



previous incarnations in her performance in *Forked*, especially in the semi-autobiographical Peh. In the Rocky Balboa-esque warm-ups, I saw the indefatigable female warrant officer in *Frago*; the heritage club president desperate for validation of *Trees, A Crowd...* echoed in Peh's shapeshifting accent; and *Displaced Persons' Welcome Dinner*'s battle-worn administrator Angela in Peh's final moment of resignation when she decides to call time on her UK sojourn.

Chong and set designer Chan Silei work hand in hand to effectively carve out emotional spaces in an otherwise spare stage. A cool, knowing Peh occupies the upstage area, while centrestage is when the multinational characters often meet. But stage left is where many of the more emotionally intimate scenes in *Forked* play out. Here, a small desk light illuminates hastily ended phone calls with her mother and troubling memories of school, to heartbreaking detail. In contrast, sound designer Darren Ng's playful music often goes big, offering cheeky nods to musical theatre or rendering the almost cliché soundscape of the London Tube.

Like *Forked*, a number of theatre productions this year have turned their attentions onto the industry itself, such as Ellison Tan's bitter paean to unsung heroes in *We Were So Hopeful Then*, and *Acting Mad*, which featured verbatim accounts from Singapore theatremakers who have mental health issues. In *Forked*, actor training becomes a conduit for exploring Peh's multi-everything/nothing identity as a Singaporean – at once too ethnic in a foreign land and too foreign at home, and yet too blended to be able to pinpoint for herself what and who she is. Notably, Lim Woan Wen's dazzling array of lighting, from decorative to functional, glaring PAR Cans to mere figurations of street lamps, brings the metatheatricality of the play to glorious light. Actors are often conditioned to find the light on stage, and in doing so, Peh ultimately finds herself.



In the fast clip of Singapore's theatre scene, restaging one's work is a luxury. I am delighted that Tan gets a chance to revise her work, and within such a short time period too. I was privileged enough to have been part of the initial series of playwriting classes under Checkpoint Theatre's Huzir Sulaiman in 2016, where Tan first wrote her script, then titled *China Wine*. Since then, with the help of many others, it's been reworked, and had its fat trimmed. This is what we mean when we say that theatre is a craft.

This is the role Tan has been waiting for; that it is one of her own making, makes it all the more sweeter. With each identity she takes on, Tan reveals more of herself. One can only hope for much, much more in the future. Each stretch of a muscle makes it leaner, stronger. Even an injury is a chance for the body to regenerate itself, be built anew. Tan steps up to the plate. And picks up the fork.