



DISMANTLING ORIENTALISM

This is Not a True Story

FRI | 3•31•23 | 6 PM
USC PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- This event includes a panel discussion on Asian American representation in pop culture, followed by a staged reading excerpt of *This Is Not a True Story*, a new play by Preston Choi, produced by Artists at Play.
- The evening is presented in conjunction with the *Dismantling Orientalism* pop-up exhibition at the USC Pacific Asia Museum.

ORIENTALISM BY EDWARD SAID

Orientalism is a 1978 book by Edward Said that identifies Orientalism as a discourse and a “systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and even imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.” Orientalism is a colonial, racist construct of the Western gaze that Said explains is inextricably tied to relationships of power and domination. While Orientalism is made up of lies and myths, Said points out the ways those lies and myths are tied to socioeconomic and political institutions, and how art, culture, politics, and power are intertwined.

Edward Said (1935–2003) was a Palestinian American cultural critic, academic, and activist who was born in Jerusalem and raised in Jerusalem and Cairo until he moved to the United States in 1951. Said was a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University and published academically as well as in newspapers and magazines.

ABOUT THE PANELISTS

Reena Dutt is a director of theatre, film, and television. She was a 2021–2022 Drama League New York Directing Fellow and is a member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab and Directors Lab West.

Donatella Galella is a professor of theatre, film, and digital production at UC Riverside. She researches how capitalism and white supremacy shape and are shaped by contemporary popular American performance. Her first book, *America in the Round: Capital, Race, and Nation at Washington D.C.’s Arena Stage*, is a critical history of the first professional regional theatre in the U.S. capital. Galella is working on a book about how yellowface persists in 21st-century musical productions and how Asian Americans have mobilized art, activism, and affect to counter yellowface.

Rena Heinrich is a professor of theatre practice in critical studies at the USC School of Dramatic Arts and an affiliated professor of East Asian studies at USC Dornsife. Her forthcoming book, *Race and Role: The Mixed-Race Asian Experience in American Drama*, explores the shifting identities of multiracial Asian figures in theatre from the late nineteenth century to the present day.

Jenny Lin (moderator) directs the MA program in curatorial practices and the public sphere and is a professor of critical studies at the USC Roski School of Art and Design. Lin explores relations between 20th- and 21st-century art and design and social phenomena such as urbanization, globalization, and decolonization. She is currently writing a new book, *Another Beautiful Country: Moving Images by Chinese American Artists*, and curating a related exhibition scheduled to open at the USC Pacific Asia Museum this year.



Reena Dutt



Donatella Galella



Rena Heinrich

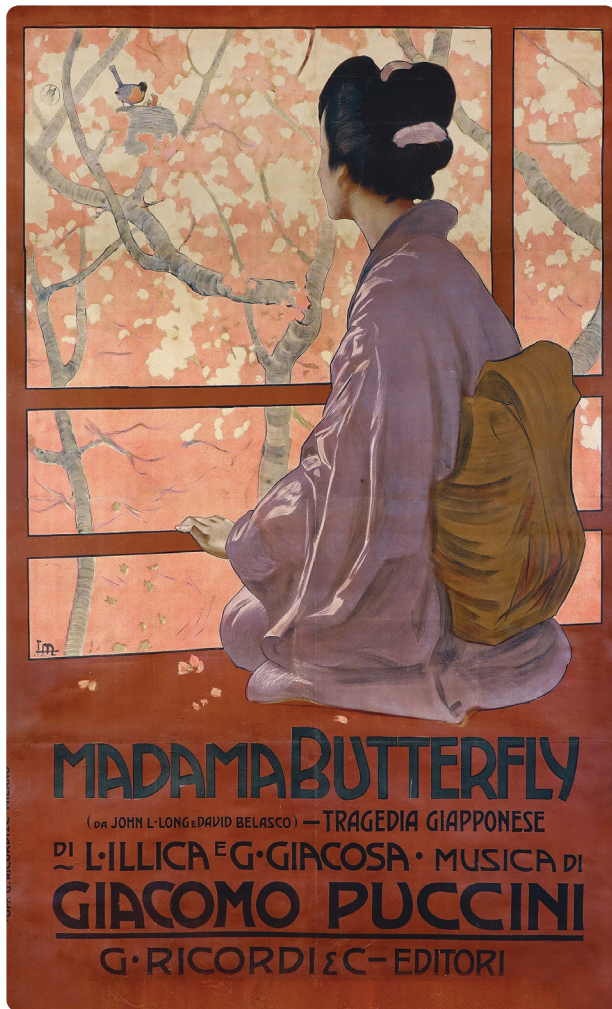


Jenny Lin



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Madama Butterfly, Leopoldo Metlicovitz, 1904



Preston Choi

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Madama Butterfly is an opera by Giacomo Puccini that premiered at La Scala in 1904 and remains one of the most frequently performed operas. The story is a tragedy involving the marriage of a U.S. Navy officer and a teenage geisha in Japan at the turn of the 20th century. It is a canonical western opera that thoroughly exemplifies Orientalist stereotypes and tropes.

Madama Butterfly was updated and adapted as the 1989 musical *Miss Saigon* (set in 1970s Vietnam) and critically subverted by David Henry Hwang's 1988 play *M. Butterfly*.

THIS IS NOT A TRUE STORY

Written by Preston Choi

Directed by Reena Dutt

Staged reading excerpt produced by Artists at Play

CAST:

Jessica Jade Andres	CIO CIO
Nicole Santiago	KIM
Jenny Soo	KUMIKO/TAKAKO

This Is Not a True Story will receive its world premiere at the Los Angeles Theatre Center, a co-production between Artists at Play and the Latino Theater Company, in Fall 2023.

About the play: When Cio Cio from *Madame Butterfly* and Kim from *Miss Saigon* each find themselves locked in a time loop of their respective stories that always end in suicide (spoiler alert!), how do they fight against the plots that they're forced to repeat for eternity? And what would happen if a contemporary character joined their ranks? From the perspectives of the characters themselves, *This Is Not a True Story* humorously challenges the harmful representations and stereotypes that Asian women have suffered for generations. Discover what it takes to control your own narrative.

Preston Choi (playwright) is a Chicago-based playwright whose plays include *Happy Birthday Mars Rover*, *performing class*, *A Great Migration* or *the Migratory Patterns of the North American Monarch Butterfly* and *the Development of Fatherless Sons*, and *This Is Not a True Story*. He is currently in the MFA playwriting program at the University of California, San Diego.

Founded in 2011, **Artists at Play** produces theatrical programming that explores the Asian American experience. Through productions, new play development, and other programs, Artists at Play advocates for and collaborates with diverse communities of artists. The critically acclaimed group has received Ovation Award and GLAAD Media Award nominations.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Have you noticed Orientalism in contemporary pop culture? What are some examples?
- What are some examples of art or media that counter or challenge Orientalist discourse?
- Why is representation powerful?
- Does it make a difference who is represented and who creates the representation?
- What stories would you like to see told from different perspectives?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- 🕒 Upcoming events at USC
- 📅 4/5/23: [A Conversation with Stephanie Hsu](#)
- 📅 4/6/23: [Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration](#)
- 📅 4/30/23: [Tales of Clamor](#), presented by USC Visions and Voices
- 🎭 Artists at Play artistsatplay.org
- 🎭 East West Players eastwestplayers.org
- 🎭 Latino Theater Co. at the LATC latinotheaterco.org
- 🎭 Asian Americans Advancing Justice advancingjustice-aaajc.org
- 🎭 UC Riverside production of *Yellowface* by David Henry Hwang, directed by Reena Dutt (5/11-5/20/23) <https://events.ucr.edu/event/yellowface>

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

TANG LI of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS

- 📖 Arthur Groos, [Madama Butterfly/Madamu Batafurai: Transpositions of a "Japanese Tragedy"](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2023).
- 📖 Seung Ah Oh, [Recontextualizing Asian American Domesticity: from Madame Butterfly to My American Wife!](#) (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008).
- 📖 Francis Oakley et al., [A Vision of the Orient: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts of Madame Butterfly](#) (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2006).
- 📖 Jan van Rij, [Madame Butterfly: Japonisme, Puccini, & the Search for the Real Cho-Cho-San](#) (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001).
- 📖 Nicholas Tarling, [Orientalism and the Operatic World](#) (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).
- 📖 Isil Tombul and Gulsah Sari, [Handbook of Research on Contemporary Approaches to Orientalism in Media and Beyond](#) (Hershey: IGI Global, 2021).

DATABASES

- 🔍 [Arts and Humanities Full Text](#)
- 🔍 [Bibliography of Asian Studies \(BAS\)](#)
- 🔍 [Performing Arts Periodicals Database](#)

STREAMING MEDIA

- 📺 [Asian Americans](#) (PBS, 2020)
- 📺 [Madama Butterfly](#) (ArtHaus Musik, 1986)
- 📺 [Tapestry: Asian Women in America](#) (Third World Newsreel, 1991)



Tales of Clamor



Artists at Play

