

# PLATFORM SERIES: JOURNEYS, A DOUBLE BILL by GenerAsia

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## “Skin Deep, But There’s Potential“

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**Reviewer: Isaac Tan**

**Performance: 3 February 2018**

With this double bill, GenerAsia launches its Platform Series, which gives younger performers an opportunity to create and perform original works. In this inaugural showcase, Erwin Shah Ismail and Kimberly Chan blend personal aspects of their lives with fiction to create their respective monologues, *Kulit on the Go* and *In Her Shoes*.

Erwin takes his love for leathercrafting and creates three characters – the itinerant Malay leathercrafter, the Chinese tannery worker, and the Texan farmer – to explain the process of leather production and crafting. Along the way, *Kulit on the Go* raises issues about the value of things in life, love, and the environmental footprint of rearing cows.

Initially, the glacial pace of the show simulates the process of leathercrafting, which creates the expectation that we will eventually see how the disparate elements come together to form something beautiful.

Unfortunately, that did not come to pass. There is a sense that the show is groping for something, only to suddenly veer off into environmentalism, which does not quite fit with the rest of the show.

That said, Erwin proves to be a consummate performer as he moves between characters with absolute ease. He also has a keen ear for dialogue and successfully captures the idiosyncrasies of how English, Malay, Mandarin and Hokkien are spoken locally. He even overcomes the language barrier that some audience members may have by mixing languages or having his characters code switch.

While Erwin’s work is reaching for something, Kimberly Chan’s *In Her Shoes* is a grab bag of all that she loves about performing.

Largely structured as a revue, Chan lays out various shoes across the space. With every pair she tries on, she plays a different woman: sometimes herself, sometimes characters who are possibly inspired by true stories. Songs are then recontextualised to fit the various scenes.

While it starts off with a thoroughly entertaining interpretation of Stephen Sondheim’s “You Could Drive A Person Crazy” to express a daughter’s love-hate relationship with her mother, it soon feels as if she is including as many of her favourite tunes as she can.

In a scene where a girl grapples with a friend's suicide, Chan delivers a poignant text about the what-ifs, only to be disrupted by her singing Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again", which hardly adds anything.

Furthermore, not all shoes are given equal treatment. As she puts on her flamenco shoes, she talks about hating flamenco and Spanish dance at first, but they soon become something she loves. This is accompanied by an oddly dizzying choreography, in which flamenco and classical Spanish dance steps (yes, there is a difference) are paired with modern classical music. After receiving her applause, she swiftly moves on to the next segment, which makes it seem like the scene was only there to prove that she is a triple threat.

Rather than journeying in various pairs of shoes, the show is more akin to trying on and tossing aside shoes in a boutique.

What is most encouraging is that both performers are keenly aware that their pieces are works-in-progress. While there is still a long road ahead, I would happily watch another iteration of both pieces.

Do you have an opinion or comment about this post? Email us at [info@centre42.sg](mailto:info@centre42.sg).

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

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**PLATFORM SERIES: JOURNEYS, A DOUBLE BILL by GenerAsia**

2 – 3 February 2018

SOTA Studio Theatre

## **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

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**Isaac** started reviewing plays for the student publication, Kent Ridge Common, and later developed a serious interest in theatre criticism after taking a module at university. He is also an aspiring poet, and has a passion for acting and flamenco dancing.