the scene is readying her own lines at the side.

Glen indicates silently to Claire to get ready for her entry into the scene.

Glory/Adela is at the back resting her head on the back of the chair as if asleep.

The other actresses are at the back reading through their lines.

Glen tells Glory that she needs to exit to the area in which she changes her costume. He might want Glory to stop crying first and then set the chairs.

There's still an issue about the shoes and costume changes. Juraidah explains that the cheongsam shoes are to be worn again after the screaming and requiem scene, which are different from the kerbaya shoes.

They will start their scenes from Act 1, Scene 4.

They take a 5 min break.

Juraidah speaks the lines of the chorus with Claire replying. Claire sings the catholic benediction/responsary prayer. She has slight trouble with the low ending note.

Marcia Vanderstraaten, the assistant director, indicates to Claire how to sing the hymn properly. They are going through everything from the top of the play.

\* There is a smoothness in the rehearsal of the play, The actresses speak with the smoothness of experience.

Glory keeps forgetting her lines because she is now not carrying her script.

Karen leaves at 5.40pm and the assistant SM takes over the speaking of her lines.

\* Jo who acts as the servant in house has a peculiar tick, wherein she points her finger at Bernarda/Claire, her master, quite rudely.

\* There is a strange flutter of birds at the small window at the front of the room near the door, while Claire points the walking stick at the ceiling 'the mountain'.

They continue after the lynching of the neighbour's daughter.

Sharon enters at 5pm.

Glen indicates where each of the character's sit, Glory doesn't come in as she is still changing.

Sharda and Jo will place the chairs for this.

The costume change is aimed to be at 45s.

Sharda has the tea cups.

Apparently, there used to be a diner scene, but now he wants to set it after dinner where everyone is having tea.

Jo will help Sharda hand out the tea.

Glen wants there to be to be the tension evoked from the presence of 'guests', wherein the family has to be mindful of decorum and etiquette.

Glen wonders if Bernarda will follow Prudencia/Sharon out to the front door.

Claire asks if she is to stand up as well when Sharon does so. Claire is asking about the matter of status.

Jo talks about the formality of the goodbye, and Claire wonders if Bernarda will see Prudencia all the way out?

Glen asks for the children to stand when Bernarda does so. To show the rote learning of manner by the children.

Sharon asks about where the light is shining on.

Glen replies that the cups and saucers sequence is done in silhouette.

After Prudencia leaves, the children sit down and give their cups to Blanca.

Glen asks Swee Lin to shift to the end of the row of chairs near Prudencia to facilitate the conversation instead of being at the center chair at first.

Noorlinah suggests that she sits back down and that some can leave later or leave immediately, when Bernarda says "We are done eating."

Glory asks if they will have their fans with them, which is a no from Glen. This is the same for Claire who asks if she will have her fan with her during the scene.

There was some confusion over the timing of the dinner break, and when does the evening rehearsal start.

Glen plans on what to direct after dinner between Claire and Swee Lin with Marcia. They are discussing that the blocking of the scene is too far upstage and should place them more downstage.

Marcia suggests helpful direction of the characters in their movements on stage, especially their entrances.

**17 Feb 2014 - Wild Rice Rehearsal Room on the Right, 33 Kerbau Road.**

**10am - 12pm**

**3pm - 7pm**

**Artistic Interpretation of text and staging:**

Glen is talking to Glory about the creation/embodiment of presence for an actor. He delineates the difference between TV and theatre actors. He is giving notes about how Glory acts, he is concerned with her projection of voice and presence.

Glen and Noorlinah are discussing about the new arts festival she is involved with Tan Kheng Hua and about how tiring it is.

Glen shows Glory and Noorlinah that they are shifting the set stage right, with regard to the apron/thrust of the stage and its tilt.

Chee Wai is the set designer.

Glen is indicating Noorlinah's entrance and how the previous version is awkward. They are now talking about her entrance from stage right. They discuss about how to switch the window to a door. At the end of Act 1, they are indicating that they exit stage left.

Noorlinah remarks about her line of sight in the scene so as to not have seen Glory/Adela sneak out in her nightie.

Glen is indicating that Glory's creep down the hallway to downstage left when she exits to put on the red dress. The dress is in a laundry room offstage.

Noorlinah disputes that she does see Glory/Adela by then, she makes this argument by way of textual analysis.

Glen is not using the stage direction in the script, so he wants Noorlinah to not see Adela first until Noorlinah goes to the back.

Noorlinah says that from the line "keep yourself away from that man", Adela has yet to meet the man yet.

Glory is trying to give the solution that at downstage left, she hides and then appears from that same space again.

Glen says that is not possible because there are characters on stage.

Eventual remedy is that Noorlinah moves downstage right. Her first "Adela", has Glory enter in a creep down the front of the stage, with Noorlinah following the edge until she walks down the stairs at downstage left, where she shouts "Adela" after seeing Glory's back.

Glen apologises that the front of the rehearsal room is too small.

Noorlinah has to grab Glory from the back, when Glory turns to leave. There's a need to choreograph this violent scene.

Juraidah indicates to Sandy, another assistant stage manager, to move away the folding chairs so as to give more space to the actors to act.

Noorlinah talks of how there needs to be a consciousness on Glory's part, of where she is facing. Glory needs to be conscious that her hands are not clenched to her sides, so that Noorlinah can grab them.

They are now discussing the reason for the 2nd whistle by Pepe, so they've changed the reason for Adela's entrance. Where Adela is having a tumble and her hearing her name being called.

Glen adds an extra "Adela" to the script for Noorlinah. Glen directs Glory about being conscious about status play.

Noorlinah asks about the line "Don't raise your voice at me," because Glory chose a different motivation.

\* Currently, they are discussing an actual rat in the toilet, and Sharda doesn't want to kill it. They spend more than 5 mins discussing this. Jo and Karen do not want anything to do with the rat.

Glen says there's no time for the warmup for vocals or physical, he confirms this with Juraidah.

Noorlinah and Glory are choreographing their struggle scene, while Glen is telling the rest of the cast that they need to change onstage, which is not choreographed transition.



Glen asks for the word “corral straw” to be shortened to just “straw”, because it is too much of a mouthful that does not add to the situation.

Glen is choreographing the scene for which Claire/Bernarda swings her cane at Adela.

Noorlinah suggest that it might be more be more natural for Glory to not do the twirl when throwing away the cane that Claire swings at her.

Gory pushes Claire in the scene, there is an issue of safety so that Claire can land safely on the floor.

Glen is trying to decide who retrieves the gun. The actors and Glen are trying to figure out this from the script based upon who says what subsequently.

Karen suggests that they go ahead with the scene first without the gun. Because Bernarda’s demand to “get me my gun.” does not necessarily mean that the gun has to be immediately present.

When Martirio announces that Pepe, all the women go to stop Adela.

Noorlinah is busy coaching Glory and her physical position in reaching out to the main door and the supposed ‘dead’ body of Pepe.

Glen asks that Claire be downstage right after Bernarda shoots the gun.

Noorlinah says that the rifle is a bit over the top.

Glen shifts Glory and Karen to the stage right.

Claire asks that because there is no door at Adela’s room, how do they make an entrance. Glen replies that there will be change of light, to indicate Adela’s death.

Glen wants all the other actors to look at Claire who gasps when seeing Adela’s body.

Glen wants them to kneel and make the sign of the cross at this moment.

#### **Notes on the rehearsal room:**

The assistant SM’s have lit little tea lights during the scene of suicide by Adela, and placed them about the room. There seems to be a superstition about this area in Little India.

\* The rehearsal ends at 12pm, for the full run that couldn’t accommodate extra guests, because the small space was prioritised for the other creatives to watch it. I adjourned till 3pm.

#### **At 3pm.**

The costume manager is briefing her costume assistants about where the costumes are to be. She is briefing them in front of the costume drawings that are posted near the front of the room. The costume assistant are also tasked to find sandals for some of the characters.

Originally, there were 32 chorus members, now only 29 chorus members.

The chorus members all have veils which the assistants make sure are kept properly.

A lot of the costume quick changes from linen to cheongsam will have to be practiced when the costumes come in.

All the actors are taking a lunch break after the full run.

Those who are back, are practicing their lines.

Currently, Glen is at the scene where the sisters are hemming a sheet.

Jo asks about the symbolism of having the bedsheet.

Glen replies it’s about the domestication of women.

They do the scene once.

Serene says that they need to work out the business on stage because the cloth will be used in the dance.

Glen asks Karen to improvise a bit when she takes hold of Serene. Glen wants to dance to a sad song.

\* Angustias retort that Magdalena uses “that needle for sewing”. But Karen is just dancing at this point.

The ASM is reading Noorlinah’s lines during the scene, because she is absent.

Glen pauses the scene to make a moment for the looking of the photograph. There's also the set of the red-herring where Karen/Magdalena might have been the one to have stolen the photograph in the later scene.

Glen wants the actresses to lean in slowly during Jo's speech so that when they break off in laughter at the end of it, there's more visual dynamics. He also asks about the meaning of the word "Everisto", if it means something.

Jo replies that the name might be in reference to the original Spanish version which means short-tailed.

\* A funny moment erupts when Jo accidentally says "I feel his hot breath" as "I feel his hot butt."

Glen asks whether Swee Lin has ever seen Adela consumed with envy in the previous scene, whether it comes from the time they were in the garden. But because time has passed already, this gleam of envy that saw Swee Lin/Angustias must have happened offstage.

Swee Lin points out that the needle will be dangerous on stage. Karen adds that she has been dealing with this by pretending to check the stitches of the cloth, when she is in fact searching for the wayward needle. Jo suggests that Karen cut off the needle and thread from the sheet before she goes to search for Adela.

Glen is concerned with Karen's abrupt change in character and emotion from the previous scene, wherein she says "Don't touch me!"

They have changed the moves, Karen walks nearer to the courtyard to gather herself, when the sisters laughingly enter. So that when Swee Lin passes the 3rd sheet to Serene, Karen has more time to recollect herself to approach Serene to make fun of Swee Lin/Angustias.

Glen notices the odd interjection by Serene about the heat. He suggests that Serene use a fan to break the tension between the 2 older sisters, Karen and Swee Lin.

Glen finds it strange why Karen pulls Serene up to dance, when Karen has a line that calls "Adela!" from her room.

Serene wonders if Karen dances first, then later gets up to join her.

Karen says she'll notice that Adela/Glory is not in her seat, while in the same direction she pulls Serene along to dance.

Glen suggests that when Serene replies to Karen that that is when she joins Karen at the courtyard.

Swee Lin suggests a change in pronunciation of Karen's name. From Mag-da-*ley*-na to Mag-da-*lee*-na. To later rhyme with Hyena. Glen agrees.

Glen tells Jo that her energy drops when she does her passage. The passage should be said in a more sexual way. As a lead up to her own monologue about Everisto, the bird man. He remarks upon the playwright's writing style where his scenes can go from hot passion to cold tension, then light energetic passion at the reaper's song.

Glen asks for Swee Lin's reaction to the insinuation by Poncia played by Jo. It should be embarrassment.

Glen suggests that Poncia's interjection might be trying to take the focus from Angustias.

Jo actually wants to play the pause so as to show the disparity of time about the timing Pepe was at Angustias' window.

Glen wants to hear the poetry in the lines, to stress on the words like "looming" and "dark".

Serene remarks that Mag-da-*lee*-na, sounds much more Singaporean. This links to the context that this is a Singaporean adaptation, it is after all, a Peranakan household.

Jo plays with the cloth, shaking it between her legs to indicate the horniness of her husband.

Glen asks Glory to start at the line "I slept perfectly"

Serene asks that the laughter before she goes looking for mama needs to extend a bit before she goes off.

Glen speaks to Glory privately to give her notes on her acting.

\* As a director, he is sensitive to not embarrass the younger actress in front of the more experienced ones.

Jo suggests that the laughter after the sexual monologue should be a squealing laughter instead. Glen shows Jo how to strangle the doves of Everisto and for another line. Now he is telling Karen that she should play the male part in the waltz dancing at the back with Serene.

They start from the top of the scene. The actresses know all their lines by then.

Karen asks why is it Adela gets away with being such a brat, and bringing down the energy of the sewing group. She asks what should fill the space. The energy/reaction by her sisters from dropping the energy or increasing the tension instead. Is Adela's tantrum something shocking, because she is out of character? Martirio is the only one who knows the real reason for Adela's snappiness.

Karen wants to know how Magdalena regards Adela's real character.

Adela's real character in Act 1 is seen first and then that change in Act 2, Glen replies.

Jo asks if Adela is pregnant by then. The washing of the cloth at the end of Act 1 is the loss of virginity.

Serene asks about the design of the play and the space time that happens in the play, what has happened and who knows what.

Jo says that the less they know, the more the characters can discover. So the lines shouldn't be said so knowingly. She adds on that this scene also shows how there's really nothing to do, there is little release in the lives of the sisters. So there is a reiteration of the story of the bird man with more flourishing details in this particular telling of a story, the sisters might have heard from Poncia before, but not this particular version.

Glen asks that Swee Lin direct the word "prison" to Karen as jibe, as if Magdalena were a prison warden.

There is a change in interpretation during this run by Jo, when she says "I'm cut from the same cloth as your mother." Previous runs had her touching the cloth they are hemming, this time round Jo doesn't. The actresses have taken note that Adela's tantrum and snappiness is out of character, their expressions and the tension of the room is visible and felt.

They commit to another run of scene 2.

Glen discusses with Juraidah about what scenes to do, especially the reaper's song which Glen has not chosen yet.

Jo has changed the presentation of Everisto's first arrival again, foregoing the cloth and instead straightening her legs as if to indicate Everisto's horniness.

#### **Note on the rehearsal room:**

The coolness of the air conditioned room is quite at odds with the sweltering heat that the scene is supposed to present, that the actors are supposed to be in.

Karen has left the needle in the cloth this time round during her search of Adela. She comes back to the cloth after Adela is downstage right. When Bernarda calls for the sisters to receive the lace.

The actresses take the needles and pin them to their shirts so as to prevent anyone from stepping on them as they leave.

The rest exit rehearsal at 5.40pm, as they are released from rehearsal.

Jo and Glory continue their own scene.

Glen asks Glory to exaggerate and mock Martirio's voice in the lines "a shame about your face..." and to not drop the exaggeration until the end of the line.

Jo asks that they hold the moment a bit longer.

Glen asks that Glory play and stay near the 2 chairs on stage left more before she moves next to Jo. He asks if Glory feels more comfortable on the chair or on the floor. Glory replies that she feels more comfortable on the floor. Glen agrees because Glory is tall. Glen speaks to Glory in private hushed tones to give her notes once again.

\* The drape of the cloth on Jo's lap is all but forgotten. It would be interesting to have the symbolism of the matrimonial cloth be used to wipe Adela's tears.

Jo asks that Glory just go through the chairs instead of going around. Jo likes the shape of the body when Glory sits on the chair and sprawls onto Jo's lap. The stretch of the body looks more desperate, instead of being situated at Poncia's feet, which hunches Glory's body, hiding it from sight. It looks more genteel when Glory sits on the chair.

Line interpretation:

"Do you think I'm blind?" Poncia says.

"I wish you were blind." Adela replies.

Jo wants the word "were" to be stressed instead of the word "blind" as if it sounds like a curse. Even if Poncia's eyes were blind, she still has eyes on other parts of her body. It feels more oppositional. Glen agrees. But previously, he argues that the stress on the word "were" doesn't sound as Singaporean. In the end, he agrees to Jo's interpretation.

Glory sits on the chair and stretches her body onto Jo's lap this particular version. Glen does not speak up about the change or the image, so it looks like it has been accepted as a better image.

Glen asks that when Glory walks to Jo halfway, to then take 3 more steps forward. He stands up to show that Glory should point her feet towards Jo, as it is more confrontational, instead of panning her body to the audience, when she walks towards Jo.

Glen asks that Glory square her feet as well, closing the gap between her legs from a profile, so it does not look like she is pausing in mid-motion.

Jo says that they need to play up the passion more, not as cold because there needs to be a switch of energy that culminates in the hug between Glory and her.

Glen tells Glory that Adela doesn't really hate anyone, that what is flowing in her veins is really hot passion. There is the moment when Adela grabs Poncia's arm and that needs to be a long second.

Jo says that maybe the reason for their hug is almost like Poncia really does know Adela's passion. Poncia is woman too, she has had children, she understands.

What Poncia should see in Adela's eyes is the love for Pepe instead of hatred for Bernarda.

Jo says that Adela's passionate speech should come from her body instead of her head, if not it becomes intellectual.

\* Glory is processing all these things silently. Glen is quite passionate about the actual passion that Adela feels.

Glen asks if Adela pushes Poncia away because of Angustias' entrance or anger.

Glen feels that the last line sounds as if Adela was playing a power card.

Glen suggests that the last line should be said out of frustration, even desperation.

\* Their total discussion has also reinterpreted the previous portion, which portrayed Adela as a mean girl.

When Jo says "Don't defy me." It is not out of gaining more power for herself, but more out of love, for Adela's own good.

Glen remarks that this scene isn't really about status between mistress and servant, more so about passion and frustration.

The long moment when Adela holds Poncia's arm happens.

Glory says that she wants to push Poncia in anger. Both Glen and Jo shake their heads because Adela is supposed to be the most likeable of all the characters in this play. Adela starts out weak and then rises to the front as a whirlwind character.

Jo says there's a break in the line "but now, I'm stronger than you are." The break in the line has a different rhythm. It is not a status/class play of roles, but a realisation from Adela about how her passion makes her stronger than Poncia.

Glen says that Adela needs to have a vulnerability.

Glen remarks that this family doesn't hold or touch, so when Adela moves forth to hold Poncia, it needs to be visceral.

Jo feels that in the script there is a stage direction for silence when she tells Adela to "hold it in." She feels they need to see and look at each other.

\* They start the scene from the top again. Glen likes to demonstrate to the actors.

Glen asks for a different interpretation, where Glory says her lines from the beginning with frustration to Martirio as if she means it. As if Adela were really generous with her life.

\* The resulting run is quite intense, passionate and loaded. Everyone ends up tearing as a result.

Glen gives the note that Adela should turn to Poncia when she says "I can't."

#### **Note on venue:**

The absence of any other spectators and actors in the space; it's quietness allows for the safety of exploring Adela's vulnerability.

Jo says that in that portion of Adela's monologue about how it is "coursing through my veins, my lips, my breast" could radiate into happiness. An almost terrifyingly passionate emotion.

They take a break of 5 minutes to recollect their breath.

"I feel nothing for any of you" is said by Poncia, but Adela doesn't seem to react to it. As if she isn't hurt by the words.

Glen asks that there needs to be tension in the hand grip, He indicates the angle and weight of Jo's arm. Opposite tension when they pull apart, still attached by the grip between them and then almost boomerang into a hug.

Jo suggests that there needs to be more motivation than choreography. That Adela's grip of Poncia's arm is a motivation of "don't do it." Jo needs to find the rounder expression of how Adela should not defy her, instead of a more strict and cold statement of authority on Poncia's part, her own reply must be passionate as well.

**22 Feb 2014 - Wild Rice Rehearsal Room on the Left, 33 Kerbau Road. 1pm - 6pm**

#### **Notes on the venue:**

There is more natural light in this rehearsal room, it is bigger than the one the cast is usually in on the right of the premises. There is a row of mirrors for the actresses of the chorus to be able to view themselves. The floor is marked in a diagonal fashion that does not recollect anything the stage is supposed to look like at the moment.

There are two rows of chairs lining the sides, one row along the front door and stairs and the other along the mirrors.

#### **Chorus Rehearsal:**

The chorus actresses are milling about with their black veils and comfortable clothing, as they wait for rehearsal to start.

The actresses have tags of their names on their shirts.

There are 28 chorus members.

Marcia, the assistant director remarks that a number of the chorus is late.

Hock, the choreographer shows the chorus the proper way to lift the black lace veil. A number of the chorus actresses practice the dramatic lifting of the veil.

Hock reassures them that the veil will not drop off their heads on that day as pins will be used on that day.

2 of the actress practice the hymn.

Marcia announces the start of rehearsal despite there being a number of them missing. They start on warm-ups with Hock leading it.

Hock leads breathing exercises from nostrils first, shifting of weight on soft bent knees, easy loosened hips. The exercise is about how to keep the torso taut, it is not just about shifting weight. They do a patting and sweeping of the body to sweep away unwanted energy, which leads to the massaging of the body to wake up.

Hock continues into an almost Tai Chi sequence, which is a learnt sequence of moves that will make it into the actual show. Hock reveals they are actually Beijing opera moves.

Hock uses everyday allusions like “balloon”, “bounce a basketball,” “open doors, close doors,” etc. To make it easier for the chorus actresses to remember moves.

\* Hock has an easy manner to his teaching, with joking that shows that he has taught people of numerous capabilities. He understands that the numerous ages and capabilities of the chorus, needs him to be sensitive in the pace of his teaching.

Actresses are streaming in bit by bit, it is 1.30pm.

Hock reminds actresses that should remember to make their arms fluid and long.

The actresses now dance to music. The practice music is *Shelter* by The XX, due to its slow tempo.

Hock says that some of the actresses have tight hip joints. He is teaching them how to do a body ripple. He is training them to also keep a tight torso. He states that what is difficult is the repetition and how the numerous shows can make the actions seem boring. He is telling them that the chorus needs to remind each other to keep sharp as a chorus till the last show.

He is showing them how to open the veil and the fan in a synchronised fashion. He gives them 2 extra counts to adjust their veils.

The actresses take their veils and fans to practice with them.

Hock tells them that it is about their own motor-skills that they need to practice those 4 count, because fabric (the veil) is quite difficult to work with.

The actresses must practice in such a way that they don't duck their heads when they lift the veil over their heads.

Due to the varying lengths of the veil for each of the actresses, they need to find the center of each veil so that their hands are near the same count as they lift the veil.

Hock shows that they should not lift their elbows as they fan themselves.

Marcia asks that the chorus get into position for their entrance into the house of Bernard Alba as the mourners.

Hock tells them that even if they take their cue from Claire, the chorus needs to stay together. The actresses are to take to their seats on the side for their entrance.

Sandy, the ASM hands out pins for the veils.

Marcia asks that the actresses stand in two rows in ascending height that they arranged yesterday.

Hock tells the actresses that because their hairs are not in a bun on top of their head, that is why the veil does not have the aesthetic appeal of the triangular hood-like effect yet.

They are going to practice the entrance of the chorus. The first row of actresses do not have chairs in the rehearsal as there are an insufficient number of chairs available.

Marcia reminds the chorus to remember to place their hands atop each other in obeisance when they enter the house, but in the subsequent practice, some still forget to.

Hock gives the note that the chorus pairs need to arrive at the point on the floor before turning their back on each other and separating.

They play the toll of the bell as background music to the entrance of the chorus.  
They practice fanning themselves in unison.

Marcia asks that the chorus gets ready for the reaper's song.  
The chorus sing the reaper's song that they learned last night.  
Marcia feels like the "hey" is slightly delayed. She says the reaper's song is like a drunken song, a carnival atmosphere. There needs to be that kind of momentum in the song.  
Hock proposes a skip-step on the floor while the chorus is seated to create the thump of feet of the reapers.  
Ivan Heng enters at this point in the rehearsal, wherein he gives a few notes about the song. Where he wants to send their voices into their bodies. The chorus is swept up in the charisma of his advice and the ensuing song sung is passionate and raucous.

One of the chorus actresses asks if they will be in their heels.  
Marcia says there are 2 different ways to play the song, the first would be that the chorus sing as men, the second would be as the women who follow the men, almost like the children of Hamelin, following the pied piper.

Hock gets the chorus on their feet to march during the song.

Note on the rehearsal venue:

The parquet flooring of the rehearsal room allows for the resonating stamps of the song. The vibrations of the floor make quite an impact.

Marcia makes some slight changes to the way it is sung, adding in more "heys!" for consistency's sake. The chorus now commit to a marching pace for the reaper's song.

Marcia says that they only have 15mins left till they are joined by the main cast. They practice the song 1 more time and then move into Act 2, scene 8.

In this scene is the shouting of insults.

One of the actress when is the acceleration cue because can get really loud, really fast.

Marcia replies that maybe when Bernarda says, "any women who squanders their decency must pay for it", should be the acceleration point.

Marcia tells the screamers to take their cue from Adela who says "run" 6 times before they scream. She reminds them that while they are whispering to each other, to remember to listen to the lines being said.

They take a 5 minute break before the combined rehearsal. Currently, they are shifting the chairs in preparation for scenes.

Sandy, the ASM takes note that there are enough chairs in each of the sections.

Marcia says that they will be working on gesture vocabulary, the chorus will be on stage for the entire show.

Sharon, an chorus actress had previously suggested to create a character on stage. Marcia asks that the chorus actresses to commit to a character to help stay in focus for the entire show.

The main cast enters the larger rehearsal room.

### **Combined Rehearsal:**

Marcia asks that the chorus go next door and line up first before they enter so they can view the effect. Juraidah has her SM folder with the full script and blocking and notes on a music stand that she periodically edits.

Glen takes issue with the chorus's hands and how they are not held the same way.

Glen wants the daughters to stand with Bernarda.

Glen wants those in the chorus who are not so present to be switched out because they are visible from the audience's point of view.

Glen and Marcia have a discussion of a possible rosary for the funeral scene.

Glen asks Hock that the chorus all fan out at the same time.

Claire asks how they should walk in. Glen replies that she walks to the toll of the bells.

Glen wants the head turns that the chorus does when gossiping to those seated next them to be bigger and more noticeable.

They rehearse the chorus' and the main cast's entrance a second time.

Glen takes note that the chorus is not stepping out into the main playing area in sync.

Glen wants a leader in each corner so that the rest of the chorus can follow the leader's holding and movement of the fan.

He wonders about the gossiping of the chorus and whether they can be switched to the fluttering the fans to show chock instead of moving their heads. He asks Marcia if it would be comedic, she nods yes.

### **Killing Scene:**

The team has managed to pack 28 chorus members, 5 main cast members, the directors and other staff into the now squeezed in rehearsal room.

The main cast is over-powered by the chorus.

Glen wants there to be a cheer after they lynch the girl.

Karen has a note about fitting in the audio of the chorus with Claire's audio (speech).

Marcia is asked to conduct the chorus in their shouting of insults.

Serene asks that there needs to be a noise that draws the daughters out of their room.

Marcia walks around the scene to conduct the chorus.

They are unable to hear the "kill", "run", by the main cast.

Karen asks what's important about the scene, is it the visual or the audio?

Serene asks if the scream the first time is what draws the sisters out of their rooms.

Karen asks that maybe they shouldn't be so still. Or do they take it a bit further?

Noorlinah says that maybe seeing Adela say run and not be heard can be quite powerful as well.

Karen says that the daughters might say kill but their bodies might say run.

Glen wants the chorus to chant "kill" instead of continuing with their own lines of insults.

Noorlinah advises the chorus that they don't need to rush the word "kill" cause the main chorus will join in first.

Karen gives the note that when they cheer, it needs to sound like a kind of hysteria.

Claire needs the scream to emerge like a solitary note for a climax. For a cleaner audio presentation.

They change the "no" by Adela to after the cheer instead of immediately after the 2nd scream.

Marcia believes that the main cast won't be able to hear if the chorus speak their lines.

Serene also suggests that if you don't want them to speak, you can use Poncia's statement "stones and sticks", so they can use a different soundscape instead of the insults.

Marcia has instead chosen just a few of the chorus members to say their lines a bit louder.

They have decided to switch their screamer because that particular chorus member has a sound that is much more piercing.

Glen and Marcia are discussing when the chorus stands up. It is no longer a wave, instead a little bit more randomised.

Marcia asks that those who are saying their lines to stand up so that the ones near them will be affected kinaesthetically to stand as well.

Sharon Frese tells those who say their lines to stay standing.

They take a 5 minute break before they start the reaper scene.

Glen believes that the whispering will be fine because the chorus will be slightly backstage, away from the playing area.

Glen wants Marcia to conduct the reaper scene.



**Reaper Scene:**

Glen remarks to Hock that it might not be appropriate for the main cast to dance, "it might look contrived and false." The family would instead look longingly at the reapers on the road. The contrast would be better.

Karen talks of who would dance during this scene.

Swee Lin and Jo are not around for this rehearsal despite having to be in the scene. Claire has left because she is not needed for this scene.

Marcia asks the chorus to start humming first.

When the chorus sings "to garland his crown", they drop to a hum as Poncia says "they're turning the corner."

Marcia tells the chorus to take note that they will be humming the song till the end.

Glen likes how organic the dance is but he needs more response from the main cast to what happens outside the window of the house.

Glen asks Marcia if it makes sense with the drop in the volume at that point in the song, for when they are turning the corner.

\* There is an exchange of views between the director and assistant-director. A sign of mutual respect for each other's opinion.

Glen wants an insert at the end of the scene with night sounds, he tells Juraidah.

A chorus actress asks if they stop the song when the scene ends or naturally fade out. Glen asks that it fade out.

Juraidah gives notes about how to enter the drama centre black box because the whole cast is rehearsing there. It will be combined rehearsal all the way next week till show day.

The main cast leaves.

**Notes after combined rehearsal:**

Marcia gives notes about presence.

A chorus asks about how much is distraction when they fidget for their character gesturing during the play.

Marcia gives notes about how the chorus members as villagers should only stare at each other of the same social status, Bernarda's family is of a higher status.

Hock makes the chorus practice how to hold and fan themselves.

Marcia, Hock and Glen take note of the wrong angles and hand postures of the chorus, when they hold the fan.

Hock makes them do the mechanical motion of fanning first, and then makes them breathe into the motion to make it look more natural.

Sharon Frese suggests that they feel the back of their chairs with the back of their legs.

Marcia goes to Act 2, scene 8 to go through the cues. As well as the cheer at the end of it. It needs to be a diverse sounding cheer, so as to not have just one note in the roar.

Marcia goes to talking about the reaper's song. Asking the chorus to finish the line they are singing for the end of the scene.

A chorus member asks about the falling of the veil and if they pick it up. Glen says that the veils should be left for the maids in the house to do it.

Marcia talks about the gesture vocabulary that the chorus needs to create to keep moving throughout the play.

They end the rehearsal and are asked to give their shoe sizes to Juraidah and to return their veils and fans to the ASMs.

**11 Feb 2014 - Drama Centre Black Box.**

**12pm - 6pm**

**Notes on the rehearsal venue:**

The cold air of the black box has all of them wearing coats and scarves.

The foldable seats of the black box have been pushed to the side on stage right.

The house lights are switched on and some pale wintry light is shown on the acting space.

They have the main cast doing blocking on a to scale set that has been taped on the floor.

Chee Wai's (set designer) initial arrival helped with the laying out of the tape (to spike), that depicts the actual set. To make sure that it is to scale.

**Rehearsal of the scene after the hymn:**

Juraidah, Glen, Jo and the last assistant SM are helping with the placing of the chairs for the beginning scene.

Blanca, Sharda is not here as she is performing for TNS.

They are doing the blocking with the taking away of chairs as well.

Glory is taking a long time to pass the fan to Claire, because she is looking out the window.

Glen wants Glory to be nearer in the courtyard.

The actresses are trying to reorientate themselves with the expansion of the space.

Juraidah is speaking Margaret's and Sharda's lines.

\* Claire's voice is slightly muffled due to the low whine of the air conditioning. The long black curtains that line the room absorb the sound from the actresses.

**Notes on costume wear:**

Claire is wearing a necklace of pearls, it belongs to Bernarda's mother whom she inherited from her, to get into character.

Glory is wearing a bright red skirt, that Adela is seen in Act 1.

They are missing the thunder and rain SFX, that are needed for the transition scene.

Karen asks if Martirio and Amelia need to wear shoes. Glen ask them to leave their shoes.

They take a break at 1.25pm, they will be back at 2.25pm.

Jo asks if she should have shoes. Jo says that in that era is that she is not a housekeeper, but a servant. Maybe the only scene in which she wears shoes is with Blanca, if they want to show that they have more class. But Glen disagrees that she and Blanca shouldn't be wearing shoes at all. Jo agrees because then it would make more sense as the servants have more incentive to sneak about the house.

**Rehearsal for sewing scene:**

Juraidah discusses with Glen about where Blanca should be moving about during a scene.

2.30pm, the rehearsal starts again.

Claire has left already.

The wardrobe hands are backstage in their room sewing on zips to the costumes.

Juraidah is telling Jo, how the set actually looks like, with what portions are actually steps up and down. Because it is not immediately noticeable with the colours of the tape. Jo is asking about exits and entrances, and what portions of the set are raised.

Where I am seated near the sound and lights control and Juraidah's stage manager station set up, is where the audience is supposed to be seated.

Juraidah and her assistant are currently spiking the chairs on the set.

Juraidah is showing Glen a makeshift cloth the approximate size of the bed sheet.

They are starting from the top of Act 2, and acting till the point when Bernarda enters again after Angustias accuses her sisters of stealing Pepe's photo.

Since they are bringing their own sewing boxes, they should not bring in the sewing box for Adela, it would be in anticipation that they would be sewing. It would be a leap of logic for Adela to have her own sewing box, since she has just woken up.

Juraidah plays a recording of the Reaper's song. Glen discusses about the dancing that happens during the Reaper's song.

Glen tells them the thought process of hearing the song, because the song happens only once a year, in that season. This is from the line "What are they singing?"

Glen indicates to them that they should look off downstage right, because the reapers will go around the corner along downstage left.

They are now plotting the action for the scene for clear, clean action. Glen tells Jo, that the movement of the reapers outside will be indicated by Jo, because of her line "They're turning the corner." So she leads the action.

### **Stage Business:**

They are now discussing stage business. Because Serene says that they are striking their own sewing kits, so Glen tells her that the daughters would be more excited to go to Adela's room.

They are talking about what do they sew onto the bed sheet. If they are hemming then it would be simple. But if they are sewing the lace onto bed sheet, there is more stage business.

Glen discusses if they are having their own individual sewing, he asks if Serene is okay with that. Serene replies that she thought that Glen needed the bed sheet because it brought them together. Glen says that the stage business of the bed sheet is not working for him anymore.

Charlene asks Juraidah if she can go cut up some individual pieces from spare cloth backstage. Juraidah gives the go ahead.

Serene suggests that they can do their own patches of quilts.

They have decided to sew a trousseau for Angustias, because she is getting married first.

Glen asks now what Magdalena is sewing, she is embroidering and Karen offers to bring her own.

Charlene's face as she takes hold of the bed sheet, indicates that she was the ASM who created/got hold of it in the first place.

They have decided on individual quilt portions.

They go through the scene, and now Jo is asking about where do they strike the chairs to.

As there are a lot of props for the production, there is the issue of where do the props end up and when they are needed for later scenes.

\* Jo remarks that every Singapore play she has done, she is moving chairs.

Noorlinah remarks that it would be so much easier if the sewing baskets do not have lids, then it would be easier to stack them.

Previously, Noorlinah was sitting down when she remarks, as Maritirio, about sick she feels; this time round, she is standing behind the chair.

Only after the last chair is in, that Adela enters. Noorlinah asks that the lights go off first before she hands over the cloth to Amelia/Serene, if not the cloth handing would be deemed symbolic or part of prop handling by the character.

Swee Lin is asking about when she is looking for the photograph that is missing, because she is in her room for that part of the reaper's scene. Because now the light isn't coming on in her room to show her searching. As there would be a crossing when Adela comes down and Glen doesn't want the audience's eye taken away from the action of Adela by Swee Lin. This is remedied by Swee Lin searching in the early morning after the night transition.

Assistant Costume Designer in his hot pink hair arrives.

As Glen has moved the chairs for the sewing scene, the ASMs need to re-spike the chairs.

Swee Lin remarks that she doesn't understand Poncia's line "You are fortunate." Jo explains that she thinks Angustias could talk to a man till 4 in the morning, when she only talked to her husband Everisto for half an hour. So Poncia is complimenting Angustias, because Angustias is of a higher class and of better upbringing.

Jo asks that maybe the line "you are fortunate" could be a line that brings all the sisters together. As in "you are so lucky" that your husband to be is so handsome. So the rest of the sisters can react to that.

The blocking for the scene between Poncia and Adela has changed, with Glory on her knees hugging Jo, before she rises up again on her feet.

**Note on the rehearsal venue:**

It is strange that they have to act as if they are perspiring in the heat when it is so cold here, fanning themselves as well.

They take a break.

They start at 4.50pm again.

Karen gives her lines to Serene, "I got up to cool off." so that it ties with Amelia remarking about how hot it was that night.

Amelia throws the fan on the floor this time round instead of the bed sheet, Serene continues her next lines in anger and frustration.

As Juraidah goes through entrances and lines with Jo, Glen talks to Glory about her scene with Poncia.

They are discussing the surname of the sisters surname which would be "Maria Alba." Wherein the "Maria" is their father's surname, whose full name is Antonio Maria Benavides.

They go through the sewing scene again with the reapers.

Jo asks that Juraidah to throw in the line "Everisto" which keeps on knocking her off. She says she needs to find the beat/pace of the speech. It helped her with the pacing eventually. Jo has taken off her slippers which she has worn for the entirety of the rehearsal.

Glory goes in for a hug instead of the holding of Jo's arm and then the hug in the recent run of the scene.

Glen asks that Serene and Noorlinah exchange the cloth and fan instead of Noorlinah just passing Serene the cloth. Where Noorlinah now has the fan to have something to do at night.

Glen asks that Noorlinah just stand at that angle till the transition ends, as if Martirio has been standing there the whole time round. Noorlinah is discussing about the word "so" and how it should be axed from the sentence because it feels as if there was a conversation previously and how it is continuing when it isn't so in that scene. She wants to play a new motivation, as a break from the transition.

Everyone is released except Poncia and Glory.

They end rehearsals at 6pm.

**28 Feb 2014 - Drama Centre Black Box.**

**7pm - 10pm**

Juraidah tells the chorus about the set, that the coloured lines are steps up or down.

Jo is telling Glory how to project and how to have presence, this was a progression from her lying on the floor where Jo, Hock and the other choreographer, Ix held Glory down as she struggled. Glory has to say her lines while she struggles so as to find the same consistency in breathe.

Juraidah tells the chorus to put on their veils.

She calls the attention of the main cast to brief them about how the procession happens.

\* As this is a combined rehearsal and a full run, there is a lot of negotiation of space that happens.

They are practicing the procession scene.

Glen sees that the chorus is not sitting at the same time.

Juraidah and Marcia sort out the sequence of the mourners.

Glen wants Bernarda to open the doors first. He wants Poncia to be behind Bernarda in deference.

The 2 choreographers want the chorus to shuffle right and left even if they haven't reached the door yet. Hocktells the chorus to shift their entire torso during the gossip scene.

Glen wants them to practice the lifting of the veils and the opening of the fans.

Glen asks the question if the main cast when they pray, if their eyes are to be closed or open. The main cast decide they will keep their eyes open but downcast. The chorus will bow their heads and close their eyes, because they have a tendency to dart them about.

The main cast had a full run before this.

Juraidah asks Jo to close the door when the last person exits.

Hock demonstrates that they should walk with their torso held up.

Jo asks Juraidah if the door opens flat against the wall, and it does.

\* There seems to be a problem with working with older actresses in the chorus. They don't seem to have an awareness of their own fidgeting and the pace at which Glen as a director directs, which is quite sprightly, doesn't give them a lot of time to process the direction.

Claire is using a mic to conserve her voice at this point of time.

Marcia, Hock and Ix are standing about to make sure the chorus members remember the things that they have to do.

They are doing a once through of Act 1.

The chorus are seated by the sides.

Margaret Chan is in for rehearsal, the only one absent is Sharda, who is at present busy acting in another show, Poor Thing by The Necessary Stage.

There is a change in the staging of the scene between Jo and Glory. Jo is standing with Glory this time round. It has become more dynamic and passionate, with Jo standing up as well. Adela is much more angrier and wild in her movements.

Glen wants the chorus to start the Reaper song later in the scene.

The dance is shorter in the scene between the sisters as well.

Glen wants the chorus' lyrics to come out after Martirio says "What are they singing?"

Hock choreographs a little dance of Amelia and Adela.

After trying out the scene to Glen's satisfaction. Hock gets the chorus to stand up to do the reaper's stamping and dancing.

Marcia asks that they sing the reaper's song at a lower register so that they sound more men-like.

Hock indicates to the chorus that those who can't hop should just bounce on the spot.

Marcia is conducting the song at the back during the rehearsal.

Glen is directing Glory for the moment she is to start dancing to the song.

They currently have night time sounds for the scene after the reaper's song.

They do the lynching scene, which is the end of Act 1.

Claire is made not to raise her voice too much during this scene, so they increase the volume of her mike.

Hock tells Marcia that the chorus' roar should be stretched a bit longer.

Serene tells the chorus that their cue is the screamer.

Juraidah and Marcia give notes to the screamer. Juraidah tells them they must remember which side they are on when they proceed onto the stage the first time round. And who is their partner for the procession.

Marcia gives the note that the chorus need not be distracted of watching the last act by the main cast, and should concentrate on their own acting, for they will be watching the last act for numerous times later on.

**12 Mar 2014 - Drama Centre Theatre.**

**3pm - 6pm**

**Notes on the set and lighting:**

The set is impressive with actual rain that falls on set, in the scene before the reaper's scene. The door to the house is colossal. Frosted window panes line the sides, indicative of rooms.

The lighting state and colour palette is a dark turquoise and pale lavender, moody and twilight. Each of the windows are lit with warm yellow light, weak like the last rays of the day.

The back of the chairs sparkle in the same pattern as the frosted panels at the top of the windows. The same grainy pattern is repeated on the wall at the back of the stage. There appears to be no sharks tooth scrim at the back, instead they use the natural texture of the wall.

The courtyard in Act 3 is lit in blue and dark lavender.

They are still rehearsing the last scene of Act 3. They will start the full run in 20 mins time. Tonight is the opening night.

The music is a smatter of violin and horns. They do the hymns as they walk in with the whole procession.

I finally see Sharda play her scene her scene at the beginning, which is hyper sexualised with her mock masturbating on stage.

**Changes in direction:**

They have taken away the dancing between Amelia and Magdalena in the sewing scene because of the actual rainfall in the courtyard which has to be mopped up by Sharda.

They have also done away with the cross-stitch and patchwork and have finally taken to just individual large pieces of white linen.

They have also switched the positions of Glory and Poncia's scene to downstage right.

The Reaper's song does not have the chorus members stamping anymore.

With the music, the chorus cannot be heard, so they have taken to shouting their lines as they had previously done.

There were no technical faults during the full run. Everything is a go for the opening night. Yu Beng, the lighting designer is using the time to make a few last minute adjustments to the lights.

Researcher: Christopher Fok, 16 April 2014

General Editor: Aubrey Mellor, 29 August 2014