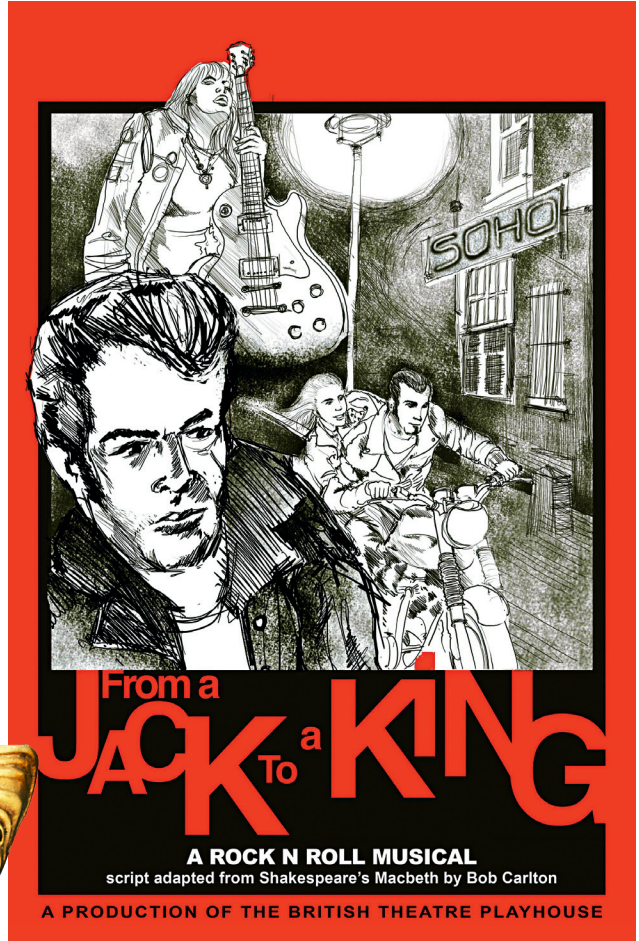


ROCKING SHAKESPEARE

Helping to raise funds for women with cancer and chronic illnesses, the British Theatre Playhouse is staging From a Jack to a King—a modern-day rock ‘n’ roll take on Macbeth.
By Alexandra Kohut-Cole



Husband and wife co-producing team, Cecilia and John Faulkner are owners and the driving force behind the British Theatre Playhouse.

Cecilia is the marketing and PR mind behind her stage actor and producer husband John. By introducing their dinner-theatre concept, they have added a new dimension to Singapore society.

Their latest venture is the comedy-musical *From a Jack to a King*, written by Olivier award-winning British playwright and director, Bob Carlton and directed by Matt Devitt. Debuting in Singapore, the company will tour Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and on to, for the first time, Ho Chi Minh City.

From a Jack to a King is based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, yet set in the colourful London scene of the Swinging Sixties. Carlton has transformed the play into a live rock 'n' roll musical belting out such rock 'n' roll hits as *Leader of the Pack*, *Jailhouse Rock* and *Go Johnny Go*. The cast of nine actor-musicians—as the company name implies, is all British—is required to play musical instruments as well as sing live on stage “I said if they can sing, dance and play two instruments they will be considered!” shares Cecilia Faulkner. Not only that, the actors had to be believable rock stars too, as well as fitting the bill in terms of age,



persona, stage presence and being able to “belt out *Macbeth*.”

The Playhouse is working with the Association of Women Doctors (AWDS) to help raise funds for the KK Hospital Health Endowment Fund (KKHHEF) under the Arts for Charity Programme. This programme was set up in conjunction with, and at the same time as, the British Theatre Playhouse in 2004. The premise is that the company dedicates one performance and evening of each run to charity. Each production, a new

*“Acting is a tough love—I really admire those who carry on and on. This is what gives me the buzz.”
— Cecilia Leong-Faulkner*

charity is chosen. “Much depends on the committee but the tendency has often been to choose children's charities” explains Faulkner. Indeed, some past recipients have been Mainly I Love Kids (MILK) and Make-A-Wish Foundation. In the run up to *From a Jack to a King*, a silent auction will take place throughout followed by a live auction on the opening gala night.

The production in Singapore will be held in the 400-capacity Jubilee Theatre of Raffles hotel in the style of a British dinner-theatre, as are all the plays put on by the British Theatre Playhouse. “The acoustics are marvellous in such a small theatre and you can see the faces.” says Faulkner. A four-course gourmet dinner is served in the ballroom next to the Jubilee hall after the show with a mix of price packages intended to reach a larger audience. “The whole idea is to bring over the British theatre and it is very holistic to establish prominent actors and bring them out.”

Faulkner is excited about taking the company to perform in Ho Chi Minh City for the first time at the Saigon Opera House. The strict authorities have requested for the script to be translated into Vietnamese as well as to witness a full dress rehearsal—not only expensive but also taxing on the cast as they are working back to back. But Faulkner is not daunted “This will be very new to Vietnam but in life you have to take a calculated risk and you've got to try!” ■

5-9 May, Jubilee Hall Theatre, Raffles Hotel. Tickets, from \$105. Gala dinner performance including pre-show cocktails, free-flow wines and gifts, \$300. Visit www.britishtheatreplayhouse.com. Tickets can be booked via www.sistic.com.sg