

SmartyPants and the Swordfish - Pre-show Notes

Prepared by Seren Chen for ARTDIS

Introduction and Audio Described Show Information

Welcome to this introduction to *SmartyPants and the Swordfish*, directed by Samantha Scott-Blackhall and Tan Beng Tian, and presented by ARTDIS and Gateway Arts.

This production runs from the 20th to 24th of March, with public shows at 2pm from the 20th to 22nd of March, and 11am and 3pm from the 23rd to 24th of March. The venue is Gateway Theatre's Black Box. Audio description and touch tours are available at any show upon prior request to nurarina@artdis.sg. An audio device with disposable ear pieces will be provided. Touch tours with limited slots begin one hour and fifteen minutes ahead of each show. If you are attending the touch tour, please plan to arrive early and register at Level 1.

SmartyPants and the Swordfish runs for approximately one hour and thirty minutes with no interval, including a 20-minute post-show dialogue. Your audio describer is Seren Chen.

Do note that seating for this show will be primarily on the floor. Chair seats are available upon request to nurarina@artdis.sg.

Synopsis

The story opens with a group of students investigating the legend of Redhill, probing to uncover how a young kampung boy met his demise at the hands of a jealous Raja. As they peel back the layers of this age-old tale, they uncover hidden truths, meet evil advisors and even fend off an attack by swordfishes!

The post-show dialogue will engage young audiences to explore dynamics of power and learn how to prevent bullying. The play further provides a platform for intellectually disabled artists to showcase their skills, gain professional experience and be recognised as equal contributors to the creative process.

Creative Team

SmartyPants and the Swordfish was written by Jean Tay.

The directors are Samantha Scott-Blackhall and Tan Beng Tian.

Set design by Samantha Scott-Blackhall.

Lighting design by Petrina Dawn Tan.
Sound design by Daniel Wong.
Puppet design by Ling Jia Le and Shawn Yzelman.
Props by Jessy Choo.
Costumes by Theresa Chan.
Creative captions by Shai and Joanna Ong.
Audio description by Seren Chen.
Movement coaching by Zhuo Zihao.
Creative access and artistic collaboration advice by Peter Sau.

Cast, Characters, and Costumes

Overview

SmartyPants and the Swordfish features a collaborative staging between mainstream actors and artists with disabilities. The artists with disabilities are puppeteers, manoeuvring big, colourful puppets to bring the play to life. This diverse casting underpins the importance to have empathy and respect for one another, regardless of differences.

All actors and puppeteers act as students from the same school, wearing white, short-sleeved collared shirts. The 7 boys wear turquoise shorts or trousers, and the 5 girls wear pleated knee-length skirts in the same shade of turquoise. As the students investigate the legend of Redhill and present stories from different perspectives, they take on different roles, from the villagers and government of Singapura to a clan of swordfish led by their Queen.

As villagers in the Singapura story, they wear brown batik sarongs over their uniforms in different ways. Some tie the batik sarongs around their waists or sling them as a sash, while others wrap them around their chests like a tube dress.

In the swordfish story, as the swordfish and other aquatic creatures, they shed the sarongs and wear shiny vests instead, mostly in different shades of blue or green. The swordfish puppets are large 3D foam fish, ranging from about half a metre to a metre long. They are stylised and geometric, mostly made of gently curved triangles of foam joined together to make a 3D fish, with their fins adorned in trailing batik fabric. These puppets are attached to long poles, which the puppeteers hold so the fish swim overhead. Puppeteers for fish with speaking roles are each paired with a mainstream actor, who stands behind them and provides the voice to their puppetry. Other animals featured include a big foam crab, a big foam clam, as well as smaller birds and clucking chickens. There are even big jellyfish made from transparent umbrellas, with trailing tentacles made from floaty white crepe streamers and strings of shiny silver tinsel.

Character Details

Zaini Hassan plays Nathaniel, the SmartyPants of the student group. In the Singapura story, Nathaniel plays Nadim, a young boy whose quick intellect saves his village from a swordfish attack. In the swordfish story, he puppets Baby Fishy, who is the only fish who isn't blue or green - he's pink and purple instead! Baby Fishy is also much smaller than the other fish at about 30cm long, which allows Zaini to spin the puppet pole and have Baby Fishy execute quick, lively loops!

Mary Tan plays a student in the group and a villager in the Singapura story. In the swordfish story, she puppets Queen S. In contrast to Baby Fishy, Queen S is the biggest of the bunch at about a metre long. Queen S is turquoise blue with sparkly silver accents and an equally sparkly golden crown. Johanna Van stands behind Mary to provide Queen S's voice.

Johanna also plays Sandy, a prefect in the student group. Sandy wears a burgundy blazer and tie on top of her uniform. She plays a villager in the Singapura story.

Periyachi Roshini plays Violet, who comes to Nathaniel's defence when he is bullied for being a SmartyPants. In the Singapura story, she plays Lina, who is Nadim's friend. In the swordfish story, she voices Pointy Mouth for the puppeteer Alexavier Ang.

Alexavier puppets the swordfish Pointy Mouth, one of Queen S's advisors. He also plays a student of the group, and in the Singapura story, he is one of the four who puppet the Raja.

Wayne Lim plays Brandon, the leader of the student group. He wears a red sports jacket over his uniform, and is bold and forceful. In the Singapura story, Brandon plays the Raja. In public appearances to his villagers, the Raja is shown as a larger-than-life puppet. Unlike the swordfish, the Raja's puppet is 2D, like a massive paper doll, in 4 segments - his head, with a brown face and yellow crown, as well as his two separate arms, and the rest of his body. Each segment is puppeted by a different person - Wayne Lim, Alexavier Ang, Timothy Lee, and Filmer Tan. However, in private scenes with his advisors, the puppet is set aside, and he wears a deep maroon vest trimmed with gold and a big, glittering golden crown. In the swordfish story, he provides the voice for Fish 2, puppeted by Isaac Tan.

Isaac plays a student in the group and a villager in the Singapura story. In the swordfish story, he puppets Fish 2, a green fish who brings terrible news to the Queen. Fish 2 is accompanied by Fish 1, puppeted by Filmer Tan.

Filmer plays a student in the group and a villager in the Singapura story. He also puppets one segment of the Raja in his public appearances. In the swordfish story, he puppets Fish 1, who brings bad news to the Queen together with Fish 2. Fish 1 is voiced by Jeremy Leong.

Jeremy also plays the student Seng, who is the sidekick to Brandon, the leader. In the Singapura story, he plays the Minister of External Defence, one of the Raja's two advisors.

The Raja's other advisor, the Prime Minister, is played by Claris Tan. Among the students, Claris also plays Rachel, one of the bullies. In the swordfish story, she voices Motor Mouth for the puppeteer Timothy Lee.

Timothy puppets the swordfish Motor Mouth, one of Queen S's advisors. He also plays a student in the group and puppets one segment of the Raja in his public appearances.

Janel Jiang plays a student of the group. In the Singapura story, she plays the Raja's favourite elephant via a shiny royal purple elephant balloon that she holds in her arms.

Set and Setting

SmartyPants and the Swordfish is set in a basketball court where a group of students present the story of Redhill from different perspectives and act as different characters in each setting.

For this show, the squarish floor of Gateway Theatre's Black Box has been painted like half a basketball court. The far end of the space features the large semi-circle where a goal hoop would be. This large green semi-circle takes up almost half the floor. Inside it is a blue square with a small red semi-circle on one end pointing towards the audience. Further towards the audience is a blue catwalk that tapers to connect with a small red circle. On a court, this circle would be in the exact centre. Instead, for *SmartyPants*, this circle is the end of the acting space. Each shape is outlined in white. Audience members sit behind the white outlines of the circle and catwalk on three sides, filling the rest of the half-court.

At the far end of the large semi-circle, where a goal hoop would usually be, are instead four round rattan baskets as large as laundry bins. The students use the central basket as a goal. However, the baskets all contain different props and costumes for the different settings in the story of Redhill.

In the Singapura story, thick brown tree trunks extend upwards, and some characters wave large palm leaves. Meanwhile, in the swordfish story, a giant translucent canopy is raised to cover the ceiling, becoming the sea's surface above this underwater realm. Colourful coral structures in all the shades of the rainbow frame the edges of the space, which is filled with a shimmering blue light.

Access Information

Gateway Theatre aims to provide an excellent experience and service for all patrons who may require additional support to access our venue and enjoy our events.

Gateway Theatre is located at 3615 Jalan Bukit Merah, Singapore 159461. The Black Box, where this play will be performed, can be accessed from the 7th floor of the building.

While Gateway Theatre itself has no carpark, there are HDB carparks available surrounding the building.

For public transport options, the nearest bus stops are 10091, Bukit Merah Town Centre; 10099, Opposite Bukit Merah Town Centre; and 10009, Bukit Merah Bus Interchange, serving a variety of buses.

The nearest MRT station is Redhill, on the East-West line, an 11-minute walk away.

If you are using a ridesharing service such as Grab or Gojek, do note that Gateway Theatre's registered drop-off point is on the opposite side of the building from the audience lifts. To be dropped off or picked up in front of the lifts, you may set the location as 163 Bukit Merah Central.

Gateway Theatre is assistance dog-friendly. It is also accessible for wheelchair use, with step-free access to the box office, toilets and performance spaces from the street. There is also lift access and accessible toilets on all floors.

If you have any other queries regarding access information, please contact us at 6424 9408.

We look forward to welcoming you and hope you have a wonderful time with us.