

For Immediate Release

A Landmark Musical Returns: Lao Jiu: The Musical Back on the Singapore Stage



Lao Jiu: The Musical returns to the stage from 2 to 19 April 2026 at the Drama Centre Theatre, marking the latest revival of one of The Theatre Practice (Practice)'s most enduring and beloved productions.

Helmed by Practice Artistic Director Kuo Jian Hong (*Partial Eclipse of the Heart*, *The Soldier & His Virtuous Wife* and *If There're Seasons...*), this staging promises to be one of Singapore's most ambitious theatrical productions of 2026.

Featuring an epic cast of 26 performers, audiences can look forward to the musical's signature blend of memorable songs, dynamic choreography and critically acclaimed scenography. This includes the return of the celebrated "Battle of the Greats" number, which features a dazzling mix of traditional and contemporary puppetry techniques. Expect everything from traditional Chinese glove puppetry, to playful object theatre (made from upcycled materials), to massive rod puppets operated by multiple cast members!

Media Enquiries

Soya Liow soya@practice.org.sg

Tel/WhatsApp: +65-8302-2583

Jasmine Lim jasminelim@practice.org.sg

Tel/WhatsApp: +65-8288-7507

A Living Work in Constant Renewal

First written by the late theatre doyen Kuo Pao Kun as a play, *Lao Jiu* has been staged in multiple countries and languages since its premiere — each version shaped by the artists and contexts of its time.

In 2005, the story was adapted into a full-scale Mandarin musical by Kuo Jian Hong, a bold experiment that established Practice as one of the pioneers in creating Original Chinese Language Musical Theatre — a distinctively Singaporean genre blending Western musical theatre forms with Chinese language, culture and aesthetics.

Following a major reworking, *Lao Jiu: The Musical* returned in 2012 to sold-out houses and was revived again in 2017. It was lauded by The Business Times (2017) for its “emotive songs, effective choreography and a moving story with a classic struggle”, with the publication declaring that “*Lao Jiu: The Musical* ticks all the boxes as a great Singapore (Mandarin) musical.”

The production won Best Ensemble and Best Director at The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards 2013, and the set and costume design was selected for exhibition as a featured Scenic Design entry at the 2013 World Stage Design (WSD) held in Cardiff, Wales.

For Kuo Jian Hong, each revival is less about preservation than rediscovery. “*Lao Jiu* isn’t a work you save as ‘final.pdf’ and file away,” she shares. “Every iteration adds another layer of understanding. As artists change, and as society changes, the work changes with us.”

She points out that while *Lao Jiu* was once known solely as a “Kuo Pao Kun play”, it has since evolved into a piece of collective artmaking. “Thirty-six years later, it carries the voices, questions and experiences of generations of theatre-makers. It has developed a life of its own.”

A Story That Resonates Across Generations

Set against the backdrop of 1980s Singapore, *Lao Jiu: The Musical* centres on a young man torn between his passion for traditional Chinese puppetry and the weight of family obligation. Yet, despite its period settings, the show’s emotional core remains recognisable: the difficult negotiations between desire and duty, idealism and practicality.

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“These are choices that many people grapple with, not just artists,” notes Kuo. “A student might relate to Lao Jiu’s desire to pursue an ‘impractical’ dream career, while the pressures of providing for the family might resonate with older viewers. *Lao Jiu* is an evergreen story because each generation can see themselves reflected in the different characters.”

In a rapidly changing world shaped by technological advances, urban development and broadening social values, the production continues to invite reflection on how individuals define success and responsibility. “The world has changed so much since *Lao Jiu* was first written, and I’m excited to see how today’s audiences will respond,” says Kuo. “I hope it sparks reflection — about how we face ‘choices’ at life’s crossroads — and opens deeper conversations around dreams, responsibility and decision-making.”

A Platform for Generations of Performers

Reflecting Practice’s long-standing commitment to artistic development, continuity and mentorship, the many versions of *Lao Jiu: The Musical* have also become a training ground for local performers.

Singer-turned-actor Sugie Phua, who previously played Lao Jiu in the 2012 and 2017 productions, returns this time in the role of Lao Jiu’s father. “At first, I was a little worried because I’m not a father yet!” jokes Phua. “But since I’ve already played Sun Wu Kong, this role is yet another challenge to stretch me as a performer — and maybe a good ‘practice run’ for when I become a dad some day!”

Taking on the title role this year is singer-songwriter Amsden Huang, who makes his musical theatre debut in the production. “All this is completely new to me!” he notes. “It’s pushed me far beyond just singing. I’m learning how to tell a story physically and emotionally, and even how to operate puppets onstage.”

Joining them is a stellar cast of new faces, musical theatre veterans and returning original cast members — some reprising the same role for the third time. “For many of these performers, *Lao Jiu* has followed them through various stages of their career – from newbies tackling their first major production to industry veterans guiding the new generation,” says Kuo. “It’s very moving to consider *Lao Jiu* as more than a show, but also a site for transmission, legacy and cultural inheritance – how many local productions can say that?”

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Returning Creative Team, New Voices

The production retains songs by acclaimed Mandopop luminaries Xiaohan (lyrics) and Eric Ng (music), alongside a core creative team that has shaped earlier incarnations of the musical.

This includes Music Director Julian Wong (also co-arranger alongside Bang Wenfu), Choreographer Seong Hui Xuan (building on George Chan's 2012 work), Set Designer Szu-Feng Chen, Props Designer Rainie C., Lighting Designer Genevieve Peck, Sound Designer Shah Tahir, Hair Designer Ashley Lim and Makeup Designer Bobbie Ng (The Make Up Room).

Joining them are new collaborators, including Puppet Designer & Director Bright Ong (expanding Benjamin Ho's work from 2012 and 2017) and Costume Designer MAX.TAN, who bring fresh visual perspectives while building on the musical's established aesthetic.

Tickets for *Lao Jiu: The Musical* are now on sale via BookMyShow.

For programme information and ticketing deals, visit practice.bigtix.io or follow The Theatre Practice on social media (@thetheatrepractice).

Publicity Visuals

Credit: Courtesy of The Theatre Practice

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Creative Team

Original Work By: Kuo Pao Kun

Director: Kuo Jian Hong

Lyricist: Xiaohan

Composer: Eric Ng

Script Adaptation: Liu Xiaoyi

Arranger: Bang Wenfu

Music Director & Co-Arranger: Julian Wong

Choreographer: Seong Hui Xuan

Original Choreographer (2012): George Chan

Set Designer: Szu-Feng Chen

Associate Set Designer: Lee Bee Bee

Props Designer: Rainie C.

Puppet Designer & Director: Bright Ong

Puppet Designer & Trainer (2012, 2017): Benjamin Ho (Paper Monkey Theatre)

Lighting Designer: Genevieve Peck

Sound Designer: Shah Tahir

Costume Designer: MAX.TAN

Hair Designer: Ashley Lim

Make-Up Designer: Bobbie Ng (The Make Up Room)

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Cast

Lao Jiu: Amsden Huang

Shi Fu: Yeo Lyle

Father: Sugie Phua

Mother: Katherine Tang

Senior Horse: Wysom Wong

Junior Horse: Ang Xiao Ting

Ensemble:

Jodi Chan

Marcus Elliot Cheong

Isabella Chiam

chong shen hao

Edward Choy

Juni Goh

Joel Gay Han

Hang Qian Chou

Cheryl Ho

Abby Lai Ka Hei

Felix Lim

Angel Mermairina

Ng Mun Poh

Jean Seizure

Claris Tan

Tan Rui Shan

Tan Shou Chen

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About The Theatre Practice

The Theatre Practice (Practice) is Singapore's longest-standing professional bilingual theatre institution. Artist-driven and deeply progressive, Practice strives to be an arts space in Singapore that consciously nurtures and empowers people who care about humanity. Over the past 61 years, we have developed and presented works that aim to reflect the richness and complexities of Singapore's diverse cultures.

Today, we carry on the work of our visionary co-founders and cultural medallion recipients, Kuo Pao Kun and Goh Lay Kuan. Under the helm of current Artistic Director Kuo Jian Hong, Practice continues to shape Singapore's cultural landscape as the definitive voice in Singapore theatre. Jian Hong is deeply influenced by the importance of play in art-making and under her leadership, Practice has become the embodiment of the irrepressible spirit and fearless experimentation of play.

Practice is motivated by a desire to always respectfully entertain. We have collaborated with Singapore and international artists alike to present a critically-acclaimed repertoire of over 350 productions including musicals, classics, original and experimental works. We have toured extensively in the region. Many of our works have entered the canon of Southeast Asian literature and have been adapted and presented by theatre companies worldwide, presenting an authentically Singaporean voice on the world stage.

Since our inception, Practice has served as a cultural bridge between Asia and the world. Our recent theatre festival – *Patch! A (Live) Theatre Festival of Play* – comes from a legacy of carefully curated festivals and seminars that gather practitioners of all disciplines and cultures for sharing and exchange, while providing a valuable platform for outstanding international works.

As pioneers in Arts Education in Singapore, Practice has been instrumental both in nurturing leaders in the Singapore arts scene, and inculcating a love for the arts in generations of Singapore youth.

Artistically diverse and constantly relevant, Practice will always engage with the ceaseless exploration of new frontiers.

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