

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Smash-hit bilingual production of popular children's classic
returns to the stage for four performances only**

**Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation's
MATILDA**

4–5 April 2014, Chinese International School Drama Studio

Roald Dahl's hugely successful children's book *Matilda* comes to life this April in a theatre production presented by the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation (YAF) with the support of Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel & Towers (Sheraton). Hailed for highlighting important childhood issues such as bullying in an imaginative and compelling way, this physical theatre performance had a sold-out three-week run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival shortly after it was first staged in 1999. 15 years later, with research showing that one in three young people in Hong Kong today are victims of bullying, these issues are clearly still relevant.



Matilda, a story of courage, intelligence and imagination, follows a bright young booklover who dreams of a better life. Bullied by her dimwitted parents and the wicked school headmistress Miss Trunchbull, Matilda takes a stand against unjust forces and grasps her destiny in her own tiny, but powerful hands.

The cast of 21 young performers aged 8 to 15 will be joined on stage by three professional adult actors Daren Durkin, Jessica De Borja and Camilla McDonald. Appealing to the young and the young at heart, the show will be performed in English with Cantonese.

Director Lindsey McAlister says, "Although the performance might at first seem fun and lighthearted, *Matilda* has serious undertones and themes that are close to the young cast's hearts and lives. Research shows that young people in Hong Kong may actually suffer more emotional and physical violence than their American, European and Taiwanese counterparts. We hope that the show stimulates conversation among parents, teachers and young people. As adults, it is our responsibility to provide a supportive and positive environment that allows young people to learn and grow up without fear."

Ten-year-old Kelly Fong, who brings young Matilda to life, says, "*Matilda* shows that it's not just friends or schoolmates that bully... some teachers and parents do too. Because they're grownups, it makes the bullying much harder to deal with. But Matilda uses her cleverness to overcome challenges." She adds, "For me, this show will be challenging. Not just because it's my first lead role, but also because I have to perform in two languages!"

With the generous support of Sheraton, and in accordance with their guiding principle that 'Life is better when shared', all performances of *Matilda* will be free of charge.

Alongside the performances, Sheraton's sponsorship and core values 'warm', 'connected' and 'community' are also enabling:

- 200 students from local primary and secondary schools in low-income areas to experience *Matilda* as their first theatre show.
- YAF staff to offer a workshop to provide teachers with the skills to address the issues raised in *Matilda* through creative games and drama exercises.
- 20 staff volunteers from Sheraton to help run a drama workshop and give 20 young participants with limited first-hand experience of stage performances the opportunity to create their own theatre piece.

Photos can be downloaded here:

http://ftp.hkyaf.com/press@hkyaf.com/HKYAF_Matilda.zip

Notes to Editors

Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation's *Matilda*

Venue: Drama Studio, Chinese International School

Date: 4–5 April, 2014

Times: School performances 4pm – 5pm, public performances 7:30pm – 8:30pm

Free admission, registration required (kerryL@hkyaf.com)

Suitable for ages 6 and above

Performed in English with Cantonese

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 young people through our projects, exhibitions and performances.

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