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Postcards From Rosa: A leceh play lovingly done

THEATRE REVIEW

by Mayo Martin

Postcards From Rosa

IF THERE'S one defining Peranakan trait, according to *Postcards From Rosa*, it's that they love to do things that are *leceh* (Malay for "troublesome"), from their complex cuisine to the intricate designs of the *kebaya*. Even love itself is *leceh*.

Playwright Desmond Sim's new play centres on the life of Bibik Rosa, a *nyonya* matriarch played by Neo

Swee Lin who visits her grandson Benny in Australia.

Rosa's story seems like an Amy Tan novel: Her birth led to her mother's death, she's married off into a rich family at 16, and let's not forget a tragic death in the family.

But this play directed by Loretta Chen is – with its mix of humour and sadness – more heart-warming than heart-wrenching.

Neo does her best to portray multiple characters and come off as an endearing, doting grandmother, but certain scenes get too confusing,

especially at the end, where the time frame gets muddled up.

For many, Peranakan culture has been reduced to nothing more than the *kebaya* or *sambal belacan*. But Sim has lovingly resurrected his heritage from childhood memories.

For others, that's a very *leceh* thing to do. But what do you expect from a Peranakan?

Postcards From Rosa is on until Nov 25. Shows start at 8pm at Action Theatre, 42 Waterloo Street. Tickets from \$35 at Sistic.



THE STAR: Neo Swee Lin plays doting grandmother Bibik Rosa.