

# ALAMAK!



**ALAMAK (Oh My God)!** was presented by Agni Kootthu (Theatre of Fire) on Sat 15 and Sun 16 Nov 2008 at the Guinness Theatre, The Substation, with support from the Arts Fund. The performance was given an Arts Entertainment Licence with an 'Advisory: R18 (MATURE Theme / Strong Language)' by the Media Development Authority (MDA).

Performed by

Ahamed Ali Khan  
Dew M. Chaiyanara  
Faizal Abdullah  
Gloria Tan  
Hemang Yadav  
Shaiful Risan

Lighting, Set and Sound Design, & Stage Manager: Elangovan  
Production Manager: S Thenmoli

Written and directed by Elangovan

One night, the Police Coast Guard detects an unknown person swimming towards the direction of Singapore coastline with the aid of an inflatable trash bag. They fish him out of the sea. He has no valid travel document and is placed under arrest for attempting to enter the country illegally. It is explained to him that he will be charged for unlawful entry into Singapore and if convicted, he will face jail up to six months and liable to not less than three strokes of the cane on his 'royal arse', or fined up to \$6,000. During the interrogation, he confesses that he is actually the mythical figure Sang Nila Utama, the founder of Singapore in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD. He further claims that he was returning from the Riau Archipelago after visiting his subjects and had unfortunately entered a vortex at sea and was subsequently teleported into modern Singapore. The powers-that-be identify him as a potential global branding image for the Foreign Talent scheme and offer him immediate citizenship. But he demands that he be released first to understand his subjects better before accepting the citizenship. The authorities release him and give him free access to meet-the-people of modern Singapore. Sang Nila Utama meets characters from all walks of city-life (Pochong, toilet-protester, foreign sex-workers, Malay HDB dweller who lost his cat, Intelligence Officer, jobless Indian, Merlion) and unravels the discrepancies and incongruence that exist between the dominant official viewpoint and the articulations of the disenfranchised subalterns. Nila Utama has mixed feelings about acquiring citizenship but is surprised when he is accorded the highest honour and given an official position. He reiterates what he had uttered centuries ago: "If the animals here are as fine and as fierce as lions, this would be a good place to start a new kingdom... sorry circus."

### **Excerpts from ALAMAK! :-**

#### **VOMIT**

[Merlion - Hemang & Sang Nila Utama - Faizal]

*[Sang Nila Utama is checking out the Merlion. The Merlion spits at him.]*

M: *[To SNU in English and Mandarin]* Hello Sang Nila Utama. I am the Merlion. Welcome to Singapore. The land of the free people.

SNU: Is this your religious prayer?

M: No. They have not given me any religion. I am a free-thinker. I spit freely for twenty-four hours.

SNU: Why do you vomit the same shit again and again?

M: Vomitting is my job. In the vernacular of this country, to Merlion means to Vomit. To Vomit means to Merlion. I am supposed to be a noun. But these bastards have made me a verb now.

SNU: But why are you Merlioning in English and Mandarin?

M: English and Mandarin are the official languages of this country.

SNU: What about Malay and Tamil?

M: Oh! Minority stuff. Not practical to add them to every publicity material. Do they still exist for official and commercial use? I don't know what you are talking about? *Wa pu chi tau maaa ...*

SNU: You are neglecting the two other ethnic languages. Don't you know the constitution?

M: *[Merlion takes out a document from its bra and reads]* Under General Provisions in the Constitution for Official languages and national Language. 153A - (1) Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English shall be the 4 official languages in Singapore. (2) The national language shall be the Malay language and shall be in the Roman script: Provided that — (a) no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using or from teaching or learning any other language; and (b) nothing in this Article shall prejudice the right of the Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in Singapore. Are you satisfied now? *[Merlion rolls the document into a ball, puts the paper ball into its mouth and spits it towards the audience.]*

SNU: Then why can't you respect the constitutional right? Why don't you welcome me in the other two languages?

M: Hello visitor! I am not breaching the constitutional right. I am not prohibiting nor preventing both languages. I am programmed to welcome you in only two languages. Those two languages are easily understood by the tourists who visit us. Statistically more *orang puteh* (white man) and *orang kuning* (yellow man) with spending power visit us. So I am used to speaking in the two profit-making languages. See I also can speak Malay which I picked up from the tourists from the poor neighbouring countries. Please have some respect for me. I am the national icon of this country. Look at my streamlines pointed snout. Look at my bared fangs. Look at my fishy tail. Look at my lion-head. Hear me roar now. *[Roars but it sounds like a cat's meow.]*

SNU: Icon? What is the purpose of having a mutant like you?

M: A mutant? I am a good *fengshui* symbol for Singapore. I am the guardian of wealth. I keep the water moving in our Singapore river. My vomiting keeps the *qi* (energy) active. I am made of concrete and stand 40 feet tall in this 2,500 metre park. I can spout water throughout the day and night.

Look at the aesthetic lighting effects, the multi-purpose viewing deck, activity spaces and a landing point for boats. I, the Merlion on the Bay am a mythical creature with the head and trunk of a lion and the tail of a fish. Hey, Sang Nila Utama, if you want to live on this island peacefully then you must surrender all memory of having once been a prince. Be like me.

SNU: Why is a tourist attraction like you a national icon? In other countries, national icons become tourist attractions. But here, you have attracted tourists and become a national icon. Ridiculous! They should get rid of you from this place.

M: Exactly! I had good *fengshui* when I was first placed at the entrance of the Singapore river in 1972. But since I was moved to this Merlion Park in 2002, my view is blocked by the Marina Barrage and the Inegrated Resort Casino is coming up ... if it ever comes up. I don't have open access to the sea anymore. Now the flow of wealth to this country is being blocked and they are going to move me again. I am sick of moving here and there. I am more popular than the Statue of Liberty. Are you going to take a photograph with me Sang Nila Utama?

SNU: I think you are an ugly hybrid. Half-baked truth. A symbol of the Singaporean's loss of civil liberty. It is disgraceful to take a snap with you.

M: I don't get it. Then why are you here? Shoo! Get lost!

SNU: I came here to check whether you are the lion that I saw when I landed on Temasek.

M: You did not see a lion. You saw a tiger. Your attendants didn't want to offend you. So they lied that it was a lion to make you happy. These people have transformed the lie into truth and I am the living example. Beside the business of buying and selling, lying is the conscientious mission of our first world democratic nation.

SNU: I know that most of you have taken me for a bloody fool who took a tiger for a lion when there are no lions in south-east asia. But I really witnessed a lion, the asian lion which still lives in the Gir forest region in Gujerat, India. My attendants were not idiots either to lie to me. I know the difference between a bearded tiger and a lion. And if you are a lion, why are you having a fish-tail? Can you really swim? Where are your majestic jewels? Have they chopped it to make you another eunuch like those men-in-white? Is that why you cannot roar? Answer me eunuch? Fish-tail for Temasek, lion-head for Singapura and your mission is to vomit daily into the sea. What are you spouting daily into the sea? Lies? Disgraceful! What if I had seen a pig instead of the lion? Would you have named this country *babipura* (piggypore)? Well it justifies anyway.

M: *[Tries to roar but ends up meowing and breaking down into tears. It weeps.]*

SNU: Why are you crying?

M: I am embarrassed. I don't deserve to be an icon of fabrication. All I do is, spitting into my face every second, day and night. I want to erase my face but I can't. I am rooted to this bank. Can you help me to jump into my reflection? I need to disappear. Rightfully, you are the national icon.

SNU: Okay. Bend down. *[SNU kicks the Merlion into the sea.]* Majulah Singapura!

## **APUNENEH**

[Apuneneh - Hemang & Sang Nila Utama - Faizal]

*[Apuneneh is digging a hole. SNU is watching.]*

A: *[Singing]* Apuneneh apuneneh apuneneh.

SNU: Why are singing that racial slur?

A: Because the Chinese use it behind my back. And it is also my secret name. Agent Apuneneh.

SNU: What does it mean?

A: Nothing. Some *Manjan* (yellow-man) shit who didn't understand Tamil found the rhythms of the language funny and had coined the term to depict my race. So it is meaningless name-calling.

SNU: But if it is meaningless, why are you using it now?

A: I was instructed to chant it as a mantra to complete my project.

SNU: What project?

A: You want to *kena* (get) FBI is it?

SNU: FBI?

A: Fuck By Indian.

SNU: Why should I be fucked by you?

A: You are spying on me.

SNU: I am not spying. I am fascinated by what you are doing. Why are you digging this hole in the funny Speaker's Corner opened by your government?

A: To bury.

SNU: Bury what?

A: Something I cannot tell you.

SNU: Tell me. I am the fountain of this country.

A: What?

SNU: It's an honest mistake. I mean founder of this country.

A: I thought there are only two founders for this country. How come got a third one?

SNU: I am the original founder Sang Nila Utama.

A: Oh yes. You founded Sang Nila Utama Secondary School. Now no more.

SNU: Not the school. This country. Who are the other two founders?

A: One *Matsalleh* (white-man) and one Chinaman. One made a sleepy fishing village into city-state. One is making city-state into international fish-market. Can you stop bothering me? I have a job to do.

SNU: Why are so angry?

A: I just came back from a job interview. They asked me whether I can speak Mandarin. When I said I can, they asked me whether I can write and read Mandarin. When I said I can they asked me whether I can speak dialect. When I said I can speak Hokkien, they asked me whether I can write Hokkien. It was a very difficult question to answer. I answered promptly but was not selected.

SNU: Did you say yes?

A: I said, yes, I can write Hokkien perfectly in your mother's *chou-cheebye*. Oh you won't know. Smelly cunt. No job nevermind. But I am still fed-up about another problem. I cannot sell my own HDB (Housing Development Board) flat..

SNU: But it is your house.

A: No. It belongs to you for only ninety-nine years. They have the EIP - Ethnic Integration Policy. A racial quota for every flat. The Chinese quota for my flat was full. The Malay quota was also full. So I could only sell to another Indian. Indian buyers usually don't have money. I had to sell it for 50,000 below market price. My Chinese neighbour sold his house for 50,000 more than me. He is laughing at me. Apuneneh! Own house cannot sell. Ha ha! *Ah pui!* [*Spits and rubs the sputum with his leg in Chinese style.*]

SNU: So if your hard-earned asset eventually becomes a liability, why do you support the policy?

A: The policy is for racial integration and harmony. You don't have to support anything here. You become the support for everything automatically here. Whether you like it or not you get screwed day by day and you won't know who or what screwed you until you become desensitized and vote for the same shits every five years.

SNU: Is it a devious political ploy to deny political representation to opposition parties with strong minority ground support?

A: I catch-no-balls. I don't understand.

SNU: Then whose balls do you catch.

A: My own balls.

SNU: I don't want to see your balls.

A: I also don't want to see my balls. That's why I am digging this hole.

SNU: You mean you are going to ...

A: Yes ... bury my balls and live like other *Apunenehs* without pride and self-respect. [*Phone rings and Apuneneh answers*] Yes Sir! What! You are making me the *Mamak* (Indian) Activities Group Chairman for my constituency? What do I have to do? Oh! It is easy. I can do it Sir. Oh! with great pleasure. Okay Sir! Finally I got an excellent job. I have to report for duty now.

SNU: What about your balls?

A: No need for this job. It is a pre-requisite. Because my job is to pluck all the other *Apuneneh* balls and neutralize the minority race. Hmm ... Are you a DKK?

SNU: DKK?

A: *Dara Keturunan Keling!* Descended from Indian blood. You must be. *[Sings] Apuneneh! Apuneneh!* *[Runs after SNU to bite his balls. SNU runs away.]*