

Commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Festival

# Brecht's First Play

Dead Centre and Beijing Repertory Theater

Adapted from Bertolt Brecht's first play, *Baal*



Please download and read on your mobile phone

**19-21.03.2026 / 8:00pm**  
**21-22.03.2026 / 3:00pm**



Theatre, Hong Kong City Hall

Approximately one hour and 40 minutes with no interval

Commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Festival

Performed in Putonghua with Chinese and English surtitles

This production contains strong language, adult content, disturbing scenes with violence, smoking scenes, strong smoke effects and the smell of smoke

During the performance, live video feeds from the stage and auditorium will be projected for real-time display only. These images will not be recorded, archived or retained in any form. The auditorium may be exposed to strong lighting during the live projection

Recommended for ages 16 and above

Cover Photograph

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Co-Production:



香港藝術節  
Hong Kong Arts Festival



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- ✂ Unauthorised photography or recording of any kind is strictly prohibited.
- ✂ Please keep noise to a minimum during the performance.
- ✂ 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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**Plus**

**Post-Performance Meet-the-Artist Session**

19.03.2026

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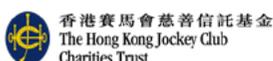


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Acknowledgements

## 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](#)

## 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



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[Foreword](#)

# 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, Cast & Characters](#)

## Creative & Production Team

Co-produced by

The Hong Kong Arts Festival

Beijing Repertory Theater

Tempest Projects

Holland Festival

Original Author

Bertolt Brecht

Direction & Adaptation

Ben Kidd (IE)

Bush Moukarzel (IE)

Literary Consultant, Script Translator,

Rehearsal Translator

Zhao Han

Set Designer

Han Jiang

Video Designer

Sébastien Dupouey (FR)

Lighting Designer

Chen Xiaji

Sound Designer

Annie Jing Yin

Costume Designer

Viola Zhang

Sound Designer

Tian Dongyi

Revival Director

Zhang Mingyi

Fight Choreographer

Shaoyan

Technical Director

Liu Haifei

Stage Manager

Su Qian

Multimedia Technician

Liu Tang

Assistant Lighting Designer

Li Meng

Custom & Character Design Assistant

Zhang Shumai

Sound Technicians

Ban Hua

Hu An'an

Make-up

Meng Siyu

Publicity Coordinator

Zhang Lyuqiao

Rehearsal Videographer

You Runduo

Poster Designer

Chen Lei

Administrative Manager

Ou Lin

Chief Producer

Wang Yuanyuan

Producers

Han Jiang

Weng Shihui

Executive Producer

Fang Xue

Assistant Producer

Lyu Renzhe

Special Thanks to

Yi Liming

Mandy Peng

Epson

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## Cast & Characters

(In order of appearance)

Jin Shijia as Baal, Brecht

Cui Wei as Mech

Li Tengfei as Piller

Ma Zhuojun as Emilie

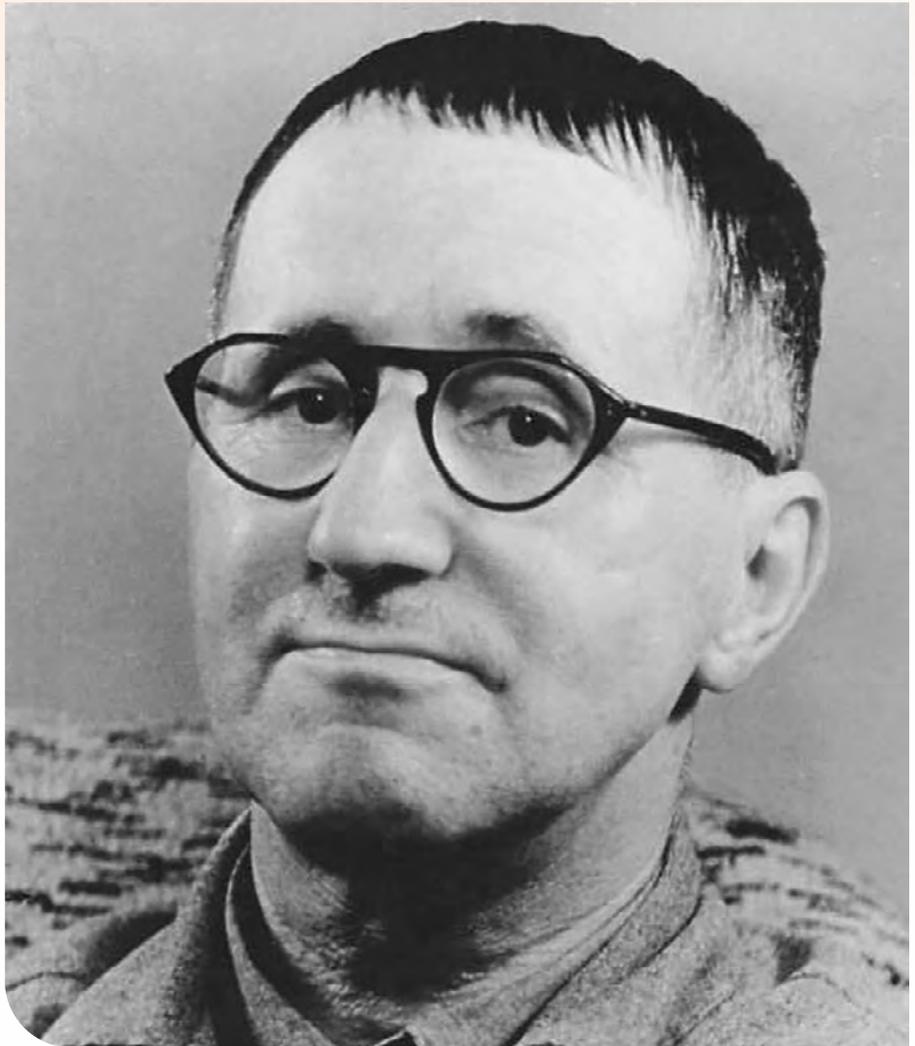
Zhang Jiahuai as Johannes

Tan Wei as Sophie

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## About Bertolt Brecht



Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) was a German playwright, poet and theatre director born in February 1898 in Augsburg, Germany. He is best known for his contributions to modern theatre and his development of the “epic theatre” style, which aimed to provoke critical thinking and social change rather than mere emotional engagement.

Brecht’s works—which often broke the fourth wall, making the audience directly conscious of the fact that they were watching a play—addressed themes such as social injustice, war and the human condition, reflecting his Marxist beliefs.

During the 1920s, Brecht collaborated with composer Kurt Weill, producing iconic works such as *The Threepenny Opera*, which critiqued capitalism and societal norms. His innovative techniques, including the use of narration and direct address to the audience, changed the way that people looked at the theatre.

Brecht’s career was interrupted by the rise of the Nazi regime, leading him to flee Germany in 1933. He spent years in exile, living in various countries including the United States, where he continued to write and develop his theatrical ideas.

After World War Two, Brecht returned to East Germany, where he founded the Berliner Ensemble, a theatre company that became renowned for its productions such as *Mother Courage and Her Children*. He died in August 1956.

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## Synopsis

Baal is a poet and singer who is anti-social, obnoxious and nihilistic. Bertolt Brecht's original play follows him through his decadent and chaotic life as he is wooed by wealthy patrons, sleeps with female fans, walks out of gigs halfway through and completely rejects bourgeois society. He wanders out of the city with his closest friend, abandoning his pregnant lover, in search of authentic experiences. But his journey becomes a nightmare and he murders his friend, before dying alone in the wilderness.

But this is only part of the story of the HKAF programme Brecht's First Play: the above synopsis is full of problematic behaviour and unpalatable elements, so the story will be presented in a way that is suitable for modern audiences: Baal (the man) will be cancelled.



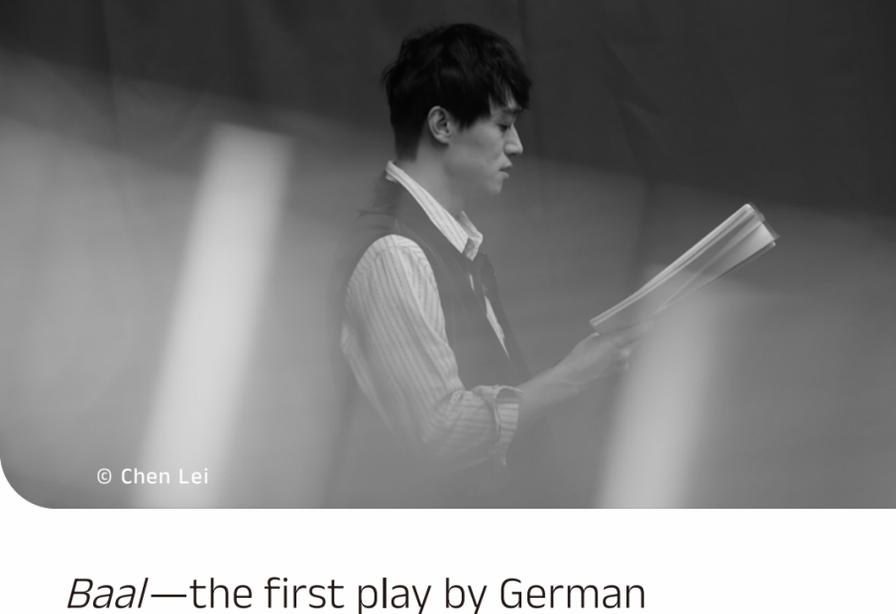
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## Interview

### When Cancel Culture Meets Brecht's Problematic Baal



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*Baal*—the first play by German provocateur Bertolt Brecht—has posed a thorny challenge to the theatre world since its debut a century ago. The titular character, a charismatic and rebellious young poet, is notorious for his misogynistic and violent nature. Brecht's *Baal* rejects societal norms, indulges in excess and captivates the literary scene, only to spiral into self-absorption and moral decay. Yet by presenting *Baal* as an amoral force rather than a misunderstood anti-hero or rock star, Brecht poses a question: what should we do with him?

For Irish theatre group Dead Centre and their partners at the Beijing Repertory Theater, the answer is: we cancel him. And they don't mean figuratively—their adaptation literally blurs out the character live on stage.



© Chen Lei

Cancel culture may feel like a modern phenomenon, but the Artistic Directors of Dead Centre Bush Moukarzel and Ben Kidd tell the HKAF that it's "a new name for an old idea". "Every society has looked to expel people who seem to represent what is wrong with that community... Whether it's the cursed Oedipus sent into exile or a disgraced figure like Harvey Weinstein, the phenomenon of 'cancelling' has a long history," Moukarzel and Kidd say.



© Chen Lei

Dead Centre and the Beijing Repertory Theater have a reputation for re-inventing classic works and *Baal* is on brand for both companies as Brecht himself famously spent much of his career re-writing the text. "He struggled with whether the character of *Baal* was useful to an audience—was his anti-social behaviour instructive, or was it merely destructive? This creative struggle is interesting as it raises the question central to his whole approach to theatre: what is art for? Can it change the world?"

Long before this Sino-Irish collaboration came about, Brecht himself looked to China and Chinese actors to help him develop his famous *Verfremdungseffekt*, or alienation effect. "He was looking to combine Chinese stage aesthetics with his European literary sensibilities to create a new form of theatre," Moukarzel and Kidd say. "Collaborations are the source of all creativity: ideas, and people, like to travel the world to create connections and discover commonalities."

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

Text: Adam Wright

Chinese translation: Stanley Leung

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[Creative Note](#)

## Creative Note

We are interested in Bertolt Brecht not only as a playwright, but also as a thinker. We are attempting to understand the radical gesture represented by his attempt to create a distance between an audience and a story—to “alienate” audiences from a character. His first play seems like an appropriate work in which to implement these theories—written before he developed most of his ideas, it has not yet been “alienated”.

We are particularly excited to work on this piece with a Chinese company. Although Brecht never visited China, he was hugely influenced by Chinese philosophy and the approach to acting found in Peking opera. Combined with his lifelong interest in the communist cause, his connection with the country was strong. Perhaps only a Chinese company can do justice to his first play.

Text: Ben Kidd, Bush Moukarzel



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## About Dead Centre



Ben Kidd (left) and Bush Moukarzel (right)

Ben Kidd and Bush Moukarzel are the Co-Artistic Directors of Dead Centre. The theatre company's projects include *Deaf Republic* (Royal Court Theatre, London), *The Education of Rudolf Steiner* (Schauspiel Stuttgart), *Alles, was der Fall ist* and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Burgtheater, Vienna), *Good Sex*, *Chekhov's First Play*, *Hamnet*, *Beckett's Room* and *To Be a Machine* (Version 1.0) .

Its opera projects include *die Dunkles Seite des Mondes* (Staatsoper, Hamburg), *LASH* and *Teorema* (Deutsche Oper, Berlin) and *Bählaams Fest* (Ruhrtriennale).

The company's work has toured extensively around the world, including to the Young Vic, Battersea Arts Centre (London), Schaubühne (Berlin), Dramaten (Stockholm), BAM (New York), Théâtre de Liège, the Hong Kong Arts Festival, the Helsinki Festival, the Teatro Piccolo (Milan), the Noorderzon Festival (Groningen), the Kampnagel Summer Festival (Hamburg) and the Seoul Performing Arts Festival.

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[About the Beijing Repertory Theater](#)

# About the Beijing Repertory Theater

Founded in 2017, the Beijing Repertory Theater (BRT) is committed to developing a unique spirit and aesthetic disposition. As a theatre company, it rallies like-minded theatre artists to pursue a collective voice, directing its attention to the tension between individuals and society, the human living space and the environment. By casting new light on classic works as well as encouraging new writing, the BRT seeks to offer a new interpretation of the past.

The BRT staged Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea* as its opening production. Other notable BRT productions include *Beneath the Surface*, *Mrozek Shorts*, *The Elephant Man*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Taibai Jinxing Is a Bit Annoyed*.

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# About Tempest Projects

Tempest Projects is an international performing arts company founded by Weng Shihui, and based in London and Shanghai. It was founded on the core belief that the theatre is about creating encounters that bring an understanding to otherness. It commissions, produces and tours work that is both radical and popular, and created by a selection of robust and dynamic international artists for a wide audience in China and across the world.

The company's production and touring credits include the Sino-French co-production *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (directed by Christian Hecq and Valerie Lesort), *Wuthering Heights* (Emma Rice Company Asia Tour), the immersive VR live show *Le Bal de Paris de Blanca Li*, Ontroerend Goed's *A Game of You*, *The Smile Off Your Face* and *Handle with Care*, the sound installation *Congregation* (by Ray Lee) and *The Making of Berlin* (by BERLIN).

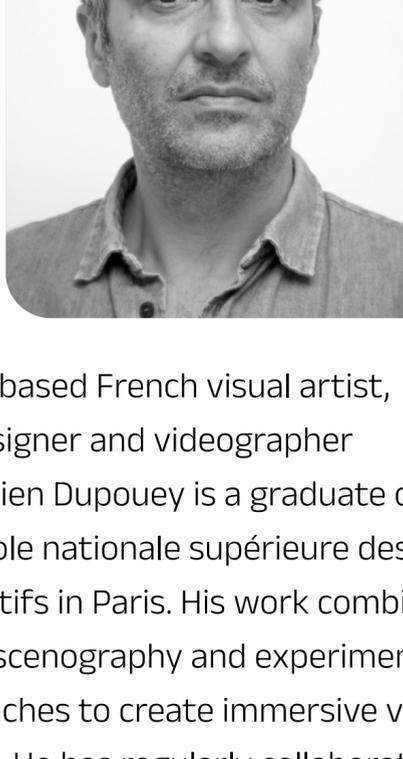
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## Creative & Production Team Profiles

### Video Designer

Sébastien Dupouey

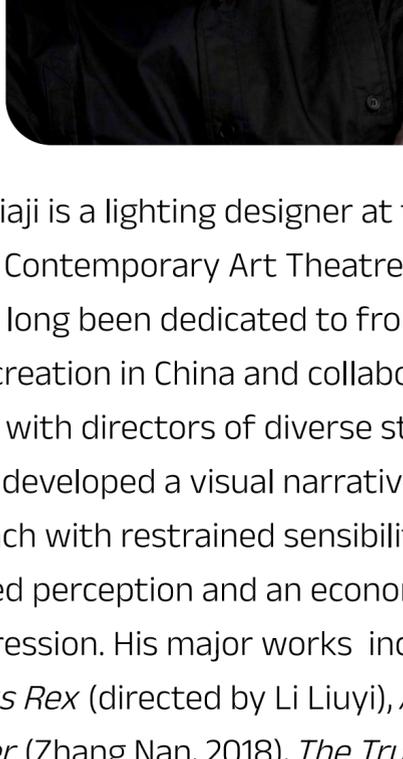


Berlin-based French visual artist, set designer and videographer Sébastien Dupouey is a graduate of the *École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs* in Paris. His work combines video, scenography and experimental approaches to create immersive visual worlds. He has regularly collaborated with international acclaimed artists such as Falk Richter and Thomas Ostermeier.

His major collaborations for the international theatre and opera scene include the Deutsche Oper (Berlin), the Residenztheater and Münchener Kammerspiele (Munich), the Deutsches Schauspielhaus (Hamburg) and the Manchester International Festival.

### Lighting Designer

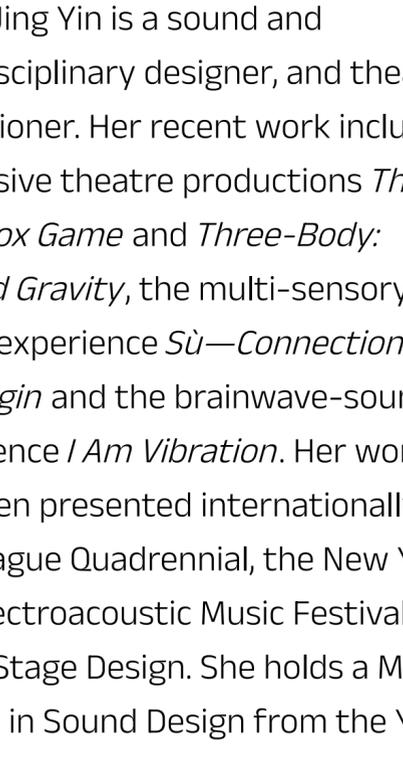
Chen Xiaji



Chen Xiaji is a lighting designer at the Beijing Contemporary Art Theatre. Having long been dedicated to frontline stage creation in China and collaborating closely with directors of diverse styles, he has developed a visual narrative approach with restrained sensibility, nuanced perception and an economy of expression. His major works include: *Oedipus Rex* (directed by Li Liuyi), *A Number* (Zhang Nan, 2018), *The True Story of Ah Q* (Michel Didym), *A Madman's Diary* (Li Jianjun), the Beijing Contemporary Ballet Theatre's dance drama *Ye Yan* ("The Night Banquet") and the Chinese versions of the musicals *Next to Normal* and *The Hedgehog*.

### Sound Designer

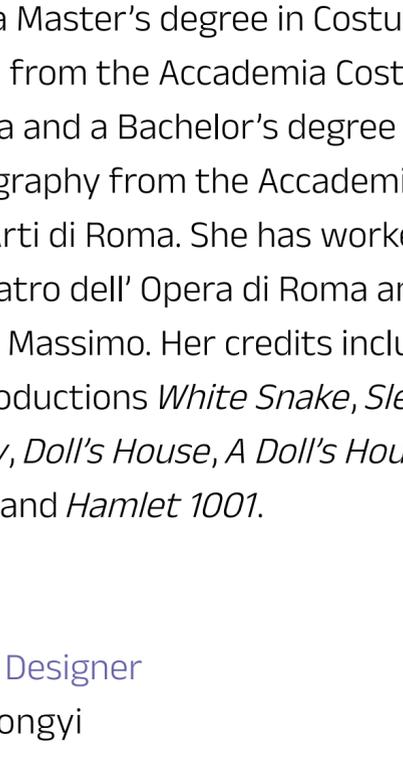
Annie Jing Yin



Annie Jing Yin is a sound and interdisciplinary designer, and theatre practitioner. Her recent work includes immersive theatre productions *The Blackbox Game* and *Three-Body: Beyond Gravity*, the multi-sensory dining experience *Sù—Connection with the Origin* and the brainwave-sound experience *I Am Vibration*. Her work has been presented internationally at the Prague Quadrennial, the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival and World Stage Design. She holds a Master's degree in Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama and a certificate in Olfactory Design from Politecnico di Milano.

### Costume Designer

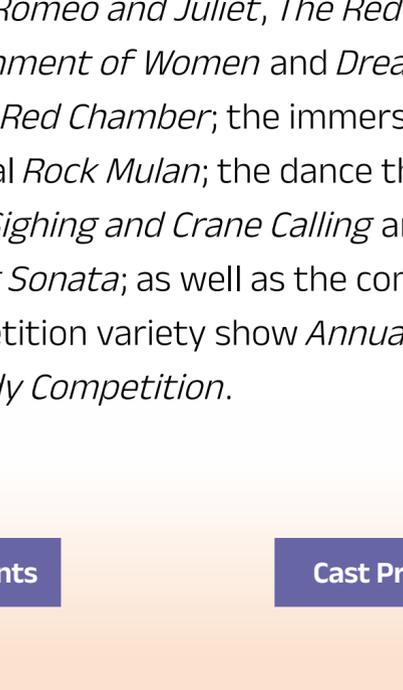
Viola Zhang



Viola Zhang is a costume designer who holds a Master's degree in Costume Design from the Accademia Costume & Moda and a Bachelor's degree in Scenography from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma. She has worked at the Teatro dell' Opera di Roma and the Teatro Massimo. Her credits include the productions *White Snake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Doll's House*, *A Doll's House, Part 2* and *Hamlet 1001*.

### Sound Designer

Tian Dongyi

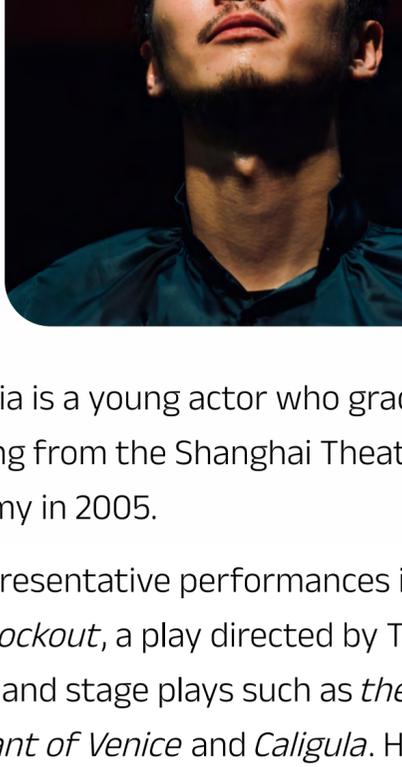


Tian Dongyi is a sound designer. His main works include the plays *The Lady from the Sea*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Heart of Almond Jelly*, *The Big Small Class*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Red Detachment of Women* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*; the immersive musical *Rock Mulan*; the dance theatre *Wind Sighing and Crane Calling* and *Beijing Sonata*; as well as the comedy competition variety show *Annual Comedy Competition*.

## Cast Profiles

### Jin Shijia

as Baal

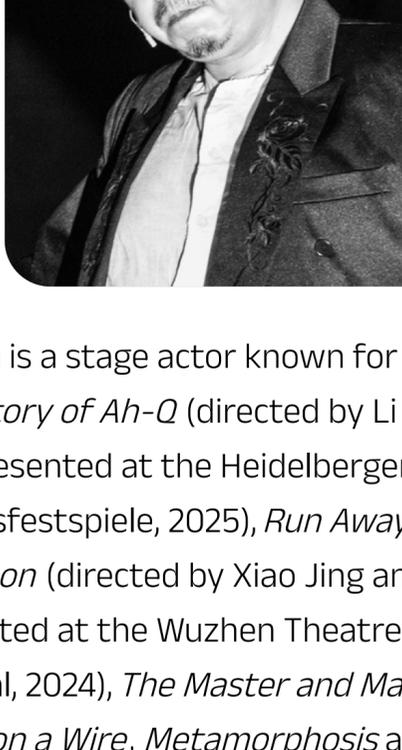


Jin Shijia is a young actor who graduated in Acting from the Shanghai Theatre Academy in 2005.

His representative performances include *The Knockout*, a play directed by Tian Qinxin, and stage plays such as *the Merchant of Venice* and *Caligula*. His works also extend to television works such as *The Heart*, *Under the Skin*, and films including *A Fool*, *Break Through the Darkness* and so on.

### Cui Wei

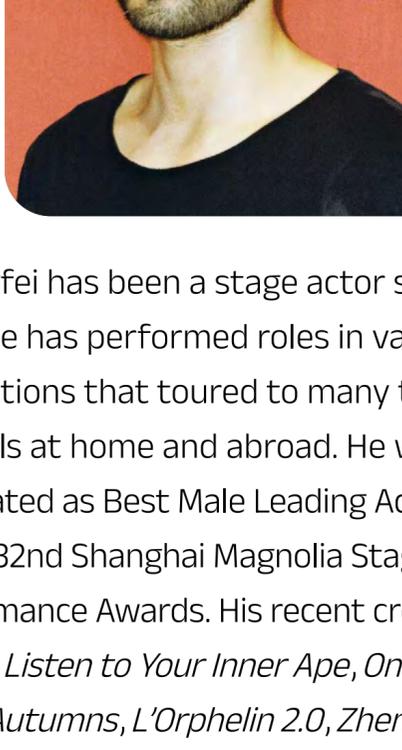
as Mech



Cui Wei is a stage actor known for *The True Story of Ah-Q* (directed by Li Jianjun and presented at the Heidelberger Schlossfestspiele, 2025), *Run Away to the Moon* (directed by Xiao Jing and presented at the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, 2024), *The Master and Margarita*, *World on a Wire*, *Metamorphosis* and *A Man Who Flies Up to the Sky*.

### Li Tengfei

as Piller



Li Tengfei has been a stage actor since 2014. He has performed roles in various productions that toured to many theatre festivals at home and abroad. He was nominated as Best Male Leading Actor at the 32nd Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards. His recent credits include *Listen to Your Inner Ape*, *One Day Three Autumns*, *L'Orphelin 2.0*, *Zheng He*, *An Inspector Calls*, *A Behanding in Spokane*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Little Prince: Wind, Sand and Stars*.

### Ma Zhuojun

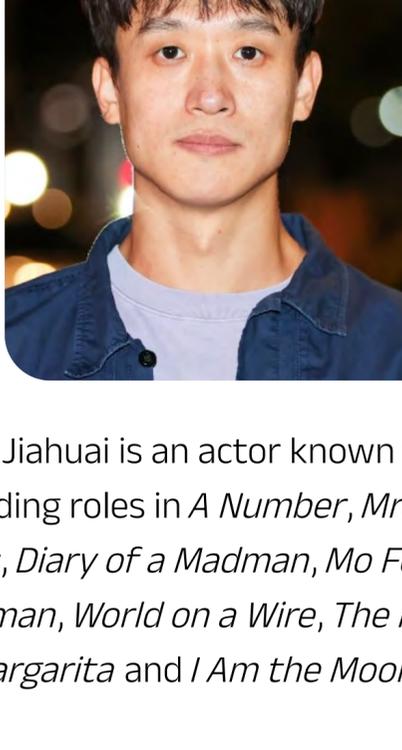
as Emilie



Ma Zhuojun is an actor who trained at the Central Academy of Drama. Her recent credits include *Stuck*, *2:22*, *Lie Flat 2.0*, *Yinding Bridge*, *Will*, *Waiting for Godot* (online version), *Frankenstein*, *Three Sisters Waiting for Godot*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Approaching* and *Evolution*.

### Zhang Jiahuai

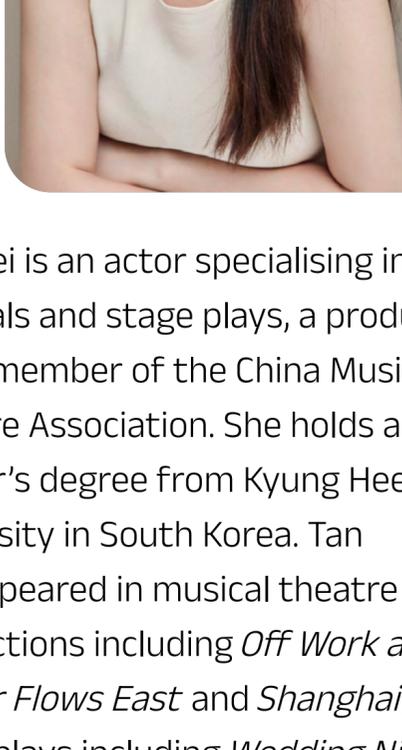
as Johannes



Zhang Jiahuai is an actor known for his leading roles in *A Number*, *Mrožek Shorts*, *Diary of a Madman*, *Mo Fei*, *The Pillowman*, *World on a Wire*, *The Master and Margarita* and *I Am the Moon*.

### Tan Wei

as Sophie



Tan Wei is an actor specialising in musicals and stage plays, a producer and a member of the China Musical Theatre Association. She holds a Master's degree from Kyung Hee University in South Korea. Tan has appeared in musical theatre productions including *Off Work at Six*, *A River Flows East* and *Shanghai*, and stage plays including *Wedding Night Pranks*, *We Were Husband & Wife* and *The East Wind Rises*.

## Producers' Profiles

Producer, Set Designer

[Han Jiang](#)



Han Jiang trained in the Department of Stage Design at the Central Academy of Drama. He is a well-known stage and dance producer, and co-founder of both the Beijing Repertory Theater and the Beijing Dance Theatre. His notable production credits include *Wild Grass*, *Golden Lotus*, *The Lady from the Sea* and *Of Mountains and Seas*. Han's productions and designs have been performed at international arts festivals such as the Next Wave Festival in Melbourne, the Hong Kong Arts Festival and the Shanghai International Arts Festival.

Producer

[Weng Shihui](#)



Weng Shihui is an international performing arts producer based in London and Shanghai. During the past decade, Weng has worked with a wide range of UK national arts institutions as a producer, including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre of Scotland and Creative Scotland. In 2021, she founded Tempest Projects focusing on commissioning new work with an international perspective. Her credits include the Sino-French co-production *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Ontroerend Goed's *A Game of You* and *The Smile Off Your Face*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

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The Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund has since its inception supported more than **31,500** Hong Kong students under its major award schemes. The total value of the grants awarded stands at over **HK\$269 million**. Over **2,890** scholars and fellows have completed their studies and are now working in different fields, contributing to the well-being and development of the community.

54<sup>th</sup>



香港藝術節  
HK ARTS FESTIVAL  
2026

MAR 三月 27-29

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55  
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# 無限亮

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Inclusiveness through the Arts 以藝術共融

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「無限亮」及香港中樂團聯合製作  
Co-produced by No Limits and Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra

## 弦上光影

中樂演奏會  
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Hong Kong's flagship orchestra with a rising erhu star — weaving ensemble and solo into one inclusive voice

## 28 MAR 三月

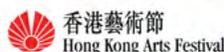
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[yfs.artsfestival.org](http://yfs.artsfestival.org) @ @ @ HKAIFYFS

### Details and Online Application

## Plus



54<sup>th</sup> 香港藝術節  
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2026

演出內外 更見精采  
MORE THAN  
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### 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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<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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