

For Immediate Release

The Pioneers of Singapore Mandarin Musicals Are Back: Practice Makes Its Long-Awaited Return With *The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife*



“Everyone on stage seemed like they were doing what they were born to do, so that the fun they were all having became deeply contagious.”

— Flying Inkpot on *The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife* (2008)

This March, The Theatre Practice (Practice) is proud to present *The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife*, an uproariously hilarious Mandarin musical starring Joanna Dong, MengFM’s Cavin Soh and Ric Liu, and Sugie Phua.

Inspired by the traditional Yuan opera *Qiu Hu Flirts With His Wife*, this production combines lavish Chinese Opera aesthetics with campy musical theatre flair and cheeky modern references. Expect hijinks, humour and harmonies galore!

A Mandarin Musical Comedy That’ll Have You Walking Down Rolling In The Aisles!

Qiu Hu (Cavin Soh) and Mei Ying (Joanna Dong)'s happily ever after is at risk when Qiu Hu is conscripted into the army one day after their wedding! Meanwhile, waiting in the wings is local tyrant Master Li (Ric Liu), who is determined to have Mei Ying marry him instead. Can Mei Ying resist her pesky suitor's schemes? What happens when Qiu Hu returns home, ten years later? ***Will the soldier ever be reunited with his virtuous wife?***

The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife will be helmed by Practice's Artistic Director and award-winning musical director Kuo Jian Hong (*Lao Jiu: The Musical, If There're Seasons...*, *Liao Zhai Rocks!*), and will mark Practice's first musical since its 2019 Shanghai tour of *Liao Zhai Rocks!*, and first mainstage production since the pandemic.

"This is actually the fourth time Practice is doing *The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife*. Our co-founder Kuo Pao Kun chose this script because he believed that theatre should respectfully entertain audiences," notes Jian Hong. "In today's turbulent world, the joy and pleasure theatre brings is needed more than ever, and I am excited to revisit one of the funniest pieces in our repertoire!"

Originally written by Taiwanese director and actor Lo Pei-An (Greenray Theatre Company), the musical was first staged in 1996 as part of Practice's anniversary celebrations — making it one of Singapore's earliest Mandarin musicals. It was later staged again in 1998 and 2008.

However, Jian Hong is quick to emphasise that the 2023 revival will contain significant changes. "Society's views on gender roles, relationships, marriage, etc. have evolved significantly since our last staging in 2008. It will be interesting to see how the script's plot and humour translate in today's world. It may be a period piece but our approach will be anything but antiquated."

Joining Jian Hong in this ambitious overhaul is a creative team of theatre veterans including costume designer MAX.TAN (*Oiwa – The Ghost Of Yotsuya, Four Horse Road*), choreographer Seong Hui Xuan (*Liao Zhai Rocks!*, *Lao Jiu: The Musical*), music director August Lum (*The Nursery Rhymes Project 3, Four Horse Road*), set designer Chen Szu-Feng (*Extinction Feast, Lao Jiu: The Musical*), and more.

A Reunion of Old Friends: Meet The Soldier, His Virtuous Wife and Her Pesky Suitor

Making his stage debut as Qiu Hu, is television actor and MengFM's singer, Cavin Soh. The Star Awards winner is a familiar face in showbiz, and has appeared in dozens of film and television works in the past 20 years. Still, he confesses nervousness at tackling his first musical. "There is no such thing as NG when you're on stage! Performing in a play has always been on my bucket list and I'm so excited to do it with The Theatre Practice. I can't wait!"

Cavin is joined by fellow MengFM member and veteran theatre practitioner Ric Liu, who returns to the world of *The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife* as the villainous Master Li. “The first leading role I ever played on stage was Qiu Hu. Although it would have been quite romantic to revisit the role 15 years later, I thought, given this is Jian Hong’s first time directing *Soldier* and Cavin’s first time doing a musical, I should try something new too and play the tyrant!” He adds, “Rather than playing him as a one-note villain, I’m excited to bring out the character’s nuances and silliness. Who knows, maybe the audience will fall in love with him instead!”

Rounding out the trio is Joanna Dong, who will reprise her leading role as Mei Ying. “With Ric returning and Cavin joining us, I think Jim (Lim) better watch out before I replace him as the third member of MengFM!” Joanna laughingly threatens. “Most of the cast are old friends, so even a simple discussion on our group chat inevitably dissolves into jokes. It’s up to Jian Hong to harness our nonsense!” She adds, “plus you have an actor past 40 playing a young maiden — it’s already going to be hilarious.”

The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife runs from 30 March to 16 April 2023, with tickets now available on BookMyShow. Additional information and discounts can be found at <https://practice.bigtix.io/events/DANGBING>.