

For immediate release

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Singaporean Playwright TAN Liting and photographer Charmaine POH bring 2017 M1 Fringe Festival's success "Pretty Butch" to Taipei Arts Festival

Inspired by the true stories of women and men, *Pretty Butch* is a play about masculinity and issues of the body, exploring the impact of society's accepted notions of gender upon its people from a female perspective. Against the backdrop of modern Singapore's multicultural society, five characters navigate life on the fringe as they grapple with gender definitions, whether by choice or by circumstance. At best, their narratives are disregarded. At worst, they are relentlessly harassed—even viciously bullied—for being different.

"But what does it mean to be man enough, or too manly, especially if I'm a woman?"

(extracts from *Pretty Butch*)

After a sold-out run at the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2017, Playwright and Director Tan Liting has been invited to bring the play to the Taipei Arts Festival in Taiwan as part of Producer Selects, a programme of the festival focusing on international work. The show will be staged at **Taipei Zhongshan Hall on 11th - 12th August 2018.**

For this iteration, the play has been translated into Mandarin and will be performed by Taiwanese actors in the form of a dramatized reading. In preparation for this, Liting and documentary photographer Charmaine Poh have been conducting interviews and documenting Taiwanese women who identify as "T", which is the closest Taiwanese equivalent to "butch". Thus, the project takes the discussion of gender identity beyond the cultural context of Singapore.

The photography series resulting from this process will be incorporated into the staging of the play, with the aim to challenge gender perceptions through the intersection of visual art and theatre. Through the translation and the re-contextualization of the work in a foreign environment, *Pretty Butch* investigates the cultural nuances of gender norms, constructs which define stereotypes regarding femininity and masculinity.

Charmaine and Liting are both [M1 Singapore Fringe Festival Alumni](#) who work on issues regarding gender, queerness, and memory. Charmaine held a solo exhibition, *All in Her Day's Work*, as part of the 2018 M1 Singapore Fringe Festival, which showcased a series of photographic images of women getting ready for work, shot through a two-way mirror. The series looked at gender expectations, labour, and the self-image.

Pretty Butch is operating on a thin budget of \$13,400. The *Pretty Butch* team is still looking to cover basic artistic and production expenses of bringing the show to Taiwan. The money will go towards paying for flights, accommodation, per diem expenses as well as production costs incurred in

putting this installation-play together. The Fundraising campaign is co-organized by Centre 42 and is available for Tax Exemption on Giving.sg platform. (<https://www.giving.sg/centre42/prettybutch>)

For info

Pretty Butch Website <https://weareprettybutch.com/>

Pretty Butch Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/prettybutches/>

PR Contact & Interview

Stefania Mangano (Producer): stefania.anna.mangano@gmail.com (+65 93502166)

Liting Tan (Playwright & Director) rebekah.tanlt@gmail.com (+65 9230 2282)

Charmaine Poh (Photographer) psxcharmaine@gmail.com (+65 8298 7538)

Biographies

Tan Liting works full time as a theatre practitioner with an interest in devising performance from personal stories. Liting's past directorial credits include *Pretty Butch* (M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2017), *The Truth About Lying: Heresy and Common Sense for the Theatre* (The Finger Players), *Taking The Subs* (The Substation Director's Lab), *(When I'm) Sixty Four* (Ageless Theatre), *Re: Almost Left Behind* (Singapore Arts Festival 2011). Liting also teaches drama in schools, and has trained her students in both performance and backstage work, in the hopes of providing a more balanced experience in theatre training and performance. Liting likes conversation, hearing and telling a good story. Liting also likes guitars, sneakers and referring to Liting in third person.

Charmaine Poh is an artist and documentarian based between Singapore and Berlin. Her work concerns gender, youth, memory, and solitude. Specifically, she is interested in the performance of self, and the multiple layers of identity we build upon ourselves. She often works with the form of narrative portraiture. Focused on uncovering narratives in Asia, her work has been recognized internationally.

<http://www.charmainepoh.com/>

Press Images

All images are part of the photography series on Taiwanese "T" culture
Credits @Charmaine Poh 2018

Pretty Butch **premiered on January 11, 2017 at Centre 42, Singapore, under the [M1 Fringe Festival 2017: Art and Skin](#)**, the annual festival of theatre, dance, music, visual arts and mixed media, which brings the best of contemporary, cutting-edge and socially engaged works to the Singapore audience.

The original script of *Pretty Butch* was developed in residency under the [**Boiler Room and Basement Workshop 2015 programme at Centre 42**](#). Centre 42 is one of the most prominent incubators for the creation, documentation and promotion of text and writing for the Singapore stage.