

MEOW!



was presented by Agni Kootthu (Theatre of Fire) on Sat 28 and Sun 29 Nov
2009

at The Substation Theatre, The Substation,
with support from the Arts Fund.

The performance was given an Arts Entertainment Licence with a
Rating and Advisory: R18 (Coarse Language and Mature Themes)
by the Media Development Authority (MDA) of Singapore.

Performed by

Dew M Chaiyanara : Female
Faizal Abdullah : Male
Hemang Yadav : Cat

Lighting / Sound / Set Design
/ Production & Stage Manager: Elangovan

Written and directed by Elangovan

What would you do when you win a million in the Singapore Big Sweep? The choices are endless, but for some, winning a fortune is as debasing and disorientating as a horrific ordeal in a car on a rainy night. The millionaires, a 'subaltern Malay couple': mechanic at a petrol station and a salesgirl, re-enact their childless marriage baiting each other on a never-ending car journey to take food home to their cat. She berates him about his impotency and other inadequacies; he about her besotted behaviour over their cat for whom he had just bought 32 tins of canned food in a cat-food sale. He loves his job. She loves her cat. But the condominium-bound tabby cannot speak and acts as a silent confidante rather than a high counsel for their marital dilemmas. He suffers from Ailurophobia and intermittently, an obese human-like cat appears in his surrealistic dreams to philosophize and entreat him. The cat proselytizes and conducts a psychiatric test to gauge his sanity. The bizarre ending bursts the septic boil of corrosive morality to leave a raw, ugly, warning wound.

With instant wealth comes subtle change and revelations of desires laid dormant by social circumstances and convenient relationships. Impregnated with strange animal instincts, it is the suppression of savagery that makes us human but occasionally when pushed over the emotive precipice, the beasts emerge snapping and snarling like feral cats. MEOW particularly addresses the cultural and sexual values of the working class couple and brittle hegemony of multi-culturalism and racial tolerance in Singapore. Exposing issues of class, violence and urban alienation, it gets its teeth into universal themes of cultural alienation and the manifestation of the society's bankrupted social values in fetishism, racism and impotency. In MEOW, verbal abuse, physical violence, racism, sexism, and classism are very ugly but demand serious attention. Desperation and loneliness cry out in the midst of communication. MEOW is a marriage from nouveau riche hell for a low-class Malay couple.

Excerpt from Meow:-

F: Have you seen Manja? [*Searches for the magazine and finds it. She reads the magazine intermittently during the journey.*] Here somewhere. See what Cameron Diaz's cat is wearing? Are you looking? Look here.

M: Yeah.

F: Look look!

M: Are those really her breasts?

F: See ... see ... one of those latest collars. Cattie said they were bringing them in different colours. Anyway, there's something we can think about.

M: What about a jacket for me? Look at this jacket: Remember the jacket I wanted.

- F: Oh! It is so hot. You need a jacket for what. Want to show off is it? You think you are James Dean-ah *babi* (pig)? Maybe P. Ramlee *adalah* (can-lah) [*She reads the magazine.*] Why are you taking so long to get there?
- M: Because it is raining outside.
- F: [*Mocking*] Aw! I'm sorry. Do you want to go home? I do. I want to go home very quickly. I need to go to the toilet. This bloody rain is making me to want to *kencing* so much. [*Holds her crotch.*]
- M: I know ... I know.
- F: How do you know? You got *puki* (vagina) is it? So can you speed? Want to get home. [*Sadly*] Butoh will be hungry. I know that he is hungry. I'm hungry. I haven't eaten. I lost some weight. I've lost some weight today. Isn't that good? I never eat the whole fucking day, and I've lost some weight.
- M: Great. Where ... where did you lose weight? [*Pinches her breast.*]
- F: Oi! Stop it! Somewhere ... somewhere you don't bother to see. . Get lost *babi*.
- M: [*American accent.*] You know are not ... the brain controls the body. If you lose 10 kg you have to keep on going because your body is genetically programmed. So it will go on trying its best to get back the 10 kg. So you have to go to Compressions for your lifetime. Got life-membership or not? You went to Compressions to lose weight right? Nevermind. I will check the bills and cut your monthly allowance.
- F: Stupid mechanic brain. Where got Compressions. Expressions-lah idiot. [*With Chinese accent*] 'Lose your flesh to look fresh' – lor. Stupid sial. I go there. They give me a second-look. How come Malay can afford-ah? Racist bitches.
- M: Don't become sick.
- F: I won't get sick.
- M: You will get sick...Bulemia or what they say...you will vomit until you cannot vomit and then die.
- F: *Suay* (bad luck). You will die. I won't get sick. I only get sick whenever that fucking foreign-trash *puki kelings* from India come to the boutique and try all the clothings but never buy anything. They make me KO (knockout) with their BO (body-odour). BO like *tong-sampah* (refuse) lorry. Disgusting. I have to wash my nose in and out. See my nose. Becoming big or not. They give us a hardtime. What if I get asthma breathing polluted air? I don't have BO. I control it. I use expensive

deodorant. Not the Tekka market type. Maybe, I should also cover my nose with a surgical mask to save my breath from their stench. If they ask, 'Dei why are you wearing the mask-da?' I can say H1N1, or even better *Keling1* N1 or *babiflu* ... hahaha.

M: (Indian accent) Very good *Aachi*. Very good. It's good to cover things when you can't fix them.

F: I'm not happy there. I don't think I want to work there anymore.

M: No you have to ... come on ... I mean you love work don't you ... working-class people. You become a vegetable if you stay alone at home. We worked and worked and worked and built this country you know. No work and you are not fit to live here. Some more when you are Malay. No work, then we can't pay monthly bank loan, then they take away our HDB flat and we end up sleeping on Changi beach and East Coast Park okay. And the Chinese Park Rangers will chase us everyday for camping there without permit. Our ancestors, the orang laut, the sea pirates lived on the beach and we also end up on the beach.

F: Who cares. If I don't work, you will look after me what? Right *babi*? When I sit at home you will *sayang* me... right love?

M: I work! You switch jobs all the time or sit at home. I know. You sit and watch tv. You just sit and change the remote buttons. Then I come home and you are still sitting. Then we have an argument and you go and sit in the balcony. Then you say you are moody ... you are moody.

F: *Suda habis*? Have you finished? I don't think you listened to what I've said. I'm unhappy.

M: [*Laughs*] Okay-lah I'm sorry.

[*Pause.*]

F: I don't know why I keep going to this meetings at the Condo ... when you know all of them Chinese and Indians want is to talk about this job and that fucking job, Foreign Talent or Foreign Trash taking over Singapore, and here I am making coffee and Halal sandwiches.. I mean you know. They don't treat me like VIP. Is it because I am Malay. But I don't look like typical Minah what.

M: What do you think you look like?

F: Bollywood star.

M: Butoh-lah!

- F: Don't laugh babi. I got mixed-blood what? Do I look high class or low class-ah? Only the men like to look at me. Always look at my backside and slits. I know why. Because my backside is so solid. Because I go for Power Pacing exercise. I pedal and spin so much-ah my cellulite all disappear into thin air. And I look so sexy when I shake my backside. But still-ah I don't like meeting all those hypocrites.
- M: Meeting the people. It is important. You are actively partaking in feeding the people. Was it Jesus...Buddha...Gandhi...ah Mao Tse Tung, no, father of our nation who said feed the people and feel the people ... or was it feel the people and feed the people or ... feed and fleece the people... but always FUCK the people to make sure they vote for you again.
- F: *Babi!* What are you talking about? You are in a very strange mood tonight. You are not usually like this at all. What's the problem? Why are you trying to be intelligent?
- M: [*Grimaces*] I got a pulled muscle from carrying the cans.
- F: You could have pulled a lot more cans than that. You knew very well that no bags were allowed in that crazy sale. Hey! Why the fuck did you wear this jacket? I can't believe it. I have been sitting here so patiently and controlling my temper [*Holds her crotch*] so patiently. Why the fuck did you wear this old jacket? I told you to wear the blackjacket I bought for you at Sungei Road. And you came late to pick me up. Fuck you.
- M: [*Shouts*] Oi! I came from work.
- F: How many cans did you get? I don't think you've got more than what twenty? How many can you get in this jacket? More than what you can get in the black jacket?
- M: I got thirty-two cans. One extra for the 32nd day of the month.
- F: We could have got at least forty-five ... forty-eight may be. I could have done better than that. But I can't. Look at my finger nails. That's why you got to do it macho-man. And...
- M: I think ...
- F: ... fucking shit job you did. Useless bastard. Body like the Merlion's backside. Brain like mosquito-shit.
- M: I think that's a point right there. I can't carry more than I could. You must appreciate my integrity in conceding that ...
- F: [*Mocks*] Oh I can't!

M: *[Shouts]* I can't but I got ... I got thirty-two cans. I got three times my own body weight in EAT PUSSY canned catfood for stinking Butoh.

F: Not good enough. Not good enough. There was a big sale on. Other people carry so many. I saw many of them running to their cars with more EAT PUSSY cans than what you brought back asshole. I know. I know. You must have got lost in your own dream-world in that supermarket ... giving way to everyone ... saying *[Mimics him]* 'After you Miss. Excuse me. Could you tell me how to find EAT PUSSY. How does a can of EAT PUSSY look like?' Fuck you. Well you know ... you are fucking stupid. Fucking lazy Malay bastard. We got a really big jacket and you forgot. I specially fixed the lining ... I fixed the lining to make the pockets big ...

M: *[Shouts]* I know I know ...

F: ... and you could have used that.

M: I know I could have used that. Why are you so greedy? There was a long queue. You expect me to jump the queue? You expect me to disrupt the peace and order for some cans of petty cat food? Who do you think I am?

F: Oh fuck them! Break the fucking system. You can get how much you want if you dare to break the rules. Everyone breaks the rules. You must be clever to break the rule. You win or lose. You don't win...you don't lose...then no point in living ...better die ... Who cares?.

M: I care! I cannot lie like you.

F: You mean I lie?

M: Yes! You lie all the time. Remember? The Ustad caught you eating at Geylang Serai market during fasting month.

F: I lied to him. So what? He sat in front of me when I was having my breakfast. He started to scold me for not fasting. He then asked me whether I am a Muslim? I kept eating and he went on *pe pe pop pop pe pe pop pop*. He continued preaching about the importance of fasting. I finished eating. Then I told him, Ustad, I am not fasting because my *puki* is bleeding. I am having my period. He scolded me for wasting his time and not telling the truth. I told him, you never asked me what? No one gives a shit about the truth in Singapore you know.

M: But you lied. You lied. You definitely go to hell.

F: Ah, *Merepe-ah!* You want to speak truth they will put you under ISA. Internal Stupid Act. You think what you *Cheena* -ah? Whatever happens just close one-eye and *buabodok* pretend nothing happened -ah? Or you think what you like the *Keling*, Indian is it? Always backstab and carry balls. You are Melayu. Remember that. [*Checking the shopping bags in the back-seat*] Hey *babi!* I didn't see any chocolates in the bags. I specially asked for chocolates because I like fucking chocolates. I think I deserve a treat. I think I really deserve a treat.

M: Yes. You really deserve a treat tonight. An unforgettable treat.

F: What? You are going to make me happy-ah *babi?*

M: Yes.

F: Have I ever said that I'm happy?

M: When were you last happy?

F: This morning!

M: Why were you happy this morning?

F: After you left. Butoh and I had a nice little time. I just had my bath. Just before I went to work, I played with Butoh in the balcony. I brushed his coat. I sprayed organic catnip all over his toys, scratching post and his puffy round creamy bed. Butoh was so happy sniffing the catnip.

M: So what makes you unhappy?

F: You!

M: Me? I bought you everything. The condo apartment ... the cat ... everything and you still don't love me? Why ... why?

F: Oi Butoh! Not cat. Butoh. I don't ask for much. You know ... Butoh's the only source of happiness we have.

M: Correction. You have.

F: I think we are the only people in the condo without a baby. Pukimak! I hate seeing prams in the lift. I fucking-shit hate it. You know what that does to me. You know I have to try so hard. I ... I have to put on the bravest face ... It is me being polite ... I just want to fucking-shit *hantam* the baby in that pram. It is my-one. Everytime I see another baby ... it is fucking my-one ... I will never see one right? MR FUCKING MACHO MAN. Mr Fucking, when was the last time we saw your *Tongat Ali* up? Mr fucking? When was that? If not for my vibrator every night

when I masturbate I don't know where I would be you know. Geylang or Batam. Or maybe your cousin Din *punya* house-lah.

M: Din's house? Listen I've something really important to tell you, Listen okay ...

F: *[Loud]* So it is on Matakucing Road... you know Matakucing Road?

M: I know.

F: Yes ... you know that's where the pet-boutique is ... at Matakucing Road. Now ask for Maria. Because I told her that you would be coming in next week.

M: *[Purrs.]* Maria really turns me on. I like Maria. Her *puki* opens like *Suriya* channel. So colourful.

F: Are you being fucking vulgar? I cannot *tahan* you know.

M: You're sure about that.

F: Oh! Fuck you! No ... no ... I've never said that one of your friends turns me on ... your gang is as condemned as you are ... your friends turn me off the way you do. You go fishing with the boys and crack jokes about fucking mermaids right?

M: I have ... I have ... have simple friends ... you know that.

F: Yes I know about your *kakis*. *Pondans* (effeminates)! They make you feel like a man. Wonder if they treat their women the way you treat me your *lembey-lembey sotong* (soft soft squid) between your legs.

M: We never talk about women. Only work. About grease...grease and rust. And we don't joke about splitting anything. We don't tell dirty jokes. Let me give you some samples.

[Snap blackout. Lights. Psycho Butoh (PB), the cat is sitting on the female's seat.]

PB: I am going to test your EQ. Emotional Quotient.

If you are not greedy, you are not Chinese. If you are not backstabbing, you are not Indian. If you are not lazy, 'sorry', contented, you are not Malay. If you are not made of all these three things, then you cannot be Singaporean. Are you Singaporean?

M: No I am Malay.

PB: Are you Singaporean?

M: No I am Muslim.

PB: *[Laughs.]* On a flight to London on an Indian plane, there was an Indian man and a British man sitting beside each other. The air stewardess started serving food but the Indian man took out his own food. He ate *Thosai*, rice with chicken and mutton curry, dhal and curd. The British asked him, "What's that?" The Indian replied "This is food India." Then the stewardess started serving drinks.

The Indian took out his bottle of *Lassi* (yogurt drink) and started gulping it down. The British man was curious and he asked "What is that?" The Indian replied, "This is water India." After a while the British man was sleeping and the Indian man was reading his newspaper. Suddenly the Indian man farted. The British woke up with a shock and asked the Indian, "What was that?" The Indian man said "You don't worry. That is Air India. Air India is free." *[M Laughs]*

Ah Beng the Chinaman and his ever nagging wife went on vacation to Jerusalem. While they were there, the wife passed away. The undertaker told Ah Beng, "You can have her shipped home to Singapore for USD\$2000, or you can bury her in the Holy Land for USD\$150." Ah Beng thought about it and calculated that it would cost him very high for shipping her body home. After thinking about it for some time, Ah Beng replied - "I take option one-lah". The undertaker was puzzled and asked, "Why would you spend USD\$2000 to ship your wife home when it would be wonderful to be buried here and you would spend only USD\$150?" Ah Beng answered, "Long ago, a man died here, was buried here, and 3 days later, he rose from the dead. I just can't take the chance with my wife man."

[M Laughs]

One night, an angel was flying around. She saw a guy half-asleep and counting sheep on his bed: "One, two, three, four, five, six ..." The angel removed his left brain, and the guy now counted: "one, three, five, seven nine ..." The angel then returned his left brain and removed his right brain, But the guy now counted "two, four, six, eight, ten ..." Finally the angel removed both brains and the guy now counted "satu, dua, tiga, empat, lima, enam, in Malay ..." *[M Laughs]*

M: Oi! Psycho butoh. You are bloody racist. You are making me say all these things. I am not like this. Get out from my car. Get out!

PB: Hahaha ... If I am psychobutoh then what are you? Psycho babi? I am not in your car. Your mind. Let me tell you one more joke. The king of the cats went to Mecca for *Haj*. Then the king of the mice thought he should visit him, for he would have changed his former sinful ways. The other mice were not convinced, so he went by himself and found the new *hajji* praying. When he saw the mouse, he stopped praying and sprang into attack. The king of the mice reported to his subjects that the cat prayed like a *hajji*, but pounced like a cat.

Come on *babi*! Pounce! Pounce! Pounce on me! You have passed the racist test.
Meow!

M: I am not racist! I am not racist! If I catch you I will fuck you. I will fuck you.

[Snap blackout. Lights. Female is in the car.]