

“29+1”: the dreaded watershed of every girl

‘Is it time to get married?’

‘Is it time to change jobs?’

‘Is it time to...?’

“29+1” – the secret code of mixed emotions when approaching the age of 30, signals a dreaded turning point in every girl’s life.

“I was turning 30 when I wrote the play – the watershed moment of life which friends around me were obsessing about, and I had my fair share of views. It took me six months to write, and I staged my first solo show in 2005,” says Kearen Pang, the director, scriptwriter and sole actress of 29+1.

“It started in a small theatre that could fit only 80 people and gradually expanded to be staged in an official theatre that allowed more than 1,000 people to enjoy the show.”

The storyline of the one-woman stage show revolves around two female characters on the cusp of 30, whose different lives and world views intersect unexpectedly, before they eventually find a new direction in life.

Portraying life, expectation and disappointment, 29+1 resonates with a legion of female fans and has received an enthusiastic response, prompting the show to be staged on nine separate occasions since 2005, plus tours in Beijing and Macao.

“29+1 is a very typical story of challenges and difficulties that Hong Kong girls are facing,” says Pang.

“However, I am sure every woman around the world shares similar experiences - no matter their job, family background or relationships. The story covers the changes in our lives that bring a sense of insecurity to all of us. This work aims to discuss how we should face up to the changes in our lives.”

To date, 29+1 has been staged more than 100 times, playing to a total combined theatre audience of over 60,000.

In 2016, the play was adapted for the big screen with a cast of seven actors. It

premiered at the 12th Osaka Asian Film Festival in 2017, where it won the Audience Award. Since then, the film has earned Kearen various other awards, including the 37th Hong Kong Film Awards - “Best New Director Award”, Hong Kong Film Critics Society - one of the “Eight Most Recommended Films”, Youth Film Handbook 2017 - “Top Ten Chinese Film Award”, and Hong Kong Film Directors’ Guild - “Best New Director”.

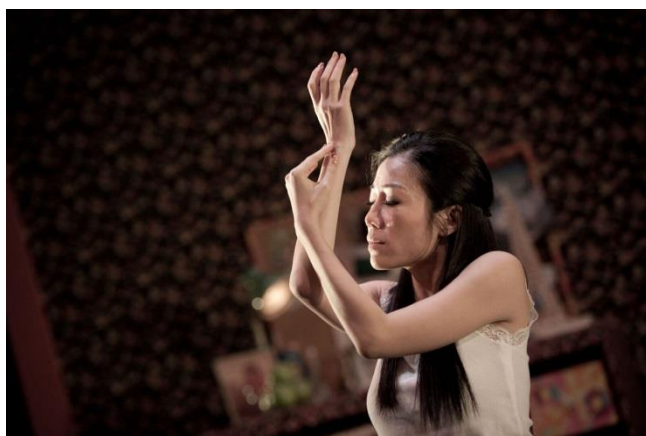
“The response to the movie let me know that people from all around the world are facing the same psychological issues about approaching the age of 30. But I am sure no matter whether the audiences are 30 or not, everyone will feel that there is some point in the story that touches their hearts,” she says.

A film of the stage play will be screened in Tokyo as a highlight of Hong Kong Week.

“The movie version of 29+1 received positive comments from audiences in Japan, so this is a chance for them to compare the theatre work with the movie,” says Pang.

“It will be an interesting comparison. In the theatre version, both the main characters (Christy and Tin-lok) were acted by myself, so the audience may have a different understanding of the story.”

Over the past 15 years, Kearen has developed into one of the most charismatic figures in Hong Kong’s arts scene. Her work has showcased her talent in screenwriting, directing and acting, while her wit and sensitivity has won over fans and critics alike.





Kearen Pang performs her stage show 29+1