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ACCEPT THAT LOCAL THEATRE IS A HYBRID

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I refer to Jonathan Lim's plus point (« Engage Singapore ! », Dec 16), which suggested Singapore theatre should speak to its audience.

Productions, he claimed, must speak to the people about their lives and their country and touch on issues that affect them. Local theatre must talk about local life.

What is local life ? It is many things to many different people.

The Singaporean identity and culture is a hybrid. I believe the hybrid is not merely multicultural, but cross-cultural and multicontextual. It can be community-based, and also experimental, but not necessarily static.

Local theatre must understand the importance of originality. It must cease reproducing imitations of East Asian classics, European or American masterpieces.

But yet it is equally fundamental that Singaporeans work with theatrical literature that does not originate from the local culture.

This is because it gives them a channel to exhibit their Singaporean understanding of the stage.

And not all wish to embrace a totally Singaporean theatre scene, even if it becomes economically viable.

The local theatre community needs to recognise its limitations of being neither here nor there.

Accept the tension of being an intercultural hybrid, face the limitations honestly and then re-evaluate « originality ».

Only so then can it work towards dealing with a dominant Eastern or Western culture from the outside, and become both an insider and outside.

The local theatre scene should not think of redefining a new identity, but work on promoting its existing assets.

Theatre practitioners should speak in more than one voice, narrate more than one reality, embrace more than one perspective, and seek more than one community.

They are translators who trespass, bridge, reconnect, reinterpret, and remap. They discover the outer fringes of her culture and then cross them.

The local theatre scene may seem limited and efforts to deal with the hybrid nature of Singaporean culture may close some old windows. But they will also open new doors.

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*What's your view on the current state of the Singapore theatre scene ?
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