



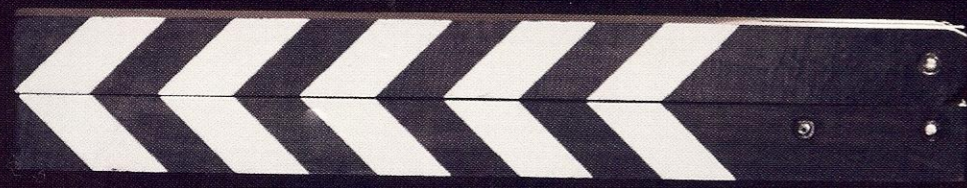
KNOW MORE. DO MORE.
EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY
TIMEOUT.COM.HK
March 18 - 31 2009
No. 24 HK\$18

Inside!

How to score
Sevens tickets
Mercury Rev get
philosophical
Your guide to
Le French May



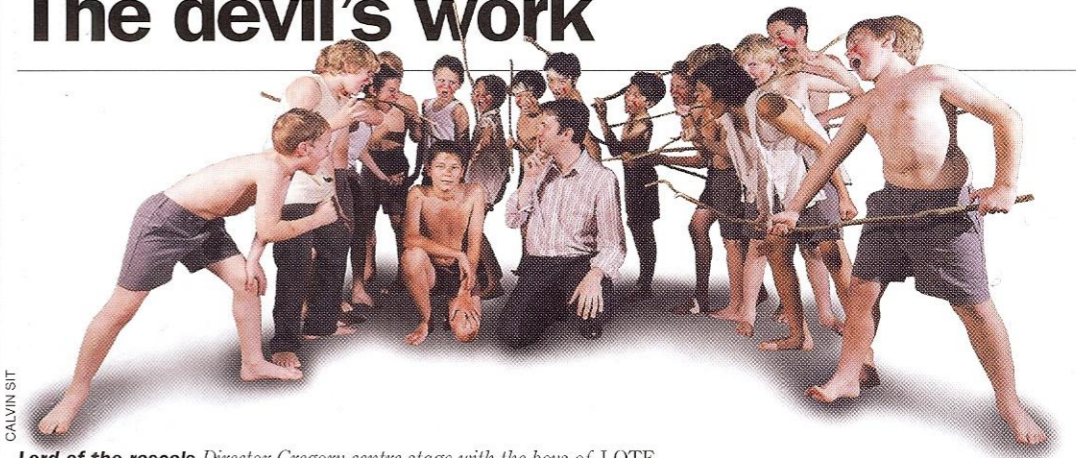
Exclusive
interview!
We talk movies,
mates, and
mocking the
mainstream with
**Daniel
Wu**



ROLL	SCENE	SHOT	TAKE
PLUS			

Wong Kar-wai interview
Oliver Stone on W.
21 films reviewed!

The devil's work



Lord of the rascals Director Gregory centre stage with the boys of LOTF

On the eve of the theatre group's tenth anniversary, and an ambitious production of *Lord of the Flies*, **Bourree Lam** meets Faust founder Matthew Gregory

Ring the birthday bells! March 29 marks the tenth anniversary of the Hong Kong children's theatre group Faust International. It all started when a young lad from Yorkshire, England, took part in a production of *A Christmas Carol*. "It was an all-boy's school that I went to, and I played young Scrooge's girlfriend," laughs Faust founder Matthew Gregory. Gregory went on to study drama and literature at Warwick University. Aged 23, he arrived in Hong Kong to work at an education NGO.

Seeking a way to get back into drama, Gregory started Faust with two small Saturday morning sessions held at Island School, attracting a total of just 50 participants. Fast forward to present day, Faust is ten years old with 700 participants, aged four to 16, attending one of 35 weekly sessions, with waiting lists of kids who want in.

The name Faust, meaning 'lucky', refers to the protagonist of a German fairytale who makes a pact with the Devil in exchange for knowledge. But is there a more earthbound reason behind Faust's success?

"There have been a number of things that have probably helped develop Faust quicker," he explains. "As a result of the children doing these drama workshops, we felt there was a need to perform more. We started putting on performances that the children in Faust could take part in."

In 2001, the company started the annual Faust Festival, which involves

all participants. At the same time, they also put on one large production per year of a classic children's tale, which Faust participants audition for. Through the years, they've done *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Robin Hood*, and *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, the latter memorably held at St John's Cathedral.

The defining moment came in March 2004, when their production of *Oliver!* sold out 14 performances at the APA Drama Theatre: "If people didn't know about Faust before then, they probably did afterwards." Overnight our numbers doubled," says Gregory. It turned out to be the ideal way to showcase the company's talent, keep their participants excited, and introduce themselves to the public. It's perhaps due to these productions that Faust has persisted for a decade, and continues to flourish.

"What we aim to do at Faust is introduce kids to theatre"

The latest work sees Gregory at the helm again, as the director of Faust's production of *Lord of the Flies*. Adapted from William Golding's dystopian novel, the story is about a group of British school boys abandoned on a desert island, and their subsequent descent into savagery and chaos. The play is difficult dramatically - full of murder and violence - but it's also perfect material for a youth theatre group, in that it requires an all boys cast.

"I don't think the production treats it very lightly or with kid gloves because of the participants," says

the director. "What we're trying to do is an authentic production of it." In preparation, Gregory took the cast camping in a desolate, isolated part of Sai Kung Country Park, and to Shek O beach for rehearsal, all to help them get into character.

Gregory is always looking to develop Faust through community initiatives and new projects. In the coming year, Faust will start ESL drama and school touring production programmes.

In testament to its success, there are participants and families that have been with Faust since the very beginning, such as Jamie Hansen. Now aged 16, Hansen is a student at Chinese International School, and is about to become a student leader with the group. "Faust has played a very central role in my life ever since I joined ten years ago. Every year I gain new experiences, make new friends, and learn something new about the world of drama. Every year is an exciting new opportunity to take place in the Faust Festival, and be part of one of the bigger productions," he says.

To its many supporters, Faust means professional children's productions, new scripts of classics, a festival where kids can learn how to act, and learn their craft under a group of dedicated educators who want to teach through theatre. Much akin, then, to the company's seemingly dark namesake, as Gregory chose Faust for its pre-Goethe roots: "It's got two sides to the story. The original Faust character was a nomadic guy, and he was a magician as well as teacher. Faust has the theatre side - magic; and the education side - teacher. I think it still fits today, because what we aim to do at Faust is introduce kids to theatre, but much more important than that, we want to inspire them to be confident."