Return of Teater Abridged

> Walid Ali of Luar Kotak Production is bringing back his popular Bahasa Malaysia version of the parody of 37 of William Shakespeare’s plays in one production

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OPULAR stage production The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) was a parody of the plays of the great playwright, scripted by Adam Long, Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield. This production was first performed at the prestigious Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland in 1987 and later, played at the Criterion Theatre in London for nine years.

In 2012, Malaysian theatre company Luar Kotak Production presented the same play in Bahasa Malaysia at the Stor Teater, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka.

Teater Abridged (Karya Lengkap William Shakespeare), which only had three performers, played to full houses and rave reviews for three nights in a row.

After a two-year hiatus, Luar Kotak Production is restaging the same play, this time at Damansara Performing Arts Centre (DPAC), from May 9 to 12.

“People who saw the play in 2012 loved it and many kept asking me for a restage,” says Luar Kotak head Walid Ali, who also translated the play into Bahasa Malaysia.

Two years on, Walid is finally able to fulfill their request after securing the same cast and director from the earlier production.

Just as before, Teater Abridged (Karya Lengkap William Shakespeare) will be a parody of 37 of Shakespeare’s works. Besides the change to Bahasa Malaysia, Walid says he had “injected some Malaysian elements to the play so that the audience could relate to it”, explaining how he changed the references to American football in the English version to the football we know here.

The 105-minute play is directed by Ches Skiner, a retired professor of theatre and dramatic arts in Canada, who had helmed some 35 plays.

Currently a visiting lecturer at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Skiner has also directed four plays at the university.

On Teater Abridged (Karya Lengkap William Shakespeare), Skiner says: “I have never felt compelled to direct a Shakespeare play but I love a parody, especially when it deals with an icon of Shakespeare’s stature.

“You really don’t need to know much about Shakespeare to enjoy this production.”

Apart from Skiner, actors Azim Sharim, Qawiem Zarid and Fathie Shafie will be returning to take on the more than five characters they each will play.

“This production is the most challenging I have been in,” says Azim, who is also a lecturer.

“It is not easy to switch from one character to another. I am totally exhausted by the end of the production.

“But I had a really fun time playing them. I love the challenges that pushed my boundaries as an actor.”

His two co-stars agree. Qawiem, who is also a lecturer, believes there is good chemistry among the three cast members and is glad they are all coming back for this restaging.

Full-time actor Fathie is looking forward to play both the tragic Juliet and Othello.

“Since the play is in Bahasa Malaysia, it will attract a different kind of audience,” he says.

“We could be introducing Shakespeare and his works to a new set of audience who may not have heard about this famous playwright.”
Doing a parody of Shakespeare’s plays in Malay … (clockwise, from above) Skiner; Walid; Azim; Qawiem; and Fathie.