

Media Release

For Immediate Release



JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL & LIVING IN PARIS

Dates: 26 May 2016 - 4 June 2016

Venue: SOTA Drama Theatre

Runtime: 90minutes, one intermission

ADVISORY (Mature Themes)

Tickets Available from SISTIC from 26 March 2016



2 March 2016 - A whirlwind of emotions swathed in colourful rhythms heads to the stage in the upcoming Sing'theatre production, the smash hit Off-Broadway jukebox musical, ***Jacques Brel is Alive and Well & Living in Paris***. One of the longest-running off-Broadway musical revue of all times, it's initial run broke box-office records and played to countless sold-out houses.

First staged in Singapore in 2008, Sing'theatre is bringing Brel back to the stage after numerous appeals from the public. The 2008 production gained rave reviews. This upcoming show is also set to mark Sing'theatre's homecoming to the genre it is commended for, the jukebox musical.

Directed and choreographed by George Chan (*Lao Jiu The Musical*, *Kumar - What Makes A Man A Man*, *Next to Normal*), this brand new production of ***Jacques Brel is Alive and Well & Living in Paris***, will adopt an avant-garde identity.

"Brel left us a legacy of highly entertaining yet powerful thought-provoking songs. To paint his story-songs in a modern light, we will be using innovative staging and multimedia projections. The stage will alter from spare naturalism to a lyrical emotional environment," Chan says.

Synopsis

The show features 23 songs which are performed independently, each presented like a mini play. Two men and two women transport the audience on a roller-coaster ride of emotions, spanning from fury and sadness to bliss and love in a whirlwind blend of ballads, tango, bolero, rock and classics. Every chanson touches you with a unique message, ingeniously universal, sometimes poignant yet always full of humour. *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well & Living in Paris* will make you think, cry, and laugh. He will also make you angry. And he will make you fall in love.

Bringing Brel's songs to life with all their wit and grit is a group of four well-known locally-based artists. They are George Chan, Matthew Jasper (*Yo Yo Ma and The Silk Road Ensemble*), Frances Lee (*Fat Pig, Monkey Goes West*) and Stephanie Van Den Driesen (*college's President's Award for Outstanding Performance and Excellence*).

Speaking on the appeal of the show, Nathalie Ribette, Founder and Artistic Director of Sing'theatre says, "Brel's timeless and powerful songs are made even more relevant in today's world. Despite recent tumultuous events, numerous acts of courage, kindness and stories of love colour lives all over the world, portraying the resilience and triumph of the human spirit."

Brel, the Leading Chansonnier

The late Jacques Brel was the leading singer and songwriter of the 1960's and 1970's European scene. He was able to share compelling emotions thanks to his powerful lyrics and charismatic presence. Anti-conformist, anti-war poet, singer, songwriter, actor, and director of two films, his fame was linked with songs protesting against inequalities and discrimination, some openly condemning capitalism and dictatorship. Brel's songs are as timeless as they are universal. They demand the correction of injustices in society, they speak about the power of love, and they add a layer of gaiety to human weaknesses, with self-deprecating humour that Belgians are famous for. Many of his hits have been sung by international stars such as David Bowie, Nina Simone, Shirley Bassey and Sting. "*Ne me quitte pas*" was translated into "*If You Go Away*" and made famous by Frank Sinatra. "*Le Moribond*" was translated into "*Seasons in the Sun*" and made famous by both Terry Jacks and Westlife.

About Sing'theatre

Sing'theatre, founded in 2006, has been lauded since for its high quality shows that promote cultural exchange by presenting the works of iconic French and European performers, musicals written in Singapore and European plays. Three main pillars uphold Sing'theatre in its mission to use music and theatre to enhance society. Firstly, it encourages the sharing of cultural heritage through the use of music and theatre as a communication channel for mutual understanding. Secondly, it is committed to bring music to Singapore hospitals through community outreach programs. Thirdly, in September 2014, Sing'theatre's launched Sing'theatre Academy, which has been enriching its students' lives through musical theatre classes and stage presence workshops.

About Jacques Brel is Alive and Well & Living in Paris.

Jacques Brel is Alive and Well & Living in Paris is a musical revue, or juke-box musical, and each of the 23 songs is treated like a mini play. It is a powerful and bold theatrical experience that was an overwhelming success in its original off-Broadway production in 1968 and again in the 2006 revival. It opened in 1968 in New York and played for four years with nearly 2000 performances! The 2006 revival Off-Broadway received several award nominations. Since its inception, the show has been staged in major cities internationally. Brel's legendary vision of romance, humour and moral conviction is universal and timeless. Originally written by Jacques Brel, the songs were translated into English by Mort Shuman and the poet Eric Blau.

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Reviews from the 2008 production in SINGAPORE

"The audience warmed to the raw honesty of the lyrics matched by the strength of the well-chosen cast and the insightful direction."

Stephanie Burrige - The Flying Inkpot

"Brel-liant show to remember a genius."

Christopher Lim – The Business Times

"A classy, highly polished production that proved how appealing a relatively small-scale musical can be."

Richard Lord - The Substation Magazine

"Everyone should watch this show!"

Gaurav Kripalani , Artistic Director - The Singapore Repertory Theatre

Reviews from the 2006 Off-Broadway revival

"A must see evening!...wry humor and piercing emotion."

Elizabeth Ahlfors, Cabaret Scenes Magazine

"A simple tune can twist and turn into a more complex one, shattering in its intensity; equally, a vibrant, pulsing song can dissipate into fragments of loneliness, memory and reflection."

- Stephen Collins, britishtheatre.com

Annex A

JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL & LIVING IN PARIS

Dates: 26 May 2016 - 4 June 2016

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Early Bird from 26 March to 26 April - \$12 voucher from luxury French confectionery La Cure Gourmand, to be collected on show nights at SOTA, and redeemed at Takashimaya outlet La Cure Gourmand.

Cast:

- George CHAN
- Frances LEE
- Matt JASPER
- Stephanie VAN DEN DRIESEN

Creative Team:

- Directed & Choreographed by George CHAN
- Musical Direction by: Joel NAH
- Produced by: Nathalie RIBETTE

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES



GEORGE CHAN

George Chan has developed his career in both the Singapore and European Arts scene. Celebrity Judge, Artistic Director, Dance Choreographer, Singer and Actor. These are some of the many hats he wear. He spent 7 years in the European Musical Theatre scene performing in over 2,000 shows during his stay.

Highlights include famous names like *Miss Saigon*, *Chicago*, the Bee Gee's hit musical *Saturday Night Fever*, and the award winning European premiere of Tim Rice and Elton John's *Aida*. George also recorded the cast album for all of the above shows. He has performed in numerous theatre productions across Asia. Some highlights include: Malaysia's first opera *M!Opera* as Kerabat, Mandarin musical *If there's seasons* as Ah Le and playing the male lead Ying Xiong opposite Kit Chan in *December Rains*. George was invited to stage a concert in South Africa for SPOTLIGHT SINGAPORE 2011. As a Show Director and/or Choreographer, some of his more recent work include: *Ocean Butterfly's* 25th Anniversary Concert, *Lao Jiu The Musical*, *Company*, *Next to Normal*, *The Hossan Leong Show 4* and the sold out production of Kumar's *What's Make a Man a Man* at the Esplanade Theatre. George also directed and choreographed *A French Kiss in Singapore*.



FRANCES LEE

A rising star in the theatre scene, Frances recently graduated from the LASALLE BA (Hons) Acting Course in 2014, and already has a string of theatre credits to her name with a number of theatre companies - and she's only just begun. She was recently involved in Dick Lee's iconic musical *Beauty World* as Rosemary Joseph.

Her first lead role was Pangdemonium's *Fat Pig*, as the titular Helen, which earned her a Life! Theatre award nomination for Best Actress. She went on to play Pigsy in Wild Rice's annual pantomime of *Monkey Goes West*, which won 'Best Production' in the Life! Theatre awards. An effectively bilingual actress, Frances has also worked with The Theatre Practice and was featured in their Mandarin musical *Liao Zhai Rocks!* Frances is incredibly excited and humbled to be a part of such a stellar cast, and to be able to take on the challenge of performing the songs of the incredible Jacques Brel!



MATT JASPER

An experienced actor, singer, lecturer, director, musical director, voice coach and writer, Matt has been working in theatre, television and film since the age of seven years old.

He holds a B.A. (Acting and Musical Theatre) from the prestigious Central School of Speech and Drama and an M.A. (Applied Linguistics) from the University of Leicester as well as holding medals and certificates in speech and drama from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. He has taught at many of the schools in Singapore, lectured at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and La Salle, has given masterclasses at Lucasfilm and has trained corporate clientele from the fields of banking and law.

As a performer he has worked on television (BBC, Central television, Mediacorp), appeared in musicals and operas in the U.K. and Singapore, narrated shows for the National Geographic Channel, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, ESPN. His proudest moments were performing with Yo Yo Ma and The Silk Road Ensemble at the Esplanade Theatre and performing alongside Jamie Cullum for the Queen's birthday celebrations.

Matt, who has lived in Singapore for the last thirteen years, is married to a Singaporean and has two sons. He is extremely happy to be a part of this performance of Jacques Brel.



STEPHANIE VAN DRIESEN

Stephanie Van Driesen is a leading lady of the Malaysian musical theatre scene. She graduated from the LaSalle BA in Musical Theatre with first class honours and the President's Award in 2007. Upon her return to Malaysia, she graced the stage in notable roles as Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*, Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, and Beth Spencer in *Merrily We Roll Along*.

Highlights include playing herself / Marilyn Monroe in her one-woman-show *Marilyn & Me* (2015), Stephanie in *Marrying Me: The New Musical* (2013) which won the Kakiseni Audience Choice Award, Betty in *The Secret Life of Nora* - which won her "Best Performance in a Supporting Role" at the 2012 Kakiseni Arts Awards, Woman 1 in *Songs for a New World*, and Yellow Girl in *SHOUT! The Mod Musical*.

A powerful and versatile singer, Stephanie is highly sought after for her incredible range, flitting between musicals, classical, jazz, pop and ethnic vocal styles with ease, having recently performed at the *Jeonju International Sori Festival* in Korea and the *Rainforest World Music Festival* in 2013; both singing and playing traditional Malay gamelan with the Rhythm in Bronze ensemble, and as guest soloist with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra in *Final Fantasy X - The Music from Final Fantasy*, for which the New Straits Times described her voice as "hauntingly beautiful" (ShowBiz: Final Ecstasy, 2012) Recently, her vocals were heard in the film score to the epic final scene of the Malaysian blockbuster movie *Ola Bola*.

For more information:

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