

March 30, 2021

**Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Theater presents**

***The Chinese Lady* by Lloyd Suh**

**Princeton University seniors Jacy Duan and Minjae Kim lead a production directed by alumnus Richard Peng based on the true story of Afong Moy, believed to be the first Chinese woman to set foot on American soil in 1834, and her life as an object of sideshow curiosity**



Photo caption: Princeton senior Jacy Duan as Afong Moy in *The Chinese Lady* by Lloyd Suh in a filmed performance to be presented by the Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Theater.

Photo credit: Adam Olkin

What: *The Chinese Lady* by Lloyd Suh tells the story of fourteen-year-old Afong Moy as she’s brought to the United States from Guangzhou Province in 1834. Allegedly the first Chinese woman to set foot on U.S. soil, she has been put on display for the American public as “The Chinese Lady.” For the next half-century, she performs for curious white people, showing them how she eats, what she wears, and the highlight of the event: how she walks with bound feet. As the decades wear on, her celebrated sideshow comes to define and challenge her very sense of identity. Inspired by the true story of Afong Moy’s life, *The Chinese Lady* is a dark, poetic, yet whimsical portrait of America through the eyes of a young Chinese woman. Filmed onstage in the Wallace Theater. Live talkbacks with playwright Lloyd Suh and Professors Anne Cheng and Beth Lew-Williams April 8 at 2 p.m. and with the show team on April 9 at 9:45 p.m. Recordings of the talkbacks will be available on-demand through April 11.

Who: Directed by Princeton alumnus Richard Peng ’20 and featuring Princeton senior Jacy Duan in the title role with senior Minjae Kim as scenic and sound designer. Presented by the Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Theater and co-produced with Princeton’s East West Theater.

When: Streaming April 9 &10 at 8 p.m. (EDT)

Where: Virtual via streaming; conversations via Zoom

Admission: Free and open to the public

Accessibility: The film will be closed captioned in both English and Chinese and the conversations will be live captioned in English. Viewers in need of other access accommodations are invited to contact the Lewis Center at least 2 weeks in advance at [LewisCenter@princeton.edu](mailto:LewisCenter@princeton.edu)

For more information and access:  <https://arts.princeton.edu/events/the-chinese-lady-by-lloyd-suh/2021-04-09/>

(Princeton, NJ) The Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Theater at Princeton University will present *The Chinese Lady* by Lloyd Suh, a play inspired by the life of the first Chinese women believed to set foot on American soil in 1834 and her life as a sideshow curiosity. The filmed production is directed by Princeton alumnus Richard Peng and features Princeton senior Jacy Duan in the title role with scenic and sound design by senior Minjae Kim. The film can be viewed on April 9 and 10 at 8:00 p.m. Live conversations will be offered on April 8 at 2:00 p.m. and April 9 at 9:45 p.m. All these events are free and open to the public.

*The Chinese Lady* tells the story of fourteen-year-old Afong Moy as she’s brought to the United States from Guangzhou Province in the early 19th Century. Allegedly the first Chinese woman to come to the United States, she was put on display for the American public as “The Chinese Lady.” For the next half-century, she performed for curious white people, showing them how she eats, what she wears, and the highlight of the event: how she walks with bound feet. As the decades wear on, her celebrated sideshow comes to define and challenge her very sense of identity. *The Chinese Lady* is a dark, poetic, yet whimsical portrait of America through the eyes of a young Chinese woman.

Duan and Kim proposed the show as their senior thesis toward a certificate in the Program in Theater, similar to a minor. “I came upon *The Chinese Lady*last year when I was on the hunt for a play centered on an Asian American woman,” said Duan. “This would be my first time ever playing a character written to be Asian. I chose this play because when I first read it, Afong Moy felt like a friend. She felt like someone I knew: all at once as a distant Chinese ancestor, my Chinese grandmother, my immigrant Chinese mother, and myself.”

When proposed last spring, the production was originally planned as a live performance, however the project team had to reimagine the show as a filmed presentation. The play was filmed onstage in the Lewis Center’s Wallace Theater a few weeks ago following Princeton’s COVID safety guidelines and with sound and set design by Kim, costume design and stage management by junior Megan Pan and lighting design by sophomore Angelica Qin.

Duan is a sociology major from Los Angeles pursuing certificates in theater and Asian American studies. On campus, she has been involved in the Program in Theater, East West Theater, and Theatre Intime as an actor, director, and producer.

Kim is an English major based in Toronto, Canada, and has been involved in the Program in Theater and the student groups Theatre Intime, Princeton University Players, The Playwright’s Guild, Princeton Chinese Theatre, and East West Theater as a performer, director, playwright, stage manager, fight choreographer, as well as set and sound designer throughout his four years at Princeton. Some his most recent Theater Program credits include *Arlington*, *Unbecoming,* and *Sister Mok-rahn.*

Lloyd Suh’s plays also include *American Hwangap, The Wong Kids in the Secret of the Space Chupacabra Go!, Jesus in India*, and *Charles Francis Chan Jr.'s Exotic Oriental Murder Mystery,* which was produced by the Lewis Center in 2017. His plays have been produced at regional theaters throughout the U.S. and internationally at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and with PCPA in Seoul, Korea. He has received numerous awards, fellowships, and residencies including a 2016 Helen Merrill Award and the 2019 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts.

A live conversation with playwright Suh and Professor of English and American Studies Anne Cheng and Associate Professor of History Beth Lew-Williams will be held on April 8 at 2:00 p.m. Cheng is an interdisciplinary and comparative race scholar who focuses on the uneasy intersection between politics and aesthetics, drawing from literary theory, race and gender studies, film and architectural theory, legal studies, psychoanalysis, and critical food studies. Lew-Williams is a historian of race and migration in the United States, specializing in Asian American history. A live talkback with the show team will take on April 9 following the stream at 9:45 p.m. Recordings of these discussions will be available on-demand through April 11.

Richard Peng is a member of Princeton’s Class of 2020 and was asked by Duan and Kim to direct the projection. He directed a production of Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music* as his senior thesis project. As an undergraduate he performed in Lewis Center productions of *Into the Woods* and *Machinal*, and served as a technician on the site-specific production of *Fefu and Her Friends*. He was a producer and performer with Triangle Club, the student company Theatre Intime, and Playwrights Guild, a student organization dedicated to creating and developing original student theater on campus.

Junior Jonathan Som joins Duan in the cast. The production was filmed by guest artist Adam Olkin and edited by Princeton alumnus Milan Eldridge.

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To learn more about this event, the Program in Theater, and the over 100 performances, exhibitions, readings, screenings, concerts, and lectures presented each year at the Lewis Center, most of them free and this year virtual, visit [arts.princeton.edu](http://www.arts.princeton.edu/).

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