



Photo: Pazu Chan

LauZone

Anna Lo x Rick Lau

Nexus Arts Venue, Adelaide
24 & 25 October 2025

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COMPOSER'S NOTE

An Asian face in America, an Asian face in Australia, an Asian face in Canada... I don't profess to fully relating to the Asian-American experience – I only lived there as a student after all. I always knew where home was, where I was really really from, where my people were from, so there's definitely much more Asian there than American. But live there I did, and for quite a long time too. People would always ask where I was from, "Hong Kong" I'd say. "Oh that's really cool!" And if I didn't get the "So what's it like in Japan?", I'd almost inevitably get the "But you don't have an accent!" And then I'd have to go into my life history of spending lots of time with relatives in the States, the novel idea of international schools (an American high school in Hong Kong, what what?), going to college in Boston, etc etc. Or I'd get lazy and just say "Oh really? Nah, I actually do have an accent if you listened closely enough". So I do sympathize with Asian Americans who always have to answer questions about where they are from, no but where they are really really from, no where their people are from, and this got me thinking about where I am really really from.

Most people from Hong Kong aren't originally from here, or their people weren't, but by now a lot of us are 3rd, 4th or even 5th generation Hong Kongers, and it's only natural that we feel this is home. History however doesn't stop with you, or your parents, or your grandparents. It extends as far back as, well, as it extends, so how far back should one trace one's roots? Like a lot of people of my generation, I have never been to either of my ancestral hometowns, so my only tangible

connection to my roots are whatever family customs we still maintain, and perhaps a little more tangible, the hometown dialects that the older generations spoke.

I understand a bit of Shanghainese through my maternal grandmother, and though I can't speak it, this iota of understanding has already been enough for me to always feel a little bit of kinship or familiarity with new Shanghainese friends I meet, or people of Shanghainese origin. I wonder, with Hong Kong being such a come and go kind of city, and especially now with so many people moving away, how they all think of their roots. Will Hong Kong remain a constant and vivid spot of light on their radars? Or will it become a distant memory of some faraway ancestral hometown in less time than they think? What about Cantonese, will it take only one generation for it to become some barely spoken ancestral hometown dialect? Will their children, who now grow up likely speaking any number of Western languages or Putonghua, will they think of Cantonese the way I think of Shanghainese? And when their now fully Asian-American, Asian-Australian, Asian-Whatever children's children inevitably decide to visit Asia and search for their roots, where and how far back will they go? When your hometown, your parents' hometown and your ancestral hometowns are all different places, where are you really, really from?

Anna Lo

Co-creator, Composer,
Text and Performer

SYNOPSIS

“Where are you from? Where are you REALLY from?”

This trivial bit of information seems useful only while filling in application forms. However, what else does our place of ancestry represent? Other than a few slang words, Hong Kong people are all but detached from the dialects spoken fluently among older generations. To tackle this bittersweet relationship, the multi-talented Anna Lo and Rick Lau present LauZone – a poignant yet playful cabaret examining the rich variety of Chinese dialects, our ancestral roots, and the process of finding home. As the second instalment of a Tai Kwun-commissioned three-part cabaret series exploring unique Hong Kong stories (Part 1: Tri Ka Tsai, Part 3: The Farewell Comeback Tour),

the premiere of LauZone in the 2021 Tai Kwun SPOTLIGHT: A Season of Performing Arts was a sold-out and much-praised success, with Rick Lau nominated for Best Actor at the 13th Hong Kong Theatre Libre Awards in 2022.

Lau Zone is a Cantonese colloquial term describing non-Cantonese natives, which essentially includes most Hongkongers of previous generations, most having been immigrants to the city. Get ready for a euphony of dialects (e.g., Chiuchow, Shanghainese, Taishan), original music, and laughter as Rick Lau and Anna Lo shine in a cabaret show paying tribute to the lives and memories of the melting pot known as Hong Kong and the city’s collective roots and inherited legacy.

SONG LIST

Nursery Rhyme (1)
In the Zone
Glass Menagerie
Cow’s Tears
Nursery Rhyme (2)
True Bias
One Way Ticket
Where Nobody Knows My Name
I Spy With My Slanty Eyes
Men are Birds, Birds are Men
Made in Hong Kong
Nursery Rhyme (3)

童謠 (1)
量化寬鬆
玻璃動物園
牛之水滴
童謠 (2)
手中線
單程機票
那地無人知曉
矇豬眼
人是鳥 鳥是人
香港製造
童謠 (3)

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM

Co-creator, Composer,
Text and Performer

Anna Lo

Co-creator, Text and Performer
Text

Rick Lau

**Leon Ko,
Leung Pak Kin,
William Ng OFM,
Chris Shum,
Tony Taylor,
Yan Tung**

Musicians

**Ming Chan,
Eric Chong,
Rebecca Li,
Antonio Serrano Jr.,
Victor Tsang**

Lighting Designer

Mak Kwok Fai

Sound Designer

Candog Ha

Sound Engineer

Ryan Chow

Surtitles Operator

Luna Chan

Photographer

Pazu Chan

LauZone is commissioned by Tai Kwun and premiered in
Tai Kwun Performing Arts Season: SPOTLIGHT 2021

BIOGRAPHIES – Where are they REALLY from?

Anna Lo – Co-creator, Composer, Text and Performer

Anna Lo is a composer, songwriter, arranger, pianist, conductor and an a cappella artist. She graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Berklee College of Music, majoring in linguistics and music. While she grew up in the Central and Western District of Hong Kong, her parents' families are from Zhongshan and Ningbo. Her favourite dishes from her hometown are Shanghai rice cakes and braised gluten. A unique tradition of her family is to switch on all the lights at home when the clock strikes twelve on the eve of Chinese New Year.

She remembers these phrases in Shanghainese:

- 1 啥物事? (What is this?)
- 2 阿拉弗要 (I don't want it)

Rick Lau – Co-creator, Text and Performer

Rick Lau was trained in Music Theatre at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, Australia (NIDA). He is of Chiuchow descent and grew up in Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate, Kowloon. His favourite Chiuchow dishes are 鹵水鴨 (Chiuchow Braised Duck) and 芋泥 (Sweet Yam Paste). A unique tradition of his family was to seek advice from 黃大仙 Wong Tai Sin Temple's fortune sticks on every family decision, from starting a business to immigration and even the right boyfriend for my sister. Rick has never been to his hometown, but he remembers his family used to send money and clothes back to Chiuchow every Chinese New Year.

His favourite Chiuchow phrases are:

Paa3 Saa3 Nia4 Si4 (亂噏廿四 Nonsense),

Dam3 Baai2 Zi3 (白痴仔 Idiot)

Leon Ko – Text

Leon Ko is a Hong Kong composer; he graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. While he grew up in Wan Chai, his parents are from Guangdong Panyu and Huaxian. He likes Chinese Fried Dough Sticks, which he reckons are food from his hometown. And at least he hopes they are.

Leung Pak Kin – Text

Leung Pak Kin is a lyricist. His father is from Taishan and his mother descends from indigenous inhabitants of Stanley. His favourite dish from his hometown is yellow-eel rice. His whole family has been to their hometown once and discovered that his family ancestral house is next to Tony Leung Chiu Wai's.

William Ng OFM – Text

Brother William Ng OFM is a Franciscan Friar. After gaining a degree in Religion and the Arts from Yale Divinity School and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Expressive Arts Therapy from European Graduate School, he now provides spiritual direction and workshops, for both groups and individuals, exploring the interface between the artistic process and Franciscan spirituality. Grew up in the forgotten neighbourhood of Gooseneck Bridge. Paternal home county is Taishan and Maternal home county is Zhongshan, although both parents were born in Hong Kong. Favourite home food is steamed rice rolls (Hong Kong).

The only vernacular phrase he knows is zaam-tau-gwai

Chris Shum – Text

Chris Shum is a celebrated lyricist with works spanning musicals, plays, movies, television dramas and pop music. While he grew up in Sham Shui Po and Tiu Keng Leng, his parents are from Guangdong Shunde and Nanhai. His father's salt baked chicken is his favourite hometown dish. He had once gone back to his hometown by goods wagon.

Tony Taylor – Text

My name is Tony Taylor. I was born in England in 1947. My father was called Tom and he was born in the same county as I, Lancashire. The name Taylor is derived from the French, “Tailleur”, meaning, “tailor”, and in the next life that is what I would like to be. My mother, Pat, was born in London, which is a completely different world to Lancashire. When my parents met, they hated each other and so they got married and had me.

I was 12 when my parents decided to leave England and start a new life in Australia. So you can decide where I grew up. I hated Australia when I got there because on the first day the big boys flushed my school cap down the toilet. But now I love it because I grew up.

My favourite English dish is Meat and Potato Pie. I also like “Put wood int ‘ole” which means, “Close the door”. In England on New Year’s Eve the person with the darkest complexion has to walk into the house and enter, on the stroke of midnight, carrying a lump of coal.

I have been back to England but it is a foreign country to me now. I do not belong. I do not want to belong.

Yan Tung – Text

Yan is a researcher and theatre practitioner. He was born in Jiangxi Nanchang. His father migrated from Nankang to Nanchang when he was 7. Since his grandmother did not let him speak in Hakka dialects, he was forced to learn Chang-du Gan (Nanchang dialect). However, most of the time his parents and Yan communicate in Putonghua. Yan can now speak Cantonese better than Chang-du Gan, but understands Chang-du Gan better than Cantonese. His favourite hometown dishes are Nanchang mixed noodles and soup cooked in pottery jar. Yan has not been back to his hometown for 4 years.

Ming Chan – Bassist

Studied at Players School of Music in Florida and with some local Hong Kong private teachers. Grew up in Mongkok, his grandparents are from Bao’ An of Guangdong province. His favourite hometown food is 鹽焗雞 (Salt Baked Chicken). He seldom visits his hometown but he remembers his father would ask him to sleep earlier by saying 「做石睡目」 which means 「早些訓覺」.

Eric Chong – Guitarist

Studied at Prins Claus Conservatory in Groningen in the Netherlands. Grew up in TaiKoo. His parents are from Xiamen. His favorite hometown food is 沙茶麵 (Satay noodles). He doesn’t know much about his ancestral dialect even though he used to visit his hometown a lot when he was a child. The phrase he remembers the most is ‘jia beng’ (食飯) which means “to eat”.

Rebecca Li – Cellist

Graduated from Conservatoire de Bordeaux Jacques Thibaud and The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Rebecca Li is active in the local Hong Kong music scene and takes part in a variety of performances. She grew up in the Southern district, and her parents are from Zhongshan and Dongguan of Guangdong. Her favourite hometown food is Dongguan’s longan. She has yet to visit her hometown.

Antonio Serrano Jr. – Drummer

Antonio Serrano Jr. is an active session drummer in the Hong Kong local scene. Born in Hong Kong, his father is a Filipino musician who has worked with jazz groups and big bands in the Hong Kong hotel scene since the 70s. Antonio developed most of his skills as a church musician playing different musical instruments. He was sent to the Philippines, to a village called Camachile in the province of Bataan from Kindergarten to Grade 4 due to his parents working at night and no one being able to take care of him. From Primary 4 onwards, he came back to Hong Kong to study. They lived in Austin Avenue, Tsim Sha Tsui. His favourite hometown food is seafood, including crabs and shrimps, as his hometown's means of income is fishing. Every village and town in the Philippines has their own festival called Fiesta, which is held every year. It is a religious celebration in honour of that village's patron saint. His village Camachile's patron saint is St Raphael. He knows the main dialect, Tagalog, the same as most Filipinos.

Victor Tsang – Guitarist

Guitarist Victor Tsang first picked up the guitar at the age of 12. He furthered his studies at Berklee College of Music, Boston U.S., majoring in Guitar Performance. While he grew up in Ma On Shan, his parents are from Guangdong Panyu and Jiangsu Wuxi. Victor has never been to his hometown.

Mak Kwok Fai – Lighting Designer

Graduated from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, majoring in Theatre Lighting; Mak Kwok Fai also earned his Master's Degree in Queensland University of Technology. While he grew up in Sheung Wan, his parents are from Zhongshan and Nanhai, Guangdong. During the only time he was sent back to his hometown with his grandfather, Mak learnt his grandfather's nickname, which he then shared with his family in Hong Kong.

Candog Ha – Sound Designer

Candog Ha graduated from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, majoring in Sound Design and Music Recording. She has worked on many local and overseas stage productions as a sound designer and engineer. She was also the Audio Consultant of Macao International Music Festival for 3 years. Candog grew up in Kowloon, and her parents came from Zhejiang and Guangzhou. Her favourite hometown dish is egg dumplings. A unique family tradition is not washing their hair on the first day of Lunar New Year. She has never been to her hometown.

Ryan Chow – Sound Engineer

Dio Ziu Nang (Chiuchow). Born in Hong Kong. Graduated from Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Love Hou Beng (Oyster Omelette). Love Daai Ngaan Gai (Bigeye Snapper). Love my Family. Love Hong Kong.

Ziah Beng La! (Let's eat!)