

LILY

A project about dementia and music



FULL PREMIERE
15-16 OCTOBER 2024
7:30pm

UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE THEATRE

SYNOPSIS

LILY explores the connection between music and dementia, initiated by vocal pedagogue and soprano Dr Wong Su Sun (who plays the title role of Lily), in collaboration with composer Chen Zhangyi and director Nora Samosir,

The opera *LOSING LILY*, with text written by playwright Jean Tay, unfolds a poignant story of the human mind – from brushes with forgetfulness in early onset dementia, to heart-wrenching moments of not recognising loved ones. Along with Dr Wong (Lily), tenor Jonathan Charles Tay plays her son and mezzo-soprano Cindy Honanta appears as the caregiver. The trio of singers is supported by an ensemble of seven student and staff musicians from the YST Conservatory, led by conductor Chong Wai Lun.

The performance will also include a screening of the docu-opera *A DAY A LILY*, produced by librettist Jack Lin and directed by Lim Ziyu of The Floating Folks. The narrative of an opera singer who begins to lose her memory is interlaced with interviews from persons living with dementia, healthcare professionals, social workers, caregivers, as well as the creatives' process of making the docu-opera.

At the core of this project, we hope to present a show that aims to raise the social awareness of dementia. *LILY* stems from the research of the correlation of singing and the delay of the onset of dementia (Feng Lei et al, 2020). To quote one of the interviewees of the docu-opera, Alison Lim (a person living with dementia, founder of Dementia & Co) once said, 'dementia does not discriminate'. Dementia could affect anyone in our society, regardless of ethnicity, or social status.



MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CREATOR/SOPRANO

Five years of co-creating and amalgamating both the film and the stage work demanded nothing less than passion, patience, and perseverance. The team and I are truly humbled by the knowledge, revelations, and friendships that we have experienced and formed through this project.

LILY started off as a personal quest to give a voice to those who suffer silently, living with dementia. Each of the three characters in the opera, to a certain extent, is a reflection of my own life as a singer/teacher, daughter, and caregiver. I find it particularly healing that each character has moments of soliloquy where their innermost thoughts are expressed and heard by the audience.

The creative team anchored the story with music reminiscence as a solution to manage and heal the lost mind, and relieve the stress of family members and/or caregivers. It may be noteworthy to highlight the demonstration of effective versus ineffective communication, whenever the Son or Caregiver interacts with the Singer (Lily). Through the various stages of script research, consultation with healthcare professionals, and our collective experience living with dementia, the team sought to incorporate realistic scenes that involve persons living with dementia and the people around them.

We are indebted to Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music for the generous support of this meaningful project, along with grants from National Arts Council and the Arts Fund.

My team and I wish to dedicate this opera *première* to all patients, caregivers, and family members who are suffering, enduring, and managing this degenerative brain disease.

Where there is song, there is light to life.

Dr. Wong Su Sun

Project initiator

Co-creator

Soprano (SINGER/LILY)

MESSAGE FROM THE COMPOSER

LILY is one of the most meaningful projects that I have been part of. This began in 2020 or so, when Dr Wong Su Sun came up with the idea of creating an opera that was about dementia and music. As I track the various milestones of this multi-part project, I realized that we have all aged a little. We have also found certain similarities and resonance with the characters in the opera.

The journey of *LILY* looks like this:

29 June 2022

A DAY A LILY

*Docu-opera
screening*

30 Nov 2024

LOSING LILY

*Work-in-progress
performance*

15-16 October 2024

LILY *full premiere*

A DAY A LILY + LOSING LILY
Screening + staged opera

In 2021-22, with *A DAY A LILY*, the creative team led by my dear friend Jack Lin as producer and librettist created a fused format of documentary and opera. The 20-minute film directed by Lim Ziyu (The Floating Folks) culminated in the first screening at the National Museum of Singapore. There have been subsequent screenings at conferences about health and music, music education, and even at hospitals.

LOSING LILY, the opera, took shape in 2023-24, where we brought in playwright Jean Tay for the continuation of this project onto the stage. Various versions of the text were created, we constantly reworked the narrative during read-throughs, workshops and the work-in-progress show. Similarly, many versions of the piano-vocal scores were created, leading up to the current orchestrated version.

Many of us amongst the creatives, cast and crew have taken turns to shed a tear during this process, forget a line or two, discover a typo, or hum the tunes while at our day jobs. And that is all okay, to quote Jean's lyrics, if we '*just take it one step at a time. One note at a time.*'

Now, please enjoy the show!

Chen Zhangyi

Composer
Project Coordinator

PROGRAMME

A DAY A LILY (2022)

Docu-opera (screening) 20'

LOSING LILY (2024) *premiere*

Chamber opera (live performance) 60'

Scene 1 - BACKSTAGE (SINGER/LILY)

- I. Prelude
- II. Another City, Another Show
- III. But Sometimes I Forget (*Sprechgesang*)
- IV. I've Been Dreaming About Lilies
- V. My World Is Full Of Music
- VI. The Chinese Song (*Transition 1*)

Scene 2 - THE MUSIC LESSON (LILY & SON)

- VII. So Late Already (*Recitative*)
- VIII. We Have To Get Started (*Recitative*)
- IX. She Can't Remember Me
- X. A New Song? (*Dialogue*)
- XI. Song Of Eurydice - I'll Follow Your Voice (*Duet*)
- XII. Why Are You Stopping (*Recitative/Arioso*)
- XIII. Oh Look! (*Recitative/Arioso*)
- XIV. Lily Dreams (*Transition 2*)

Scene 3 - CROSSING WORLDS (CAREGIVER, LILY & SON)

- XV. Popo Zou San! (*Good Morning Popo!*)
- XVI. Giving Care
- XVII. You Take Care (*Recitative*)
- XVIII. What Is Going On? (*Recitative/Arioso*)
- XIX. Go To Her (*Arioso*)
- XX. Her World Is Full
- XXI. Her World Was Full
- XXII. Who Are You? (*Recitative*)
- XXIII. For A Moment (Trio)
- XXIV. Thank You For That Moment
- XXV. Postlude

CREDITS

LOSING LILY (2024) *premiere*

Chamber opera (live performance) 60'

CREATIVES

Chen Zhangyi	Composer
Jean Tay	Playwright
Wong Su Sun	Co-creator
Nora Samosir	Director

CAST

Wong Su Sun	SINGER/LILY, Soprano
Jonathan Charles Tay	SON, Tenor
Cindy Honanta	CAREGIVER, Mezzo-soprano

YST ENSEMBLE

Chong Wai Lun	Conductor
Lee Yu Xian Natasha	Piccolo, Flute and Alto Flute
Viktoria Ivaylova Marinova	Violin
Caitlin Chin	Viola
Ren Zhiyi 'Ariel'	Violoncello
Yung-Ting Huang	Contrabass
K.Gun Mongkolprapa	Percussion
Frances Lee	Piano/Répétiteur

RÉPÉTITEURS

Aloysius Foong	Répétiteur
Soh Weiqi	Répétiteur

PRODUCTION CREW

Samzy Jo	Production Manager
Esther Tan	Stage Manager
Alberta Wileo	Lighting Designer
Audrey Low	Set Designer
Nadia Joven	Stagehand
Theresa Chan	Wardrobe Manager
Nur Fa'iqah	Wardrobe Assistant
Norehan Fong-Harun	Makeup Artist
Ischa Salleh	Assistant Makeup Artist
Vivien Tan	Hair Stylist
Xavier Hui	Surtitles Operator
Poco Productions	Video Production

YST AUDIO CREW

Calla Lim	Audio Coordinator
Zhou Xiaodong	Audio Coordinator
Alicia Ho	Audio Crew
Brandon Keasberry	Audio Crew
Chan Leo Wynn	Audio Crew
Luke Ng	Audio Crew
Nea Jie Xi	Audio Crew

PROJECT COORDINATORS

Benny Lim	Producer (YST)
Ong Shu Chen	Liaison and Marketing (YST)
Faezah Zulkifli	Marketing (YST)
Wong Su Sun	Project Initiator & Coordinator
Chen Zhangyi	Project Coordinator

CREDITS *(cont.)*

A DAY A LILY (2022)

Docu-opera (screening) ^{20'}

CREATIVES

Jack Lin	Producer & Librettist
Chen Zhangyi	Composer
Wong Su Sun	Co-creator
Nora Samosir	Dramaturg
Lim Ziyu	Director

CAST

Wong Su Sun	SINGER (LILY), soprano
Jonathan Shin	SON, pianist

INTERVIEWEES

Alison Lim	Founder of Dementia & Co
Jamie Lynn Buitelaar	Co-founder of Dementia & Co
Dr Feng Lei	Researcher
Dr Maurine Tsakok	Advocate
Rachel Ho	Advocate

MUSICIANS

Brenda Koh	Violin
Christoven Tan	Viola
Leslie Tan	Violoncello
Jonathan Shin	Piano

PRODUCTION

The Floating Folks	Film Production
Al-Azmir Ibrahim	Cinematographer
Janice Goh	Assistant Producer
Wong Wei Kang	Camera Operator
Alvin Ling	Grip
Xavier Teo	Grip
Lydia Yap	Production Assistant

MusoSpace	Audio recording
Kenneth Lun	Recording & Mixing
Kelly Tan	Recording Assistant

Tang Poem 《酬梦得比萱草见赠》 by Bai Juyi (白居易)

'Dementia does not discriminate.'

- **Alison Lim.** Person living with dementia, Founder of Dementia & Co, and Singaporean of the Year 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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