

Press release – Lanterns to light The Basement

The Lantern Project

20.5.09 For immediate release

On the fifteenth day after the start of the Chinese New Year, streets throughout China are festooned in traditional lanterns. Crowds wander the streets to read poetry written on the glowing paper. Some of the poems are riddles to tease, others wishes for prosperity or tributes to love. In some parts of China, young men who write their poems on a lantern may find themselves admired by appreciative young ladies, thus the alternative name for this day, Chinese Valentine's Day.



In the spirit of poetry and love, The Basement will become host to hundreds of tiny lanterns during the run of *Lantern*, a new play by Renee Liang. From June 8-13 audience members will be able to admire poems on paper lanterns, written by poets in Wellington (where the play premiered in April) and Auckland. They will then be able to immortalise their own thoughts in poetry and scribe the results on a paper lantern, to be displayed throughout the run of *Lantern*.

Liang, a stalwart of the Auckland poetry scene, says that her intention is to prove that poetry has a place in our lives. "It's the power of images in words," she says. "It's something that we all use and quote from, even though we may not be aware of it."

Liang, who is one of the organisers of Poetry Live, Auckland's long running weekly poetry gig, admits that she is always trying to get more people to write and read poetry. A member of the Guerrilla poets (which employs chalk-and-run tactics to bring poetry to Auckland's pavements), she's done everything from random poetry readings at bus stops to chairing the poetry session at the Auckland Writers and Readers festival.

"The Lantern Project is about showing that anyone can start writing poetry," she says. "After all, we all know how to use language in effective ways, so why not use it to write poetry?" She asserts that there is no 'right' way to write poetry. "It's not about rhyme, or metaphor, or about having to stick to one set of rules," she says. "The crafting is very important, but ultimately it's the thoughts and expression underlying the words that will speak for the poem."

Lantern, the play, is based around a New Zealand family's preparation for Chinese New Year. The tradition of poetry on New Year lanterns is mentioned. But Liang is coy on the details. "The ideas behind the Lantern tradition, those relating to family

and relationships, is central to the whole play,” she says. “But you’ll have to watch the play to find out!!”

The Lantern Project installation is free to view whenever The Basement foyer is open, the box office and bar open 1 hour prior to the show. All contributions of poetry welcomed, hand-folded origami ‘lanterns’ provided free of charge.

Lantern is part of STAMP at THE EDGE and is being staged with the assistance of Auckland City Arts Alive.

www.lanternplay.com

Lantern, The Basement June 8 -13, 8:00 pm as part of STAMP at THE EDGE

Book at www.buytickets.co.nz

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