

By Cheryl Tan

(800 words, 6-minute read)



***Poop!* by Chong Tze Chien**

A family left stranded in the aftermath of a father's seemingly irresponsible, selfish suicide, must learn to navigate its way through the nooks of grief and crannies of letting go and letting be, all whilst holding to semblances of hope through a widow's grief, a mother's denial, and the celebration of a daughter's life. In its third staging, *Poop!* returned with a perfect blend of heartbreak and hilarity that blurs the fine line between life and death, and bringing life once again to Chong's beloved characters Emily, Mummy, Granny, and Daddy.

In Daddy's (Julius Foo) reincarnations, manifesting in NTUC plastic bags, NEWater, talking toilet bowls, in the far reaches of Emily's unlimited child-like imagination, Chong's direction fleshed out the pure ingenuity of his script, portraying the limitless ways in which our loved ones live on in the most insignificant daily objects and things even after death. Riddled by these symbols for death and decay, life and healing, Granny (Neo Swee Lin) and Mummy (Janice Koh) find themselves struggling to straddle the fine line between holding on and letting go, finding every way possible trying to explain the concept of death to Emily (Jean Ng), a little girl who seems to understand death and accept its inevitability more intimately and easily than her adult companions could.



Bridging the divide between the play's realms of reality and fantasy was *Poop!*'s clever puppetry, complemented by precise lighting direction and stage design that kept the puppeteers completely out of sight and enhancing the believability of absurd impossible scenes that included Daddy's disembodied limbs, a floating leaf, the iconic NTUC plastic bag, a pair of shoes ambling by themselves. Credit certainly goes to the puppeteers, Zee Wong, Ang Hui Bin, and Darren Guo who integrated both excellent puppetry and physicality throughout the play with seamless fluidity.

With a raised platform upstage, the new dimension of a vertical plane (instead of the 2-dimensional floor-plan staging of previous stagings) created clear demarcations of spaces for individual characters who ascended this plane into a fantastic realm, cleverly complementing the temporal and spatial limits of reality on the ground – evidently, the living (Grandma, Mother, Daughter) were confined to these earthbound limits, while Daddy's spirit, Emily in her imaginative states, and other ghostly beings could easily traverse between one realm and another.

This season's *Poop!* delivered a comically tragic and important narrative of life and death that was nothing short of shattering, compelling audiences to confront the harrowing fears that surround the concept of mortality in both truth and honesty.

