

From Page to Stage: Students Bring Book by Local Author to Life

Students of Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT), recently brought to life the story from the novel, *Queen of Tiles* written by Hanna Alkaf, a prominent local author. The book adaptation was presented in a play titled 'World of Words & Wits', held over two sessions on 18 May 2024.

Meg Chia Yi Lin who directed the play and is a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English with Drama student shared her thoughts and experience of directing the play. "In terms of artistic expression and direction, working with the actors was a dream. The cast is incredibly talented and truly brought the characters to life. Directing became an innate and intuitive process, while the more structured elements like audio, movements, lighting, and stage management required greater control. This play belongs as much to the cast as it does to us," she said.

Meg took up this role because she wanted to explore the play production scene. "When this opportunity came up, I knew I had to take it. As my degree programme is in English with Drama, directing this play is a great way of putting into practice what I have learnt. The creative freedom we received was also a significant factor in settling into our roles," she said.

"TAR UMT provided extensive support for our play, including funding, provision of venue, publicity support, logistics arrangements, props, costumes, and makeup assistance. All of us were committed to the rehearsals and detailed preparations for the play, with our lecturers journeying with us, providing the necessary support and motivation," she added.

When asked what were the challenges she faced, Meg said: "The play was our first production post-pandemic. As a result of the lockdown hindering face to face interactions, it was bit of a challenge for the various sub teams, especially when liaising with different departments to come together to work on this play. We realised this shortcoming but we also knew it was important to deal with it. Thankfully, everyone had the same goal in mind of producing a successful play, so it was just a matter of correcting mistakes and moving on to the next task without letting personal feelings interfere with professional work."

As for the student actors, Siti Nurbasschera binti Mohamad Riadz, a Bachelor of Arts in English Studies (Hons) student played the cast of Najwa Bakri, the main character in the book. "Playing this role was challenging as Najwa juggles with her emotions a lot. However, over time, I grew comfortable with the character and even found myself embodying her traits off set. At first, I just memorised the script and copied the actions. With practice, I realised I needed to mentally and emotionally adapt to the character. It wasn't easy, but practice made a big difference. The final performance was much better than our first rehearsal. To make the character more natural, I merged my own way of code-switching between Bahasa Malaysia and English into my portrayal of Najwa. This helped me play the role more naturally, almost as if I became the character or the character became a part of me," she said.



Another Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English with Education student, Kusshmita Rai played the part of Yasmin. "My experience as an actor in this play has been quite illuminating. I've learned a great deal about the intricate details involved in staging a production and the considerable effort required to bring everything together. Additionally, I've also learnt how to listen effectively to constructive feedback to improve my acting. Apart from that, I have also further strengthened my interpersonal skills, working closely with the directors, fellow actors, and the production team to create a cohesive performance. This journey has definitely helped me grow holistically."

Her coursemate, Puventhiran Revichandran who played Mark Thomas shared his take on his acting experience. "The character, Mark Thomas, embodies a quiet strength. Initially, he appears to carry a heavy burden, a secret pain. However, as the story unfolds, his determination and fight for what he believes in become evident. Portraying this internal conflict is challenging, but discovering those moments of strength is incredibly rewarding. Overall, playing Mark Thomas has been an amazing experience. He's a complex and compelling character that I am grateful to bring to life."