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[Here and Beyond: Promising Marriage of SingLit and Theatre](#)

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By Cheryl Tan, edited by Teo Dawn

Toy Factory’s **Here and Beyond** is a staging of the book and secondary school text, ‘Here and Beyond: 12 Stories’ published by Ethos Books and edited by poet and writer **Cyril Wong** comprising 12 short stories by local authors, many of whom have helmed the local literature scene – S. Rajaratnam, O Thiam Chin, Alfian Sa’at, Simon Tay, and Felix Cheong, to name a few.

These 12 stories, which deal with various issues or perspectives such as domestic abuse, the struggles of a domestic helper in a land of plenty, and the reduction of a man to merely his (mis)fortune, are tied together as snapshots of life on our sunny island.



The cast consisting of **Irfan Kasban**, **Jolene Wong**, **Abby Lai**, **Rusydina Afiqah**, **Timothy Nga**, **Tan Rui Shan**, and **Darren Guo** display exceptional range and stamina, switching quickly from story to story. They all play characters who are usually heightened in personality and vary rather drastically in age. While the stories themselves were enough to hold an audience’s attention, the delivery of some were somewhat lacking though kudos to the actors for their versatility.

Several texts delivered had what felt like unnecessary breaks and pauses, which risked losing the audience’s attention. Pacing had a tendency to be draggy but was saved by quick transitions to the next story. Despite several portions of text getting lost largely due to actors perching atop relatively high vocal registers and the occasional mumbling, the cast in its entirety definitely showed proficiency as an ensemble. This was most notable in the creative staging choices used in Yeo Wei Wei’s *Here Comes The Sun*, in which one could not help but smile at the animal figurines wrapped in aluminium foil and an endearing whistling bird brought to life by Darren Guo’s puppetry.

Sound designer **Louis Quek** (also known in our music scene as **Intriguant** < <https://popspoken.com/arts/2018/05/temporal>>) does not disappoint. Each of the 12 stories is given a unique and captivating sound, opening with a drum-heavy track in the play's first story, *The Tiger* by S. Rajaratnam. The more movement-based pieces, such as Felix Cheong's *True Singapore Ghost Story*, consisted mainly of 10–15min of pure movement-based storytelling, and were largely coloured by Louis' soundscapes, which worked hand-in-hand with **Petrina Dawn Tan's** vivid lighting and set design, with each story having its own distinct coloured lights, and each transition and change in set, seamless.



Most importantly, *Here and Beyond* holds an important place in Singapore's art scene namely because of its wonderful and timely crossover between the Singapore Literature (SingLit) and Theatre scene. As this is Toy Factory's Associate Artistic Director **Stanley Seah's** first piece of work with the company, one cannot help but commend him on choosing to approach Ethos Books, one of Singapore's leading publishing houses, with some notable others being Math Paper Press (a publishing house belonging to the local bookstore **BooksActually** < <https://popspoken.com/culture/2016/04/booksactually-finding-home>>), and Epigram Books.

In this pursuit, *Here and Beyond* is timely in reminding Singaporeans, especially younger members of our community, that SingLit is so much more than what Hollywood might choose to make blockbusters out of and that might gravely misrepresent not only Singapore to the world but the literary scene within the confines of our own shores. *Here and Beyond* is more than it offers theatrically as a production, effectively extending the literature community into theatre and vice versa.

The SingLit and Theatre scenes are commonly seen as separate industries, but are two that should really be considered as one and whose artists and writers should continue to support each other. This production sets a fine example, and hopefully this play stands at the helm of an era in which the theatre practitioners and writers make extended efforts to work together.



Here And Beyond

Date: 19th July – 28th July 2018

Venue: SOTA Drama Theatre

Time: Monday – Saturday, 3pm / Thursday, 4.30pm / Friday & Saturday, 8pm

Admission: From \$50 (Concessions available. Get your tickets [here](https://www.sistic.com.sg/events/chere0718) < <https://www.sistic.com.sg/events/chere0718>> .)

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