



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PULL BACK THE CURTAIN 2015

Youth Scriptwriting Initiative

Performance: 12 & 13 June, Chinese International School Drama Studio

NEW YOUTH WRITING TAKES CENTRE STAGE!

Photos: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d3qmn3oaiagw10w/AAA5-gckpyZJE4S8rTrmlOZOa?dl=0>

On 12 and 13 June, Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation (HKYAF) is proud to present *Pull Back the Curtain 2015* – a professional performance of three 20-minute pieces by some of Hong Kong’s youngest budding playwrights.

The culmination of the second HKYAF and British Council *Pull Back the Curtain* youth scriptwriting initiative, the performance features a professional physical theatre production of *Breathe Me*, by 24-year-old Chinese University graduate Shen Xingzhou, along with staged readings of *Awake* by 16-year-old Nastassja Torio, a student at YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College, and *Mike* by Claire Chang, also 16, and a student at Renaissance College.

Breathe Me is staged by HKYAF Founder and show director Lindsey McAlister, and the readings are directed by Candice Moore, director, producer and actress of Sweet and Sour Productions Limited.

About *Pull Back the Curtain*

This spring, 26 young people aged 14 to 24 came together from across Hong Kong to take part in the *Pull Back the Curtain* scriptwriting initiative with local playwright and director Clare Stearns. For over two months, they explored the power of theatre as a catalyst for serious conversation, and penned their own plays.

Through a series of workshops, participants experimented with ideas, developed research skills, articulated their thoughts on ethical and social issues in writing, and witnessed their words come to life through rehearsed readings. They also gained first-hand insight into the world of writing through informative and lively masterclasses with **award-winning screenwriter Lawrence Gray** and **local playwright Wing Man Lam**.

Inspired by London’s National Theatre’s *New Views* programme, **workshop director Clare Stearns** says, “We want to encourage young people to explore the things that matter to them – the things that make them mad and the things that make them laugh. Whether it’s school or family issues, or international political events, it doesn’t really matter, as long as they understand that a powerful place to raise serious issues is in the theatre.”

While **Shen Xingzhou**, creator of *Breathe Me*, has experience of publishing photography, poems and even a film script, this was her first play. “It’s absolutely new to me. To think about the story, the characters, the dialogue, the development of emotion, the stage setting and lighting – it’s a lot. But it all helped me work out what I want to express and present. Before *Pull Back the Curtain*, I never thought I could write a play... I didn’t even know where to begin!”

About her work Xingzhou says, “For me, the most fearful thing is fear that seems inexplicable, and I believe this is something that haunts many people.” She added, “The play is not about the story itself, but more about a feeling, a state of mind. The two characters without names, they can be each other, their roles can be switched – they can be no one, they can be anyone, anyone suffering the same fear.”

Lindsey McAlister says, “Xingzhou’s play stood out because of its sophistication. I was captivated by the concept, and was impressed by how she managed to grasp such a tricky idea and communicate it beautifully. Her minimalistic style, and ability to create an air of mystery will lend itself brilliantly to a powerful and impactful production. This is a very promising debut for a young scriptwriter.”

Sophia Chan-Combrink, Head of Education and Society of the British Council says, “After last year’s success, we are happy to once again collaborate with Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation to help promote the creative talent of young people in Hong Kong, enhance their English language skills, and encourage their interest in the UK culture. Being able to bring one of their plays to life – it’s a very empowering and important process for a playwright, regardless of age and experience.”

Free tickets are now available at www.hkyaf.com/pullbackthecurtain.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Photos: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d3qmn3oaiagw10w/AAA5-gckpyZJE4S8rTrmlOZOa?dl=0>

Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation’s *Pull Back the Curtain Sharing Performance*

Venue: Chinese International School, Drama Studio

Performances: 12 – 13 June, 7.30pm – 8.45pm

Admission free, online registration required at www.hkyaf.com/pullbackthecurtain

Suitable for ages 12 and above; performance in English

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www.hkyaf.com/pullbackthecurtain

Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation

Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation (YAF) www.hkyaf.com is a charity that provides high quality, non-competitive arts experiences for young people aged 5 to 25. Established in 1993 by Lindsey McAlister, OBE, YAF organises inclusive and inspirational projects that reach out to youngsters of all cultures, backgrounds, languages and abilities, and actively creates opportunities for those who are disadvantaged and underprivileged. Each year we reach over 800,000 children, teenagers and young adults through our projects, exhibitions and performances.

The British Council

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.

We work in more than 100 countries and our 8,000 staff – including 2,000 teachers – work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year by teaching English, sharing the arts and delivering education and society programmes. In Hong Kong, we have been doing this since 1948, giving people opportunities to learn, share and connect worldwide.

We are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter. A core publicly-funded grant provides 20 per cent of our turnover which last year was £864 million. The rest of our revenues are earned from services which customers around the world pay for, such as English classes and taking UK examinations, and also through education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. All our work is in pursuit of our charitable purpose and supports prosperity and security for the UK and globally.

For more information, please visit: www.britishcouncil.org. You can also keep in touch with the British Council through <http://blog.britishcouncil.org/>. To learn more about British Council in Hong Kong, please visit www.britishcouncil.hk and www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilHK.

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