



Unfortunately, many of the thoughts and questions raised in the strong first act of the play remain where they are, while the rest of the play tends to get lost in the unravelling of an overly complicated narrative. As *The Seller* proceeds to relate the story of her grandfather (Joshua Lim) and his remarkable life that is intertwined with the painting, much of the ensuing narrative becomes plot-driven. It hardly develops the earlier interesting ideas, and does not reveal much about the Holocaust that we don't already know.

The decision to create a play about Hitler and the Holocaust is itself curious in relation to the local context. Of course, most would likely agree that the topic is and will always be relevant in the history of mankind in a general sense, especially given the many genocidal regimes that sadly still exist today. However, there is something awkward about watching a play set in Nazi Germany – or in an ambiguous contemporary European context – while hearing almost all the characters speak in recognisably Singaporean accents.

I am also unsure about the use of shadow puppetry against the cyclorama to indicate moving scenery and changes in setting. Perhaps because of the nostalgia and heroic drama associated with shadow puppetry in the Southeast Asian context, its use in the play is sometimes evocative of a romantic idea of history – not quite in line with associations of Auschwitz and the other wartime settings represented in the play. Furthermore, the rest of the set consists of pieces that are largely realistic representations of the time period and setting. The use of puppetry in *Framed* thus sits uncomfortably, despite it being a signature element of The Finger Players' work.

At its heart, *Framed* is a work with a compelling premise, but its potential significance is unfortunately obscured by the overly narrative-driven approach. It will be interesting to see how the third work in Chong's trilogy will deal with one of the darkest times in modern history.