

#Showbiz: The fall up close and personal

By [Aref Omar](#) - January 11, 2019 @ 11:41am



Tria Aziz and Michael Chen reprised their roles as mother and son in the engaging and intimate 10th anniversary restaging of the challenging musical, *The Edge*, which dealt with relationships, consequences of actions and suicide. Pic by CH'NG SHI P'NG

FIRST staged in 2008 as a workshop version before a full-production run five years later at the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre, *The Edge: A Goodbye Musical* had its tenth year anniversary restaging recently by Theatrethreesixty.

This particular production, the first musical for the almost-5-year-old Theatrethreesixty, was an intimate affair that had its run in the cozy confines of the theatre company's Lot'ng Arts Space in Subang Jaya.

A man named Josh stands on the edge of a building contemplating suicide. The musical then focuses on key people in his life – his mother, brother, best friend, good friend, girlfriend and co-worker.

The various characters contemplate their relationships with Josh, told through flashbacks, and try to figure out why he would choose to throw his seemingly bright future away. Eventually they find him and try to save him. But will they be able to save him?

Those who have seen this work before will already know that one of the best things about it is the music itself. It is a musical after all!

Dynamic, manic and snaky, it's also catchy and suitably emotional at times with its non-common time signatures and tight rhythmic excursions.

The combination of slow and fast numbers provided great accompaniment to the sing-song dialogue and lyrics that carried the story forward at a brisk pace and was highly engaging so as to not give a chance for the audience members' collective minds to wander.

In this production, the versatile tunes were performed by a three-member band made up of a keyboardist, violinist and guitarist.

Although the three musicians were adept at presenting the highly challenging score and made it easy to digest for the audience, the experience would have been much better if it was performed by a bigger ensemble.

Lush strings and a grand piano together with other percussive and instrumental accoutrements would have given the songs the weight, tone and impact that it really deserves.

But I do understand the context of this production, with its more intimate setup and smaller venue, not to mention budget and production constraints.

It would be great though to have another staging in the future which features a grander production to accompany the winning work.

The other obvious attraction of this particular staging of *The Edge* were the performances by the actors, who were mostly at arms length from the audience throughout most of the two-hour musical, cut in two by a short intermission.

All the action took place on and around a raised square-lined stage that surrounded the musicians.

The cast of six would emote on this narrow platform and saunter around to complete the various scenes and songs to make sure that wherever audience members sat, they could most of the time see the actors face on.

It was exciting to be able to get real close to the actors but it would have been also a big challenge for the cast to emote in such tight quarters for all to see, their faces, body movements and gestures all up for scrutiny.

But it was precisely this aspect of the production that made the story gripping as the actors easily held the attention of those who came to watch the show.

Michael Chen and Tria Aziz reprised their roles as Josh's elder brother Jarod and mother Lilly respectively, and provided a solid foundation to introduce the character that everyone is concerned about (even though Josh doesn't actually appear at all during the course of the musical. Brilliant!).

Kai Chalmers as Ryan and Iz Sulaini as Michael were Josh's close friends who had either a desire for him or his life. Michelle Tan as girlfriend Deanna and Ping Khoo as colleague April also had complicated ties to him.

The cast delivered sterling performances as they brought the different aspects of Josh's relationships to life. Interestingly, each of the actors also had a chance to individually shine during certain scenes.

Without giving anything away, everyone essentially had their own sets of baggage to deal with and skeletons in the closet.

Credit goes to Nick Choo who wrote the book, music and lyrics of the musical, which won Boh Cameronian awards for Best Original Score, Best Musical Direction and Best Musical Performer (Tria).

The smart script and witty lyrics certainly delivered an entertaining and emotional experience, considering the subject matter, which built up to a tragically satisfying ending that resulted in some teary eyes in the audience.

This is the type of production that benefits from repeated viewing and it was easy to see how the work had won multiple awards.

Although the basic story was a simple one with universal and relatable themes, yet it was the many different view points, all cleverly stitched together to eventually reveal the various characters' personalities and worries, that made it a captivating watch.

Boh Cameronian award-winning director and Theatrethreesixty co-founder Christopher Ling did a great job of utilising the space and making the most of the resources available, as well as the subtle lighting.

The Edge clearly continues to fascinate as Theatrethreesixty added an extra show due to popular demand which made it a 13-show run this time.

Hopefully there will be more restagings in the future for this winning musical tackling a taboo subject that is unfortunately becoming more of a common concern in reality.

Bottom-line, *The Edge* is a musical that must be watched, at least once!