

Dreaming up new possibilities

The coronavirus pandemic has given veteran actress Ang Gey Pin, whose work has to go online, a chance for new experiences

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Senior Culture Correspondent

Theatre veteran Ang Gey Pin has a very zen approach to the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

The 53-year-old's latest project, *Dreamtalk*, was originally slated as part of the NUS Festival of Arts, organised by the National University of Singapore's Centre For The Arts (CFA), in March. But Covid-19 put paid to the festival and the show is going digital instead.

It will be screened on a pay-as-you-wish basis on the Zoom video platform on Friday and Saturday. Each show will be followed by a question-and-answer session with the performers.

Asked about how she dealt with the challenges of restaging, the veteran actress says: "In life, there is one thing that never changes and that is 'change'. So, the current circumstance has gifted us a chance to respond to this 'law' in life. Now, it is as if I have been walking and suddenly I need to drive.

"I still journey, but the views on the way are all different and I am discovering new things from experiencing, responding and connecting to each moment of the journey. I am processing new experiences and reflecting on previous experiences."

Dreamtalk, a physical theatre piece unfolding in a house where a guardian keeps watch over a young dreamer, is a collaboration between Ang and theatre studies honours graduate Ranice Tay.

Ang, who was a member of the renowned Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards and co-founder of Theatre OX, directed Tay for a theatre studies production.

She says collaborating with her former student is also a way for her to learn: "Mr Kuo Pao Kun says you need to start from practice. That's why he chose the name Practice Theatre for his group. You learn from doing."

Tay, 23, says working with her mentor is "a period of time I cannot trade for anything else".

She is appreciative of the CFA's support for her practice as theatre performance, which has been brewing for a year. "(I have) the space, the resources to help me develop work that nourishes my soul."

Ms Mary Loh, 60, the CFA's senior associate director, says such exchanges between practitioners and students are what she wants to encourage with her programming.

While the festival has been scuppered, some of the shows will go to the ExxonMobil Campus Concerts while *Dreamtalk* and another pro-



duction *Blindspot*, an NUS Chinese drama about a girl whose mother is going blind, are going digital.

Ms Loh notes that the experience has been an "incredibly steep learning curve" for the team.

But there is a silver lining as *Dreamtalk* can now reach Ang's audiences around the world. The Friday show is scheduled for the odd time of 10.59pm, Ms Loh says.

"The reason for the strange timing is because the performers are capturing that moment between wakefulness into sleep, into a special time of consciousness.

"Besides that, Gey Pin's online audiences are also in the United States and Europe and the timing allows us to accommodate them."

Ang says going digital has also opened up new vistas for her as a practitioner: "And now there is a huge spatial interrelation between the creative team and the audience. There is something of a third, or fourth space; a hybrid, in-between, semi-public space, through a digital version of a live performance.

"All these, we hope to evoke the imaginative world and the perspectives from the inner child in each of us."

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Veteran theatre performer Ang Gey Pin (top, left) and her former student Ranice Tay (top, right) will collaborate in *Dreamtalk* (above), a physical theatre piece where a guardian watches over a young dreamer. PHOTOS: SONG TAO FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

VIEW IT / DREAMTALK

WHERE: Zoom
WHEN: Friday, 10.59pm; and Saturday, 2.59 and 7.59pm
ADMISSION: \$10 to \$15 from Sistic
INFO: www.sistic.com.sg/events/zldt0920