



GENesis: Asian-Canadian Theatre Conference

co-sponsored by fu-GEN and the University of Guelph

featuring

The 7th Annual Potluck Festival

in association with Factory Theatre

May 3 - 9, 2010

www.fu-GEN.org

GENesis: Asian-Canadian Theatre Conference

There has been an explosion of activity in Asian-Canadian theatre in recent years but it has not been extensively reflected in scholarship. GENesis is the first ever conference of its kind; bringing together academics and artists to generate and institute a new field: Asian-Canadian Theatre and Performance Studies.

Co-sponsored by fu-GEN Asian-Canadian Theatre Company and the University of Guelph, and held in conjunction with fu-GEN's Potluck new play development festival, GENesis will consist of an academic conference running concurrently with artist panels and play readings from May 3-7, 2010.

This event is particularly timely at an historical moment when there is an urgent need to understand the ways in which new diasporic and intercultural identities are performed into existence in urban centres in Canada and internationally or transnationally, as conference participant Haiping Yan argues. It is also timely because a new generation of Asian Canadian artists is emerging to challenge the hegemony of whiteness on Canadian stages, to move Asian Canadian theatre beyond stories of immigration and intergenerational conflict, and to develop an ongoing Asian Canadian institutional presence in Canadian theatre.

The conference will function at the intersection of two growing fields: Canadian Theatre and Performance Studies and Asian Diaspora Studies. This conference will be unique in bringing together scholars and artists in a mix of scholarly paper sessions, artist panels, and staged readings of new Asian Canadian work. Sessions at the scholarly conference and artist panels converge along a number of themes, addressing issues, from both sides of the footlights, having to do with the performance-into-being of diasporic Asian Canadian subjectivities, covering Asian Regions and Racialized Spaces within Canada; looking at companies, plays and playwrights, including early Roots and pioneers; talking about gender and sexuality; addressing Asian hybridities and interdisciplinarity; and questioning the constitution and/or necessity of an Asian Canadian canon. These topics are crucial to the interrogation of Asian Canadian cultural production, the intersection of diasporic subjectivities across (intercultural) difference within the Asian Canadian community, and the intersection of shifting identities across several generations of immigration across Canada. They are also crucial to the understanding of Asian contributions to Canadian cultural life.

The GENesis conference will directly contribute a uniquely Asian perspective to theatre and performance studies within Canada, and a uniquely Canadian perspective to Asian diasporic studies internationally. It will also bring systematic study and recognition to bear on the important work of Asian Canadian theatre artists and performers.

GENesis Highlights

Keynote Speaker

Karen Shimakawa (New York University) is the author of the widely influential book that consolidated the field of Asian American theatre studies, *made not born: National Abjection and the Asian American Body Onstage*, published by Duke University Press in 2002. Her keynote address is *Performative Crossings in Asian North American Theater* and she will also be chairing the concluding roundtable.

Featured Academic and Artist Panels

Academic Panel: Diaspora and Transnationalism

Chaired by Esther Kim Lee with papers by Daphne Lei, Haiping Yan and Xiaoping Li.

GENesis Concluding Round Table

After all the panels are over and the papers have been read, what is left to be said and done? This panel is a call to action, gathering together both academics and artists to answer the question, where do we go from here?

Chaired by Karen Shimakawa

Artist Panel: Hybridity, Interdisciplinarity, and Asian-Canadian Subjectivities

Chaired by David Yee

Featured Academic Panelists

Haiping Yan of Cornell University, selected in 1999 as one of the six most influential Chinese Cultural figures, changed the way we think about diaspora, and in particular about the Asian diaspora, as the editor of Asian Transnationals special issue of *Modern Drama* in 2005 and her many other publications. Haiping Yan will be speaking on *Differential Identification: the Figure of Asian Diaspora in Theory and Performance*.

Esther Kim Lee of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, author of the first history of Asian-American theatre, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, which won the Outstanding Book prize from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, will turn her attention to the Canadian experience speaking on *Contemporary Korean Canadian Plays, Audiences, and Communities*.

GENesis Highlights

Daphne Lei of the University of California, Irvine, author of *Operatic China: Staging Chinese Identity Across the Pacific*, and the widely influential article, *The Virtual Chinatown and New Racial Formation*, speaks on *Homeland under Attack: Negotiating Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Globalization in Asian American Theatre*. Daphne has led the way in understanding the performative constitution of Asianness, and especially Chinese, in diaspora. She, too, will address the uniqueness of the Asian-Canadian diasporic experience.

Eleanor Ty of Wilfrid Laurier University Waterloo, author of *The Politics of the Visible in Asian North American Narratives*, speaks on *The Past as Affect in Catherine Hernandez's Singkil*. Eleanor Ty is among the few scholars who have written about Asian Canadian theatre.

Featured Artist Panelists

Simon Johnston: Based in Vancouver, Simon is the Artistic Director of Gateway Theatre and has been called one of the most prolific directors in Canada. Simon will be sitting on two Artistic Panels; Artist Panel: Hybridity, Interdisciplinarity and Asian-Canadian Subjectivities, and Artist Panel: Regional Artists/Racialized Spaces.

Mieko Ouchi: Based in Edmonton, Mieko is an actor, writer, director, filmmaker, founding member of Concrete Theatre for Young Audiences, as well as an award-winning playwright. Mieko will be sitting on the Artist Panel: Hybridity, Interdisciplinarity, and Asian-Canadian Subjectivities.

Rick Shiomi: Artistic director of Mu Performing Arts, Rick is noted as one of the first Asian-Canadian playwrights. Originally from Toronto, he will be reading an excerpt from his play, *Yellow Fever*, and speaking on the Artist Panel: The Asian-Canadian Canon?

Tickets & Venue Information



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the 7th Annual Potluck Festival
For more information visit www.fu-GEN.org

Factory Studio Theatre - 125 Bathurst Street (at Adelaide Street)

Ticket Purchasing Details

GENesis: Asian-Canadian Theatre Conference Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$40, available in advance • Access to all conference events from May 3-7 including keynote address, artist panels and academic panels • Student Conference passes are available for \$25 with valid student I.D.
7th Annual Potluck Festival Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$40, available in advance • Access to all 8 festival readings from May 3-9 • The Potluck Festival Pass is NOT a ticket • Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis • Arrive no later than 15 minutes in advance to be issued a ticket • This pass is transferable and entitles you to one ticket per reading (pending availability) • To reserve a ticket call the Factory Theatre Box at 416-504-9971
GENesis Conference Events à la	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay-what-you-can at the door, minimum donation of \$10 suggested • Available for keynote address, artist panels and academic panels
Potluck Festival Readings à la carte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10, same day tickets only • Factory Theatre Box Office is open 1pm-8pm from Monday-Saturday and 7pm-8pm on Sunday • Purchase in person at the theatre, by phoning the box office at (416) 504-9971 or online at www.factorytheatre.ca* • Arrive early to avoid disappointment as seating is limited • A limited amount of discounted student tickets are available online through hipTIX –http://www.tapa.ca/golive/hiptix

GENesis Academic Panels

TUESDAY MAY 4

10:00 AM: Conference Keynote

Karen Shimakawa: "Performative Crossings in Asian North American Theater"

Chair: Nina Lee Aquino

11:30 AM: Academic Panel: Staging Asian Canadian Subjectivities

Christine Kim, "Performing Asian Canadian Intimacy"

Chris Lee, "Staging Asian Canada"

Don Goellnicht, "Kai-dai: Staging Queer Subjectivity in Winston Christopher Kam's Bachelor Man"

Chair: Elaine Chang

2:30 PM: Academic Panel: Asian-Canadian Theatre Companies

Dongshin Chang, "Performing Traditions and Diasporic Efforts: In the Examples of the Kunqu Society and Little Pear Garden"

Thy Phu, "Sketching Subversion: Asiansploitation and the Appropriation of Improv"

Ric Knowles, "The CBT Collective: Towards a Filipino Canadian Dramaturgy"

Chair: Daphne Lei

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

10:00 AM: Academic Panel: Asian Regions?

Moira Day, "*Two-Gun Cohen*: Celebrating the Chinese-Jewish Connection in Riversdale, Saskatoon"

Anne Nothof, "Footprints in the Cement: Asian Imprints at Concrete Theatre"

Sean Metzger, "Le Regissement du Lion: Mapping Memory in Chinese Street Theatre"

Chair: Christine Kim

2:30 PM: Academic Panel: Plays & Playwrights I

Jenna Rodgers, "Negotiating Multiculturalism as Geopathic Space in Betty Quan's *Mother Tongue*"

Shelley Scott, "Asian Canadian Women Playwrights: The Ties that Bind"

Eleanor Ty, "The Past as Affect in Catherine Hernandez's *Singkil*"

Chair: Chris Lee

GENesis Academic Panels

THURSDAY. MAY 6

10:00 AM: Academic Panel: Plays & Playwrights II

Esther Kim Lee, "Contemporary Korean Canadian Plays, Audiences, and Communities"

Parie Leung, "*Ang Sarap Sarap!*: Tracing the Prop of Cuisine in *Miss Orient(ed)*, *Novena*, and *A Taste of Empire*"

Siyuan Liu, "Pangaea Art's *CUMBERLAND*, an Original Chinese Canadian Intercultural Production"

Chair: Thy Phu

FRIDAY, MAY 7

10:00 AM: Academic Panel: Professional Concerns: Training, Casting, Dramaturgy

Marie Barlizo, "Training the Asian Canadian Playwright"

Andrew Cheng, "My Story/Your Story: Finding Truth in 'Non-Traditional' Casting"

Judith Rudakoff, "newGEN playwrights: the next GENERation"

Chair: Siyuan Liu

12:00 PM: Academic Panel: Diaspora and Transnationalism

Daphne Lei, "Homeland under Attack: Negotiating Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Globalization in Asian American Theatre"

Haiping Yan, "Differential Identification: the Figure of Asian Diaspora in Theory and Performance"

Xiaoping Li, "Performing Asian Canadian: the Theatrical Dimension of A Grassroots Activism"

Chair: Esther Kim Lee

2:30 PM: Concluding Roundtable

Leon Aureus, Elaine Chang, Bobby del Rio, William Lau, Valerie Sing Turner, Nadine Villasin, Eleanor Ty

GENesis Artist Panels

MONDAY, MAY 3

8:15 PM: Panel: The Asian-Canadian Canon?

This panel will focus on the idea of a canonical existence for Asian-Canadian Theatre. There is a belief that “canonizing” work, especially work that speaks from a minoritized cultural perspective can marginalize that voice as opposed to strengthening it. Does a canon relegate that work identified as an “Asian-Canadian play” to a fringe division of Canadian Theatre? Are some types of play less “Asian-Canadian” than others?

TUESDAY, MAY 4

4:00PM: Panel: Hybridity, Interdisciplinarity, and Asian-Canadian Subjectivities

This panel will address the hybridized, or hyphenated, identities within the Canadian subjectivity and their effects on artistic (inter)disciplines. How does, for example, a mixed Asian-Caucasian artist fit into the Asian-Canadian theatrical mould, if the dominant metaphors of one-ness and whole-ness in cultural communities preclude their hybridity? The artists we’ve chosen to be on this panel are either of biracial backgrounds or are working to reconcile seemingly disparate interdisciplinary modes of creation (eg. Set design as dramaturgy, or the use of performance forms from multiple cultures as structural principles).

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

12:00 PM: Panel: Regional Artists / Racialized Spaces

Is “Asian-Canadian” an adoptive term we are able to use in cosmopolitan areas to progress ideologies of an inclusive cultural framework? Or does it further the process of racializing our spaces? What does that mean for regional artists? Is it practical to include “Asian-ness” in their Canadian subjectivity? There has never been an opportunity for Asian-Canadian artists who practice in regional locations to come together and discuss the focus of their work in this way.

4:30 PM: Panel: Roots

This panel honours our senior artists. The trailblazers. The ones who made it possible for a company like fu-GEN to exist in the first place. It’s a chance for them to speak about how it all began, in the 80’s with productions like *Yellow Fever* and *Mom, Dad, I’m Living With a White Girl*, from the people that made those productions happen. Asking what they would have done differently then, how they feel about the present, and what direction they hope to see the future go in.

GENesis Artist Panels

THURSDAY, MAY 6

12:00 PM: Panel: Toronto: “The World’s Most Multicultural City?”

Toronto is a major centre for theatre in general as well as a model of cultural diversity that claims in its promotional literature to be “the world’s most multicultural city.” So what impact does this “Toronto-ness” have on our work? Is it even a legitimate claim? The artists on this panel represent all facets of the theatre industry; actors, directors, writers, producers, technicians, artistic directors... and they also represent a cross section of people who were born and raised Torontonians, and those who’ve adopted it as their new home.

2:30 PM: Panel: Vancouver: On the Edge?

Vancouver is a growing, cosmopolitan city, a hub of culture and diversity and it has a richer, longer and more varied tradition with Asian-Canadian residents than Toronto does. And in geographical and theatrical senses, the city is “on the edge.” Is it a result of an older existing tradition with the dominant culture? Is questioning or redefining “Asian-Canadian-ness” an exercise of lesser importance? Some of the most exciting Asian Canadian theatre is coming out of Vancouver right now; it’s a good time to start talking about it in a National context.

4:30 PM: Panel: Acting Asian

This panel invites Asian actors from various regions in Canada to discuss the Asian acting aesthetic; how it was, how it’s changing and what we can do to form new frames of reference. How can we address it? What language do we use? And whose responsibility is it to invoke that change? How we are versus how we are perceived to be, or how we are expected to be, or allowed to be if we are to be viewed by the majority share audience members of a Canadian theatre.

FRIDAY, MAY 7

2:30 PM: Panel: Concluding Roundtable

After all is said and done, what is left to be said... and done? This panel is not as much a summation of what we’ve learned, but a question of where to go from there. This conference hinges on *action*, on the sharing of ideas and ideologies, and this roundtable is meant to be the spark to light what kindling we’ve laid about over the week. After all the panels are over and the papers have been read, where do we go from here?