

Young and W!ld Reboot

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August 24, 2014

W!ld Rice has decided to relaunch its youth training programme, Young & W!ld, after a short hiatus. The third cohort sees 16 new talents undergo rigorous training in various aspects of theatre making facilitated by Rodney Oliveiro and Serena Ho. As a testament to their training so far, the cohort will present their first showcase, *Little Riots and Other Stories*.

To find out more about the programme, I caught up with mentors Oliveiro and Ho.

Young & W!LD had a five-year hiatus before starting again. What is different about the training for this cohort as compared to the previous two cohorts?

We really didn't want to have an actor training platform. We felt that the local theatre scene could do with a theatre making training programme. One where young artists could question, reflect on what it means for them to be a theatre maker and how could they contribute to the industry? What does process work feel like? How to create good theatre? Can we find new ways of making theatre? We didn't want to take in just actors but writers, directors, and designers as well.

Could you elaborate a little more about your role as a member of the programme?

We are the main facilitators – we train, create work with them and also look out for trainers for the participants.

In the course of training this cohort, what is the one thing you learnt about yourself and the current cohort?

It reaffirms our belief that theatre is not a “one man show.” It belongs to the people who are creating it. We have to be honest about what takes place in the rehearsal, the material the performers contribute, what works, what doesn't work. It's important not to be too precious about the work because change and an open mind is very important when creating theatre.

What can the audience expect from *Little Riots and Other Stories*?

We would not say much about the showcase but hope that the audience keeps an open mind.

What is your wish for the cohort once they are done with their training?

That they keep working hard because theatre is hard work! That they keep going and honing their craft. That they want to do their best and they add value to the productions or art related work.

Out of the 16 young talents, five of them hail from the NUS Theatre Studies programme. Out of the five, two of them are in their final year while the rest have graduated. I sat down with Goh Koon Hui (KH) and Matthew Fam (MF) in between their lectures to find out about their training progress.



What made you decide to sign up for Young & W!ld?

KH: I'm interested in being a theatre practitioner in future. One main reason why I join Young & Wild is for me to put myself out there: to be trained and be criticised. It's also a platform to launch myself somewhere as a practitioner.

MF: Three years ago, I auditioned for the previous cohort of Young & W!LD. I made it to callbacks but was rejected. Since then, it has always been an unfinished business of mine. So, when I heard that W!ld Rice was rebooting its youth programme, I knew that auditioning for this dream internship was now or never.

Additionally, I thought I could contribute something unique in developing original, local theatre with the team. As Young & W!LD is not an acting-focused programme, I saw it as an opportunity to be an all-rounded practitioner and develop skills in other facets of theatre making, such as arts administration.

Has your experience as a Theatre Studies major helped you in your current undertaking? If so, how?

KH: Definitely. It gave me the critical eye to look at what works or what doesn't. While reflecting on a devised scene, for example, I found myself being able to articulate exactly what was wrong with that scene or what it was lacking fundamentally. While I do not have actor training unlike some of my fellow company mates, I bring to the table a critical perspective that is informed by the academic work I did with NUS. I think that is equally precious and important.

MF: Contrary to what some people think, Theatre Studies at NUS is NOT an acting course. We do have to write essays and delve into research like any regular uni student (surprise!!). This research has informed my practice and given it an added dimension of critical meaning.

What are some of the challenges that you have faced so far?

KH: I think one of the challenges so far — and I think many of my company mates would agree — is the process of experimentation during the devising process. We could work at it for two whole hours only to have five minutes of useful material for the performance. This is not as gruelling as it sounds, I assure you, because the devising process calls for a lot of playing and improvisation which ends up with lots of laughter and lots of fun.

MF: Time management! Balancing this with schoolwork and rehearsals for another production (I have them almost every single day in August) requires discipline and focus. Perhaps, this is what is meant by “paying your dues.”

What is the one thing that you learnt about yourself from Young & W!ld?

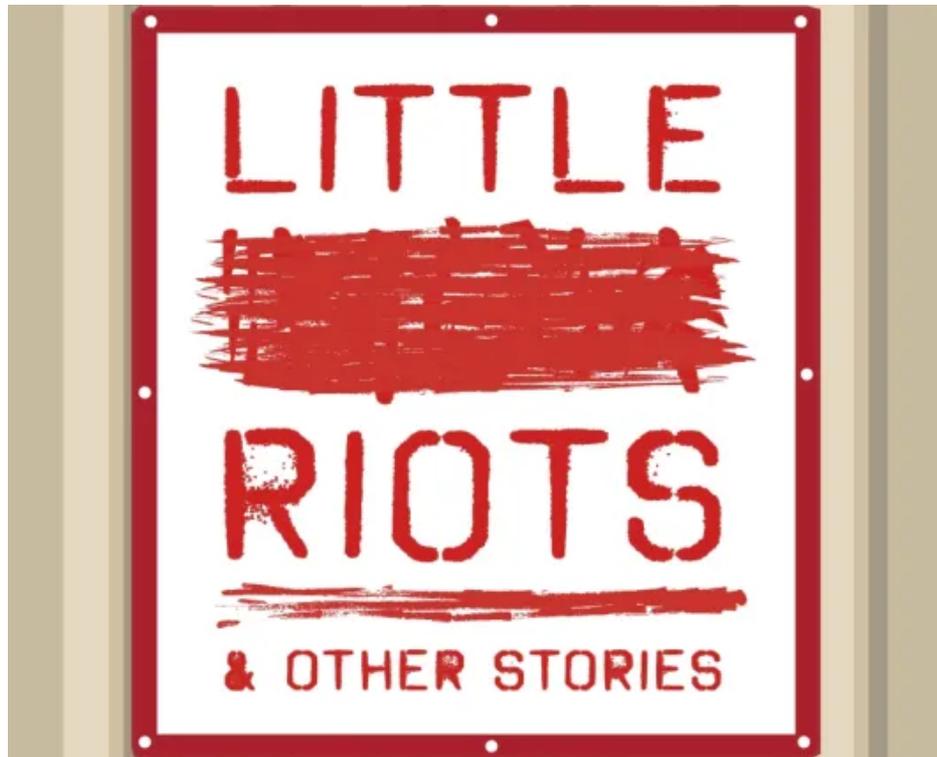
KH: Theatre is serious fun. Theatre is a serious endeavour, certainly, but it should not inhibit us from laughing at ourselves and getting over of our own insecurities. Get over it and move on.

MF: When you're placed in a group of talented theatre makers, it's easy to get envious. I sometimes fall victim to that. However, rather than comparing, I've learnt to take advantage of our synergy. I've learnt to embrace what I have and to be proud of what I represent as an artist. I've also learnt to be open to the ways I can express myself as an artist. We once had a workshop with theatre director Ramesh Meyyappan and it definitely opened up the ways I approach physical expression on stage.

If you could play any role from any play, what would it be?

KH: Wow. This is a tough question. I've always seen myself as an ensemble person because I consider my primary theatre vocabulary to be movement rather than speech. So I guess it's any of Robert Wilson's cast member in “Einstein on the beach”. If it's a particular character, probably the titular character in Kuo Pao Kun's *Lao Jiu*.

MF: *Mimi Fan*! Or something absolutely outrageous. I want to be in that crocodile headpiece and cheerleader outfit from Cake Theatrical Production's *Temple* in 2008.



*Little Riots and Other Stories runs from 28-30 August at 33 Kerbau Road.
Ticketing details at [Event Brite](#).*