



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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## THE BACKSTORIES

### Contemporary Asian Australian Performance – William Yang and Annette Shun Wah

Space Theatre

Until 12 Mar 2017

Review by Kylie Pedler

Co-directed by William Yang and Annette Shun Wah, this world premiere exclusive provides an intimate glimpse into the back stories of three Asian-Australian figures from South Australia.

This reviewer was fortunate to attend the opening night performance which revealed the life of Cheong Liew. As a chef, Liew's reputation precedes him. He is considered one of Australia's best; an innovator, experimenter, and entrepreneur with an amazing ability to blend cuisines with his Malaysian heritage. But behind the success is a story of love, family, separation, migration and challenge.

Through beautiful black and white photographs, the story of his home town and family are shared. Backdropped by Gareth Chin's emotive accompaniment, the audience witnesses the gentle touch of Liew's culinary skills as he kneads dough, and delicately places stir-fry vegetables on a plate. And then Liew himself tells the traumatic story of his childhood as the firecrackers and burned villages of Malaysia in 1969 were watched from a hiding space within the family rubber plantation and ultimately led to the destruction of their family farm.

There is humour, sentiment and passion in every word he speaks.

Self-taught from cookbooks, such as Elizabeth David (French), Chinese cookbooks translated by his own mother as he couldn't read Chinese and his fond memories of watching his grandmother cook for twenty people every day, Liew's passion and enthusiasm for food has influenced his creation of famous dishes such as The Four Dances. While his food may be amazing (I was fortunate to have a taste in the foyer on opening night), the story behind the food reveals a truly remarkable person who fifty years after fleeing Malaysia, is still happy to call Australia home.

*On subsequent nights, the story of Razak Mohammed (9-10 March) and Moya Dodd (11-12 March) will be shared.*