

54<sup>th</sup>



香港藝術節  
HK ARTS FESTIVAL  
2026

MENG Theatre Studio

*En attendant Godot*  
(*Waiting for Godot*)



Playwright: Samuel Beckett  
Director: Meng Jinghui



Please download and  
read on your mobile phone

12-14.03.2026 / 7:30pm

14-15.03.2026 / 2:30pm

Theatre, Hong Kong City Hall

Approximately two hours with no interval

Performed in Putonghua with Chinese and  
English surtitles

This production contains smoking scenes  
and smoke effects

Recommended for ages 12 and above

Cover Photograph  
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- ✘ The content of all works is independently produced by the creative team, and does not reflect the views or opinions of the Sponsor.
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### Talk

Hong Kong Arts Festival Distinguished Cultural Leadership Series (13)

In Conversation with Meng Jinghui, Artistic Director of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival

10.03.2026 (Past event)

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## Chief Executive's Message

I am pleased to congratulate the Hong Kong Arts Festival on the organisation of its 2026 season. This year's Festival, the 54th edition, features some 180 performances, encompassing music, Chinese and Western opera, theatre, dance, arts technology and a dazzling variety of performing arts productions.

The Festival opens on 27 February with Ballet Nacional de España's acclaimed operatic ballet *La Bella Otero*, recreating the glamour of Paris' golden era on stage. The Festival concludes on 27 March with the large-scale dance theatre production *Dream in The Peony Pavilion*, directed and choreographed by Li Xing, injecting fresh life into the timeless love classic. This year's music performances present a number of brilliant pianists, including young Korean piano sensation Yunchan Lim, and Hong Kong-born Aristo Sham, the gold medallist and audience award winner at the 2025 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

As ever, the Festival features a diverse range of outreach and educational activities. This year's PLUS programme focuses on a wide cultural experience for arts lovers and deeper understanding of world-class artists, contributing to promoting engagement in cultural events and consolidating Hong Kong's positioning as the East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange.

I am grateful to our many sponsors and donors for their generous support. My thanks also, as always, go to the Hong Kong Arts Festival for once again bringing Hong Kong, and the world, a shining season of arts and culture, entertainment and wonder.



**John KC LEE**

Chief Executive

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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## Chairman's Message

A warm welcome to the 54th Hong Kong Arts Festival. As a leading international performing arts event, the Festival continues to uphold its mission of enriching our city's cultural life and promoting the best of the performing arts to different sectors of our community. This year, the Festival brings to Hong Kong more than 1,100 distinguished local and international artists from a wide range of artistic disciplines in over 180 performances of more than 45 programmes, as well as about 300 "PLUS", outreach and education events.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the HKSAR Government, acting through the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, for its annual subvention and matching grant. My heartfelt thanks also go out to The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, our corporate sponsors, charitable foundations and donors for their generous support. Their invaluable contributions empower us to actively advance the community through the performing arts.

My genuine appreciation goes to all our internationally renowned and most talented artists for their creativity and outstanding performances on stage. Their dedication profoundly motivates us to continue showcasing exceptional productions, commissioning new works and nurturing local talent. I am also deeply grateful to the HKAF team for its commitment and efforts to bring this Festival to life.

Finally, I extend my warmest thanks to all audience members. We truly hope you enjoy this artistic journey and discover moments of delight, resonance and inspiration throughout the programmes being presented this year.



**Lo Kingman**

Chairman  
Hong Kong Arts Festival



Supporting Organisation:



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# Foreword

The 54th Hong Kong Arts Festival once again brings together great masters and outstanding artists, presenting more than 180 performances across music, dance, theatre, opera, Chinese opera, arts-tech and interdisciplinary creations—showcasing the exceptional craft of leading local and international talent.

One of this year's themes is an exploration of "Courage and Peace". At a time when the world is troubled by war, displacement, economic downturns and other hardships, artists respond from their own distinctive perspectives and in their own languages on stage, reminding us of the need to be resilient and hopeful.

Some works in this year's Festival adopt a minimalistic theatrical approach, enabling us to transcend the constraints of geography and resources. We also continue to embrace arts-tech, using mixed-reality technologies to open up new performance possibilities.

As always, the Festival presents more than 300 outreach and education activities. Our PLUS events feature a curated series of talks, masterclasses, backstage tours and guided cultural walks. Our comprehensive education initiatives tailored for primary, secondary and tertiary students are aimed at enabling students to gain a more in-depth understanding and appreciation of the works we present.

I sincerely thank you for joining us at this performance, and we hope that you find joy and resonance in the experience.



**Flora Yu**

Executive Director  
Hong Kong Arts Festival

The Hong Kong Arts Festival is made possible with the funding support of:



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# Creative & Production Team

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Yu Lei

Sound Director

Hua Shan

Assistant to Stage Director

Jia Yuying

Stage Manager

Xi Shengli

Assistant to Lighting Designer

Chen Nan

Lighting Operator

Hu Zexi

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Liu Jianhao

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Liu Jing

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Publicity Director

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# Cast & Characters

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## About Samuel Beckett



© Roger Pic

Samuel Beckett (1906–89) was an Irish playwright, novelist and poet, born in Foxrock, Dublin. He is best known for his groundbreaking work in the theatre, particularly the play *Waiting for Godot*, which premiered in 1953 and is often regarded as a cornerstone of modernist literature. In his writing, Beckett explored existential themes, the absurdity of human existence and the complexities of language.

Beckett developed a passion for literature and philosophy while studying at Trinity College Dublin. After briefly working as a teacher, he moved to Paris, where he became involved with the avant-garde literary scene and formed friendships with influential figures such as James Joyce. His experiences during World War Two, including his involvement in the French Resistance, deeply influenced his later works.

Throughout his career, Beckett wrote in both English and French, producing a diverse body of work that includes novels such as *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*, as well as numerous short stories and essays. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969 in recognition of his innovative contributions, which centred on the bleak, impersonal and tragicomic moments of existence, often infused with black comedy.

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# Synopsis



*En attendant Godot* is a play by the Irish writer Samuel Beckett and the most celebrated and emblematic work of absurdist theatre.

“Let’s go.” “We can’t.” “Why not?” “We’re waiting for Godot.”

Two men are waiting under a tree on a path. Their only certainty is waiting for Godot.

They encounter Pozzo and Lucky. As night falls, a boy arrives and reports that Godot will not come today, but surely tomorrow.

The next day, the same road, the same two men, the same waiting—and so it repeats.

The now-blind Pozzo and now-mute Lucky return, yet Godot remains absent. The boy reappears and declares once more that Godot will not come today—but tomorrow, certainly.

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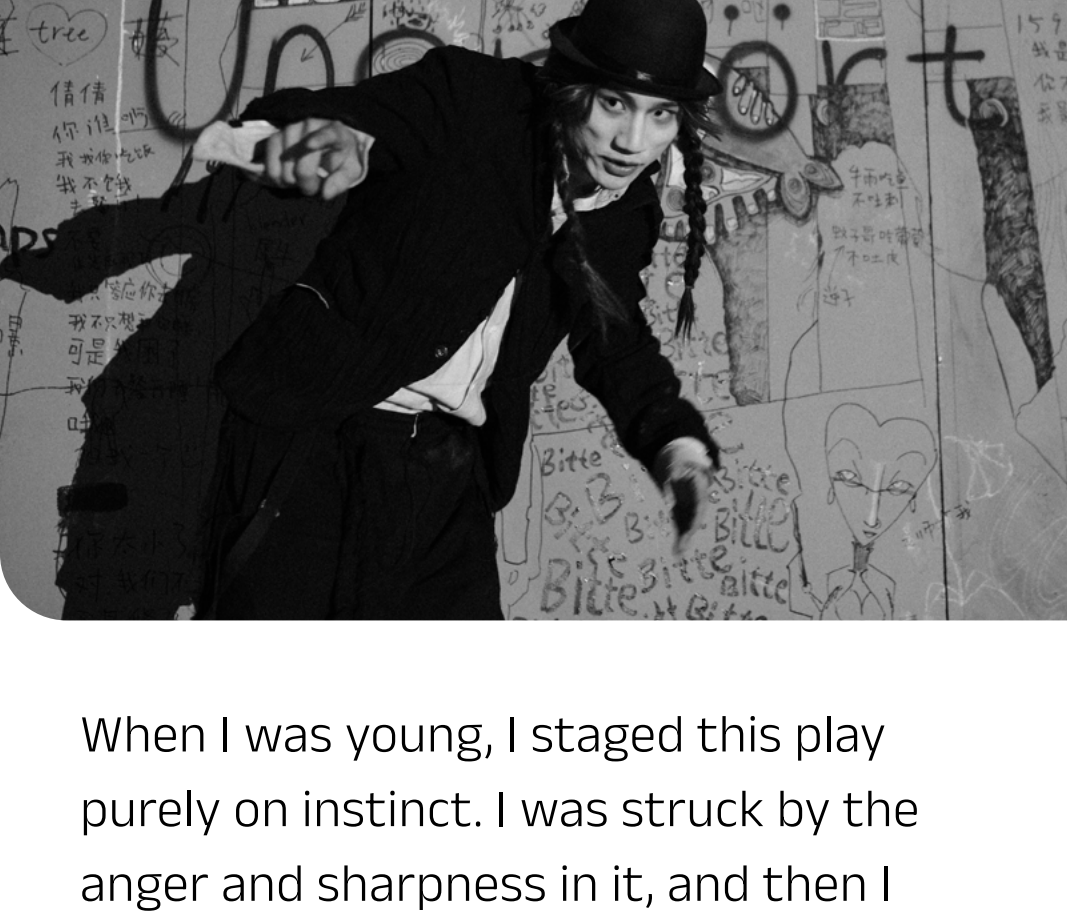
## Director's Note



It all started back in my days at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing. Back then, I felt that classics like Shakespeare and Chekhov would always be there, so there was no need to rush. However, *Waiting for Godot* was different; it was so “of-the-moment” that I felt compelled to choose it as my graduation project.

At that time, the entire modernist movement, including the French New Novel, New Wave Cinema and German Expressionism, was deeply impacting us. That was the “cultural stimulation” at the time.

Three decades on, the strongest reason for revisiting this play is our collective stage of mind. There is a pervasive sense of uncertainty, and we no longer possess the drive we felt in previous years. Technology, education and shifting human relationships all contribute to a prevailing sense of loss. Looking back at *Waiting for Godot*, it is no longer just a script. It echoes the lives we are living: the collective feeling of waiting and anxiety is becoming more tangible than ever.



When I was young, I staged this play purely on instinct. I was struck by the anger and sharpness in it, and then I rushed forward with a surge of passion.

Last August, I visited Ireland, the hometown of Samuel Beckett. Standing there, gazing at the trees, the clouds, the river... I suddenly realised that the very sources that gave rise to such absurdist drama were not inherently intense; they were simply a quiet existence. This shift in perception has made me more willing to grasp those subtle textures of existence.

The classic theme never changes: “waiting”. I have seen many versions apart from my own. I feel that people approach this classic with awe, but they seem to hold back.

But this time, I want the actors to live in an interesting world. The past interpretations often emphasised the poet’s anger and emotions. Now, my approach is to make a shift from concrete to the abstract.

What does this mean? Every detail on stage is tangible and palpable, like the giant graffiti wall covered with different thoughts. But when all these concrete elements are put together, the entire play presents a vast abstract concept. I wanted to make the space playful and open to diverse interpretations.

It has been said that absurdist drama “is ultimately about exploring life, death, solitude, and communication”. Just like that graffiti wall, chaotic, yet we still strive to decipher its meaning; just like life in *Waiting for Godot*, chaotic yet we are still willing to cultivate our own answers.

When the tree on stage finally sprouts new leaves, I hope you will feel a fresh sense of meaning taking root in your heart.

The process of staging this play is a journey of waiting. We remember all the fulfilling, anxious and relentlessly questioning moments. It is in this concrete process that we gather countless subtle meanings and emotions, filling the vast void created by the abstract concept of “waiting”.

I still cannot define what *Godot* is, but after the play we seem to be strong enough to walk away from the tree and return to our own lives.

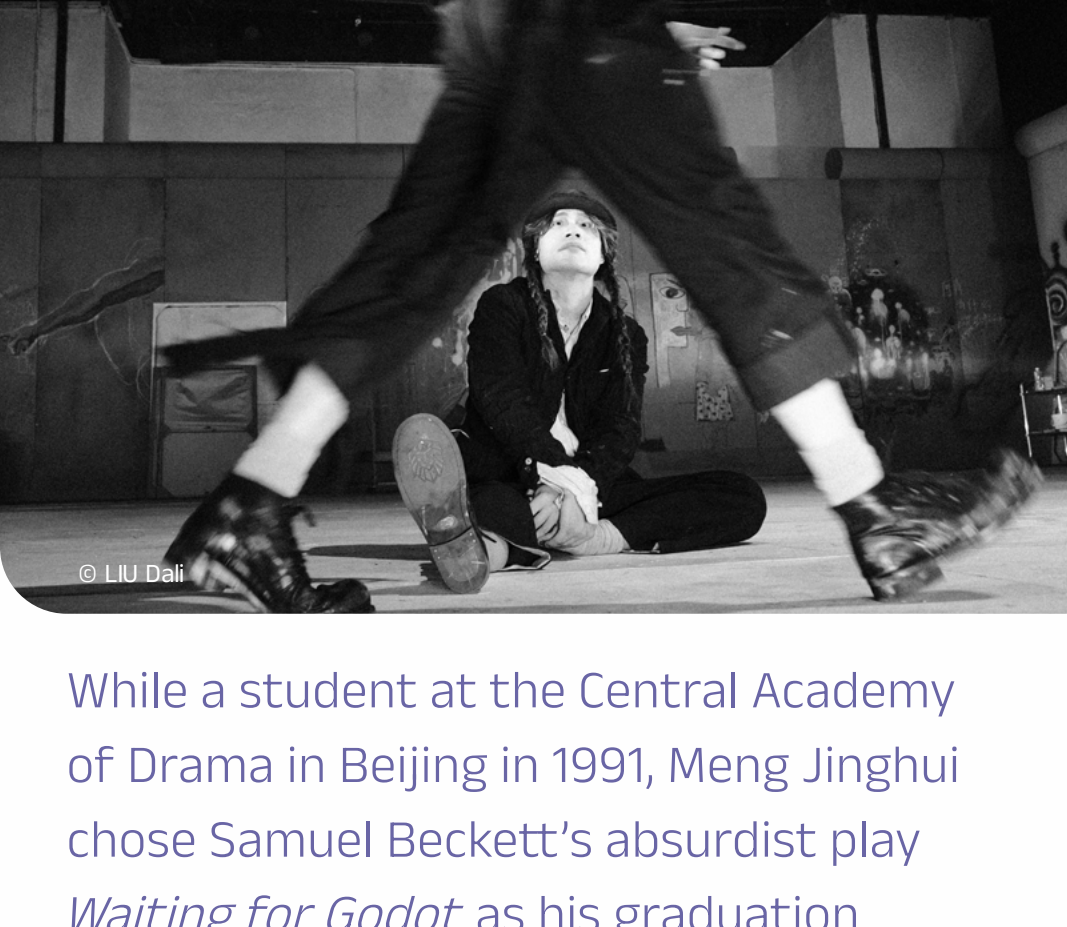
Text: Meng Jinghui

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### Why We're Still Waiting for Godot



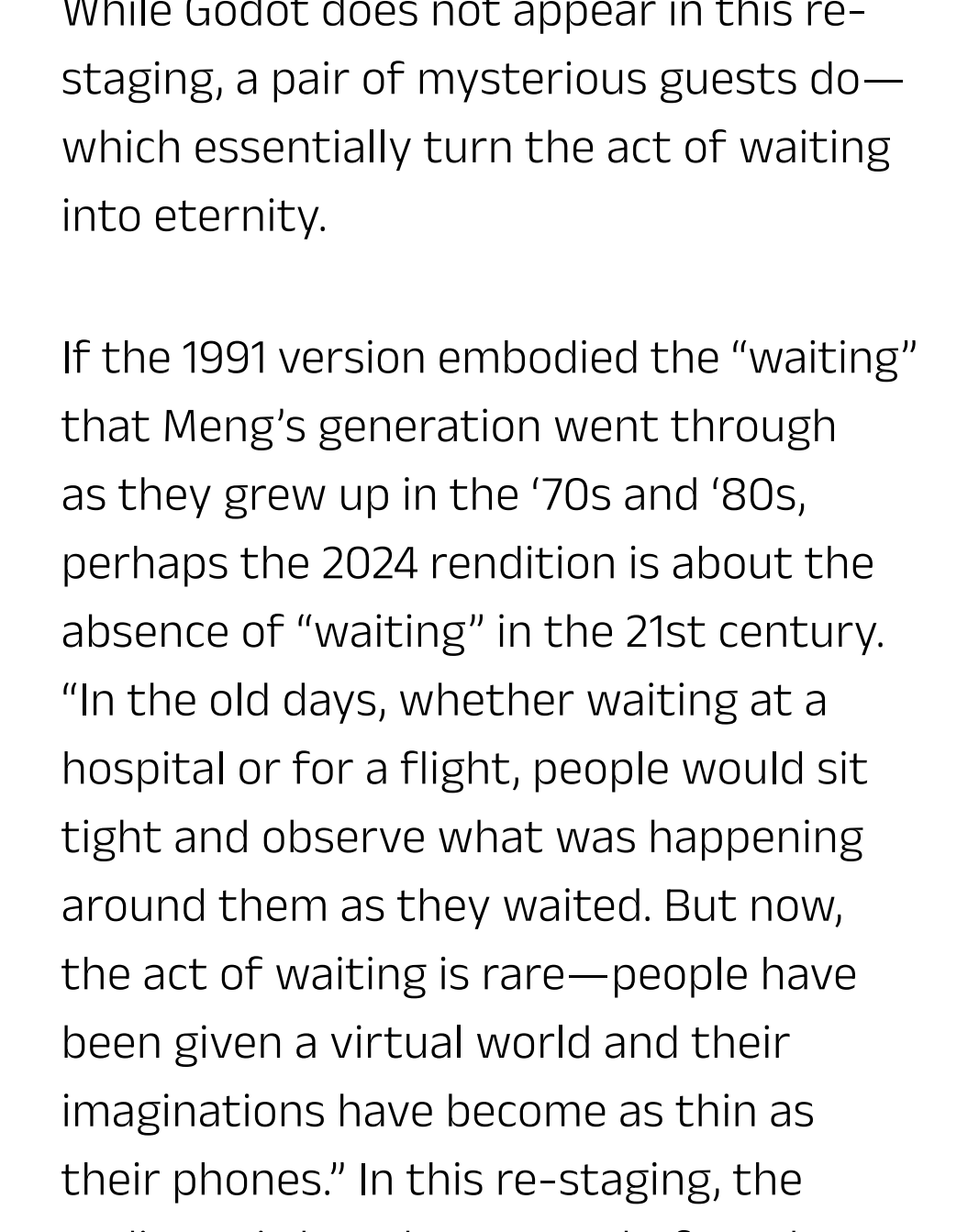
While a student at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing in 1991, Meng Jinghui chose Samuel Beckett's absurdist play *Waiting for Godot* as his graduation piece—an unconventional choice in an era still dominated by realist drama. “At the time, it was as though I was waiting for a new world, waiting for something different to happen in that new world ... It was a youthful impulse, coupled with an ambition to subvert existing aesthetics.”



The most subversive thing about this rendition was perhaps the bold manner in which he tampered with the original plot. In Beckett's play, “Godot”, the titular character the two protagonists are waiting for, never shows up. But in Meng's 1991 version, he does arrive, only to be strangled silently. Why kill Godot? “I think in facing this absurd world, we must find the courage to transcend it. The death of Godot means that one can wait in perpetuity and live forever in a state of defiance and anger.”

Thirty-three years on, Meng has decided to stage *Waiting for Godot* again and will bring this latest version to the HKAF this March. The world, it seems, is still absurdly in need of Beckett—and Meng, with his signature playfulness and a sensitivity unique to his milieu, emerges as the ideal spokesperson for the playwright in the 21st century. His fixation with breaking new ground has also led to him taking the concept of “waiting” to new heights. While Godot does not appear in this re-staging, a pair of mysterious guests do—which essentially turn the act of waiting into eternity.

If the 1991 version embodied the “waiting” that Meng's generation went through as they grew up in the '70s and '80s, perhaps the 2024 rendition is about the absence of “waiting” in the 21st century. “In the old days, whether waiting at a hospital or for a flight, people would sit tight and observe what was happening around them as they waited. But now, the act of waiting is rare—people have been given a virtual world and their imaginations have become as thin as their phones.” In this re-staging, the audience is kept busy even before the performance begins: they can step onto the stage and scribble on the walls at will, and those same panels will be used again for the next performance, allowing thoughts and memories to pass on in a palimpsestic manner. Is this not a form of transcendence?



Speaking of another of his major revivals, *I Love xxx* (1994), Meng Jinghui quipped: “You might wonder—why are we still willing to perform this play after 30 years? Some things I hope transcend time.” Waiting may no longer be an issue in contemporary times, but Meng, through his work, opens up a channel where people from various times can connect and share their differences. What happens then, 30 years from now? Surely we will find out—hopefully when Meng's next *Godot* comes out.

Text: Shao Yi Chan

English translation: DTO

This article was originally published on the HKAF's *News & Features* website in January 2026

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## About Meng Jinghui



Meng Jinghui is one of the most influential stage directors in contemporary Chinese theatre. His productions have transformed the theatre scene in China with their sharp wit and social critique, helping to bring a new generation of fresh, diverse voices to the stage. Meng's creative works have become a cultural phenomenon, with more than 50 productions staged since the 1990s, receiving acclaim from both critics and audiences.

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# About MENG Theatre Studio

MENG Theatre Studio was established in 1997. Its creative foundation has always been the principle of diversification and the spirit of the avant-garde. The company has presented more than 50 contemporary theatre works which have been at the forefront of Chinese theatre art. Among them, *Rhinoceros in Love* is known as “the bible of contemporary love” and has been performed more than 3,000 times. MENG Theatre Studio has toured extensively worldwide, including Japan, South Korea, Mexico, France, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, the UK, Germany, Italy, Austria, Brazil and Egypt.

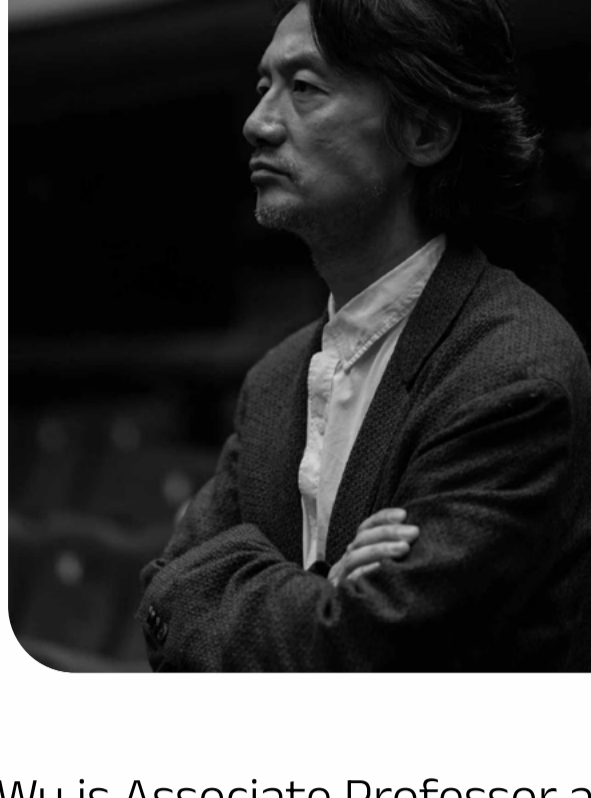
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## Creative & Production Team Profiles

### Scenographer

Zhang Wu



Zhang Wu is Associate Professor at the Central Academy of Drama's Stage Design Department. In 2002, he earned his Master's degree in Drama and Traditional Chinese Opera from the same institution. From 2020-23, he served as a stage designer at the National Theatre of China.

Zhang has collaborated closely with director Meng Jinghui, creating contemporary stage art for notable productions including *Waiting for Godot*, *Don Quixote* and *Rhinoceros in Love*. His opera works include *The Barber of Seville* and *King Zhuang of Chu*. He has also designed for traditional Chinese operas such as the Peking opera *In the Prime of Life* and contributed to films such as *Shanghai Dreams*, which won the Jury Prize at the 58th Cannes Film Festival.

### Lighting Designer

Kong Yifan



Kong Yifan is a faculty member and a Master's supervisor at the Communication University of China who received his PhD from the Central Academy of Drama. He is recognised as one of China's leading young lighting designers.

Kong is known for capturing the subtle psychological nuances of characters and illuminating hidden emotions within scripts. His work transforms stage lighting into a powerful narrative language that resonates with audiences.

Kong's lighting design spans various genres including opera, drama, Chinese opera and musicals. His notable works include the drama *Guangling San*, the Dian opera *Return Home* and the children's play *Where Is the Little Butterfly's Mother*.

### Stage Director, Costume & Make-up

Yu Lei

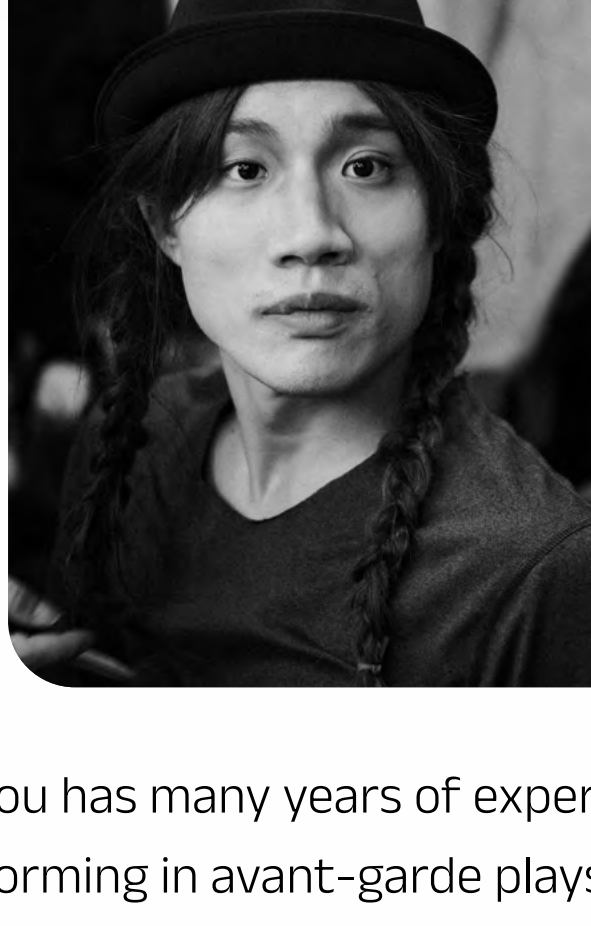


Yu Lei is an accomplished costume and styling designer from China, known for his innovative contributions to the theatre. A graduate of the Central Academy of Drama, he has created captivating designs for a wide array of productions. His representative works include *Classical Love*, *The Seventh Day*, *Teahouse* and *Rhinoceros in Love*. Yu has also lent his talent to notable plays such as *The Red and the Black*, *To Live* and *The Good Person of Sichuan*. Other significant projects include *Einstein's Dreams*, *Tender Is the Night* and *The Bedbug*.

## Cast Profiles

**Peng Lou**

as **Vladimir**

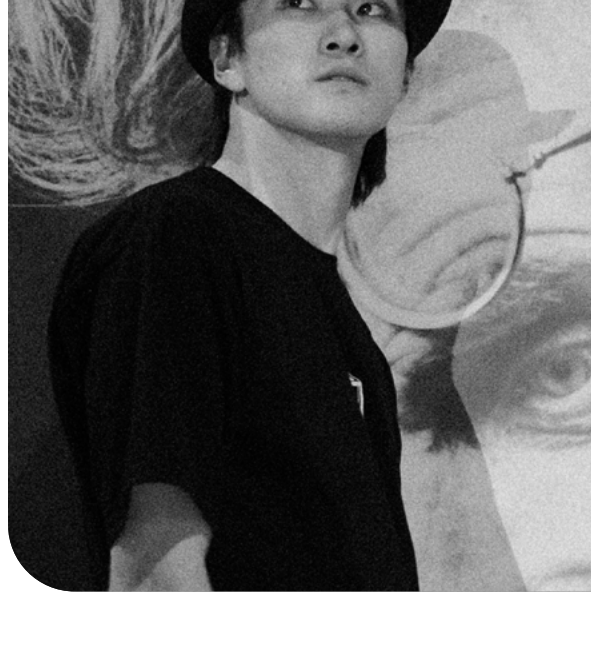


Peng Lou has many years of experience in performing in avant-garde plays. His representative works include *Rhinoceros in Love*, *The Bedbug*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Faust*, *Einstein's Dreams* and others.

He has participated in the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Zhejiang province and Lessingtage in Hamburg, among others.

**Han Xu**

as **Estragon**



Han Xu has many years of experience in performing in avant-garde plays. His representative works include *Waiting for Godot*, *Fishes Have No Feelings*, *Metamorphosis of Butterfly*, *I Love xxx*, *Treasure Ship* and others.

He has participated in the Aranya Theater Festival and the World Theatre Festival Shizuoka, among others.

**Wang Yusheng**

as **Pozzo**

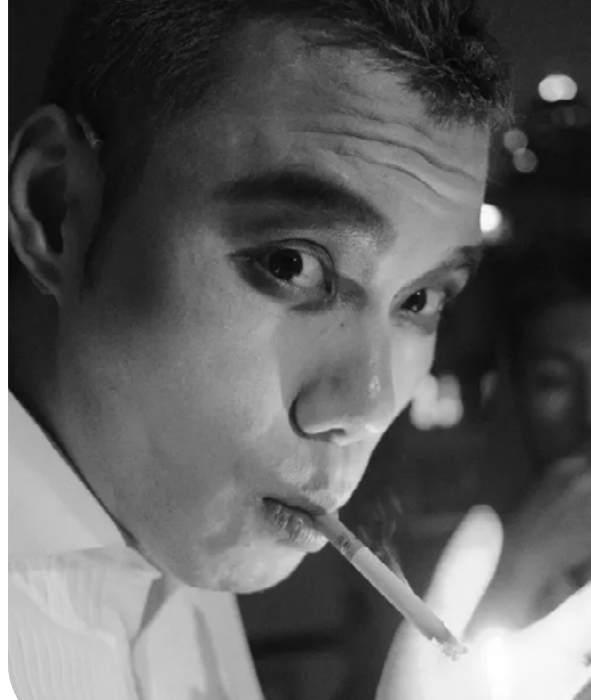


Wang Yusheng has many years of experience in performing in pioneering plays. His representative works include *The Bedbug*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Faust*, *Einstein's Dreams*, *Fishes Have No Feelings* and others.

He has participated in the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Zhejiang province and the Aranya Theater Festival, among others.

**Zhang Chi**

as **Lucky**



Zhang Chi has many years of experience in performing in pioneering plays. His representative works include *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, *Rhinoceros in Love*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Faust*, *I Love xxx* and others.

He has participated in the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Zhejiang province and the Aranya Theater Festival.

**Sun Rongjing**

as **the boy**



Sun Rongjing has many years of experience in performing in pioneering plays. His representative works include *Rhinoceros in Love*, *The Bedbug*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Metamorphosis of Butterfly*, *I Love xxx*, *Treasure Ship* and others.

Sun has participated in the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Zhejiang province and Lessingtage in Hamburg, among others.

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## 搶先鎖定兩場2027年 香港藝術節精選節目或彩排

## Register for two selected performances or rehearsals of the 2027 Hong Kong Arts Festival IN ADVANCE

## 截止報名日期 30/4/2026

Application Deadline

◆ 中學生 Secondary \$80 ◆ 大專生 Tertiary \$120

yfs.artsfestival.org @@@@ HKAFYFS

## Details and Online Application

## Plus



## 54<sup>th</sup>



香港藝術節  
HK ARTS FESTIVAL  
2026

## 演出內外 更見精采 MORE THAN GREAT PERFORMANCES

## Details and Online Application

# About the Hong Kong Arts Festival

Launched in 1973, the **Hong Kong Arts Festival** is a major international arts festival committed to enriching the cultural life of the city. In February and March every year, the Festival presents leading local and international artists in all genres of the performing arts, placing equal importance on great traditions and contemporary creations. The Festival also commissions and produces work in Cantonese opera, theatre, music, chamber opera and contemporary dance by Hong Kong's creative talent and emerging artists; many of these works have had successful subsequent runs in Hong Kong and overseas. The Festival also presents "PLUS" and educational activities that bring a diverse range of arts experiences to the community as well as tertiary, secondary and primary school students. In addition, through the "No Limits" project co-presented with The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the Festival strives to create an inclusive space for people with different abilities to share the joys of the arts together.

**The HKAF is a non-profit organisation.** The total estimated income for FY2025 / 26 (including the 54th Hong Kong Arts Festival and 2026 "No Limits") is approximately HK\$159 million. Current Government annual baseline funding accounts for around 12% of the Festival's total income. Around 24% of the Festival's income needs to come from the box office, and around 44% from sponsorship and donations made by corporations, individuals and charitable foundations. The remaining 20% is expected to come from other revenue sources including the Government's matching grant scheme, which matches income generated through private sector sponsorship and donations.

Full Organisational Profile:

<https://www.hk.artsfestival.org/en/about-us/index.html?>



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# Committee and Staff List



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EMAIL afgen@hkaf.org  
PROGRAMME ENQUIRY HOTLINE (852) 2824 2430

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\*Contract Staff

In alphabetical order

<sup>#</sup>2025/26 The Arts Talents Internship Matching Programme is supported by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council

Updated February 2026

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