

Curtain Up at Nanning for Road-and-Belt ASIEN-China Theatre Exchange

Arts Theatre of Singapore Staging the Home-made Mandarin-speaking Children-Play in China

The 5th China-ASIEN (Nanning) Theatre Week was held early this month in Nanning, the capital city of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. Arts Theatre of Singapore (ATS), the local mandarin-speaking company participated this international theatre exchange together with the other representative theatre groups from each of the ASIEN countries. The festival was organized by the Municipality of Nanning People's Government and the Department of Culture of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The participating ASIEN theatre troupes together with another 10 Chinese professional companies staged a total of 47 quality productions during 6 – 11 Sept also in conjunction with the official celebration of the opening of the 13th China-ASIEN Expo held that week.

The Submit Forum of China-ASIEN Theatre Delegations – ATS Joined the China-ASIEN Theatre Cooperation and Exchange League

The directors of the 10 representative ASIEN theatre groups and that of another 30 theatre companies from China participated the Submit Forum. Mr. Koh Chong Chien, the CEO of ATS signed the MOU of China-ASIEN Theatre Cooperation and Exchange League. Following the MOU signed, the representative theatre companies from ASIEN counties will form the working group with Nanning Ethnic Culture Research Institute, and Nanning Theatre Company to jointly explore, plan and communicate on the future theatre and culture exchange programmes between China and ASIEN countries under the background and bigger scheme of Road-and Belt Project.

Simple Plot with Subtle Suspension: THE LITTLE TADPOLE LOOKING FOR MAMA Won the Award of Excellent Production and the Award of Excellent Actor

ATS staged the mandarin-speaking children-play THE LITTLE TADPOLE LOOKING FOR MAMA at Nanning Women and Children Culture Centre during the festival. The story, written by Ai Guangjie, the artistic director of ATS, with the background of River Safari Singapore, tells about the interesting adventure of the little tadpole looking for mama and how he is helped and taken care by the other little animals in the journey. The denouement of the play reveals towards the end that the frog, the little tadpole's mama, has in fact been caught in capture by human-beings, a painful issue happening nowadays as a surprising dramaturgical scheme to this children's tale has thus created its huge dramatic suspension throughout the play being significantly meaningful to both the little and adult audience, making this children-theatre immediately related to the contemporary world of today. The play has won the Award of Excellent Production, and the two actors, Gu Zhiqi and Ren Xin who respectively played the title role and the tortoise won the Award of Excellent Actor.

Constructing China-ASIEN Theatre Joint Developmental New Phase with Road-and-Belt Scheme, Award of Excellent Paper at International Academic Symposium

The theme of the International Academic Symposium held at the Theatre Week focused on constructing China-ASIEN theatre joint developmental new phase. Theatre scholars from the 10 ASIEN countries as well as that from the universities and research institutions of China have had an intensive discussion on the topic. Dr YU Weijie, the member of ATS Theatre Consultation Panel and the Principal Lecturer of Nanyang

Academy of Fine Arts delivered his paper, exploring the possible shared repertoire, theatrical styles, standard stage expressions and common aesthetic spirit for the mandarin-speaking drama on the Chinese and ASIEN stages. The paper was awarded the Excellent Academic Paper.

The Collective Memory with the Generations of the Mandarin-speaking Public, ATS Nominated for the Singapore Chinese Culture Contribution Award 2017.

Established in 1955, ATS is a home-grown existing mandarin-speaking theatre company with the longest history. It has played an indispensable role in the development and maturity of the local mandarin drama. In 1985 when Mr. Koh Chong Chien, now the CEO of ATS, took over its chair-ship, there was only S\$2,000 left in its bank account. However, ATS has then reviewed its strategy to have focused on the mandarin-speaking children-play that has been catered for the immediate Chinese-learning needs of the younger generations and their parents alike during the time when the language policy in the educational system was changed. With hardly any funds from the government, ATS has paved its own way of existence and development in cultivating generations of the mandarin-speaking public during the past 3 decades. The Chinese-speaking plays ATS has produced so far have now been part of the valuable theatre repertoire of the republic and its distinctive performance style and benchmarked standard mandarin expressions on stage has also thus become a unique phenomenon among the local theatre landscape. ATS was nominated for the inaugural Singapore Chinese Culture Contribution Award 2017 created by the newly established Singapore Chinese Culture Centre.

Continually Recruiting the Fresh Blood, ATS Is the Biggest Local Theatre Employer for the Home-trained Mandarin Drama Graduates

ATS has been providing regular employment opportunities to the mandarin drama graduates professionally trained from the local arts institution since the beginning of the century. The present artistic director as well as the most members of the production cast and creative team toured to Nanning are all graduates from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). With almost 60 performances/productions annually, ATS has in recent years employed, both full-time and project-based, almost 100 personnel/projects per year, becoming the biggest local theatre employer for the home-trained mandarin drama graduates.

Through the recent re-structuring with Dr John Lee as the new board chairman and Mr Koh as the CEO, ATS is embarking on a more challenging departure towards a national mandarin-speaking company of children-theatre in the near future. (Ling Ren)