



PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK

PLAYING ON: It's a Labour Of Love for the cast and crew of the NTUC musical, which is a first for this year's May Day celebrations. Lasting one hour and 40 minutes, the musical has a cast of 27, all members of the performing arts arm of Young NTUC, called Play.

Coming soon...NTUC, the musical

BY ONG SOH CHIN

THE creative team behind the musical *Beauty World* and the members of Young NTUC may make strange bedfellows.

But their union has produced a first for this year's May Day celebrations – a musical on the NTUC story.

Called *A Labour Of Love*, it tells the history of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) through one couple's love story.

Writer-director Jeremiah Choy, who ploughed through reams of NTUC history, said the challenge was in making the story "sexy" to young people.

"There's a lot of history and a lot of meaning. A lot of people sacrificed their lives to make Singapore what it is today," said the 45-year-old at a press conference yesterday.

Added Member of Parliament Josephine Teo, director of the NTUC Youth Development Unit: "This is our way of expressing our tribute to union leaders past and present."

The contemporary pop musical, lasting one hour and 40 minutes, will have an amateur cast of 27, all members of the

newly created performing arts arm of Young NTUC, called Play or Performing With Love by Active Youth.

They have been rehearsing since January, four days a week, including weekends, under the watchful eye of Mr Choy, composer Babes Conde and choreographer Gani Karim.

The trio had worked on the 1988 hit *Beauty World*, which later toured Japan and had two more runs.

Mrs Teo said the aim of the new musical was to refresh memories, adding that there will be no educational or propaganda elements.

"As we progress, it becomes harder and harder to remember what it was like

in the past. So our job is not to preach but to honour their commitment," she added.

The love story of unionist Ah Keong and his beloved Mei Ling takes place amid the founding of NTUC in 1961 to the present day.

Playing Ah Keong in his senior years is NTUC's vice-president and former Nominated MP Cyrille Tan, who is making his stage debut. Mr Tan, 57, was out of town yesterday, but both Mr Choy and Mrs Teo vouched for his talent.

Said Mr Choy: "Cyrille doesn't have to act because he lived through those years."

Playing young Ah Keong is 28-year-old Spencer Tan, who works in a talent agency, while Mei Ling is played by Ms Selly Marina.

The 27-year-old assistant manager at JTC Corp has sung in the chorus of the 2001 production of *Chang And Eng: The Musical*, as well as in *PCK, The Musical* in 2005.

So stage fright is not a worry, she said, adding: "I'm glad for this opportunity to perform and that rehearsals were held after office hours to fit our work schedules."

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Where to get tickets

A LABOUR Of Love is on from April 30 to May 2 at the University Cultural Centre at 8pm.

Tickets at \$60, \$40 and \$20 are available now at Ticketcharge outlets, or call 6296-2929.