

THE FOUR IMMIGRANTS

From Manga to Musical

Wednesday, November 20, 2019
7 p.m.
Joyce J. Camilleri Hall
University of Southern California



KNOW BEFORE THE SHOW

- ◉ *The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga* is an award-winning musical about young Japanese immigrants in early-twentieth-century San Francisco.
- ◉ It is based on *Manga Yonin Shosei*, a semi-autobiographical comics series created by Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama from 1924 to 1927.
- ◉ The performance will be preceded by a panel discussion with the show's author/composer, Min Kahng, and director, Leslie Martinson, along with translator and manga historian Frederik L. Schodt. The discussion will be moderated by Julia Cho of Artists at Play, an L.A.-based theatre company that focuses on Asian American narratives.

THE FOUR IMMIGRANTS: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL MANGA

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY MIN KAHNG

The world premiere of *The Four Immigrants* was originally produced in 2014 at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Palo Alto, CA. Dramaturgy by Oona Hatton. Based on *Manga Yonin Shosei* by Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama. Translated as *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924* by Frederik L. Schodt, published by Stone Bridge Press.

CAST

Charlie: **Ewan Chung**
Fred: **Reuben Uy**
Frank: **Kurt Kanazawa**
Henry: **Scott Keiji Takeda**
Hana (et al.): **Stella Kim**
Kimiko (et al.): **Yumi Iwama**
Elder (et al.): **Jully Lee**
Anti-Asiatic Leaguer (et al.): **Sophie Oda**

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM

Directed by **Leslie Martinson**
Musical Director/Piano Accompanist **Julia Weiner**
Stage Manager **Risa Kurosaki**
Presented by **USC Visions and Voices**
Co-sponsored by **Artists at Play, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and Asian Pacific American Student Services**

SPECIAL THANKS

Daria Yudacufski, Frederik Schodt, Company of Angels, Armando Molina, Gay Yuen, Shannon and Michelle Wong, Ivan Zawinul, Oona Hatton, The Kiyama Family, Stonebridge Press, Ayu Tanaka, Matthew Miyasaki, Howard Ho, Jennifer Chang, Lisa Joe, Marc Macalintal, Helen Ota, Chloé Hung

BIOS



Ewan Chung — Film: *Firefly* fan short “The Verse,” *OJ: The Musical*, Leland Orser’s *Morning*, *Undiscovered*. TV: *Monday Mornings*, *Bones*, *Torchwood*, *Boston Legal*, *Chuck*, *Heroes*, *How I Met Your Mother*, Stephen King’s *Desperation*, *Las Vegas*, *Sucker Free City*. Theatre: Award-winning sketch comedy troupe OPM, *Lost: The Musical*, *Chinglish*, *Washer/Dryer*. He’s often writing, singing, speaking Chinese and French, recording audiobooks, and in various projects.



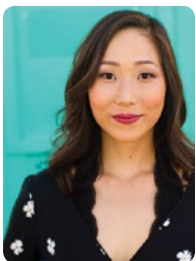
The daughter of Japanese parents, **Yumi Iwama** has always had a personal interest in the immigrant story and is thankful for the opportunity to work with the creative team on *The Four Immigrants*. Theater: Vineyard, Promenade, Syracuse Stage, Long Beach CLO, Redondo Beach CLO, Sacramento Music Circus, Buzzworks Theater, and East West Players. Film credits include *Breakable You* and *Other People*. Iwama is married with twins and is a certified hypnotherapist.



Min Kahng is an award-winning playwright and composer whose world premiere works include *The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga* (recipient of the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for Original Script and Original Music, the Edgerton New Play Award, and a NAMT Production Grant), *GOLD: The Midas Musical*, *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon: A Musical Adaptation*, and *Tales of Olympus*. Kahng is a Jonathan Larson Grant Finalist, a Richard Rodgers Award Finalist, a Resident Playwright at Playwrights Foundation, and a proud member of the Dramatists Guild. minkahng.com



Kurt Sanchez Kanazawa is a Los Angeles native with Hawaii roots and is thrilled to join this team! Regional stage and Opera: *Sweet Land*, *Sisters Matsumoto*, *The Judas*. Upcoming TV/Film: Guest star on *Airport Security Squad*, *She Had It Coming*, *OneDishDining.com*. Training: Juilliard, Columbia. kurtkanazawa.com



Stella Kim was last seen in *Into the Woods* at the Hollywood Bowl as Lucinda. Credits: McCoy Rigby’s *Les Miserables*, Rockwell’s *UMPO: 10 Things I Hate About You*, *Company*, *The King and I*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Rent*, and *Miss Saigon*. She also sings with 3DT’s a cappella group WestBeat at the Disneyland Resort and

around Southern California. When she’s not performing, you can find her directing children’s theatre. IG: [@stellaellakim](https://www.instagram.com/stellaellakim)



Jully Lee is the artistic director of *Cold Tofu*, the nation’s first and longest running Asian American improv troupe. This past year, Jully performed in *Aubergine*, *Hannah and the Dread Gazebo*, *Ladies*, and *Tales of Clamor*. Recent TV credits include *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, *Veep*, *This Is Us*, and *The Kominsky Method*. Lee will also be in the upcoming films *The Illegal* and *Paper Tiger*. jullylee.com



Leslie Martinson is a freelance director based at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, where her many productions include *The Four Immigrants*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Proof*, *Water by the Spoonful*, and *Superior Donuts*. As Associate Artistic Director and Casting Director, she was part of the company’s artistic leadership for over 30 years. She is currently working internationally as a Program Director in Leadership/Communication training with Stand & Deliver Group, and as Creative Director at Fieldwork Creations.



Sophie Oda is a SF Bay Area theatre veteran, working at TheatreWorks, San Jose Rep, AMT, etc. After graduating from UC Irvine’s BFA program, she moved to LA for film. She got her start in TV playing Cody’s girlfriend Barbara on *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* and currently she can be seen on popular TV shows such as *NCIS: LA*, *The Big Bang Theory*, and *Hawaii Five-o*.



Scott Keiki Takeda’s theatre credits include *Valley of the Heart*, *Next to Normal*, *The Emperor’s Nightingale*, *Fugu*, *Ching Chong Chinaman*, *Ordinary Days*, and *Mysterious Skin*. Film credits include *Carrie Pilby*; *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*; and *Eat with Me*. Takeda also stars opposite Gad Elmaleh in the Netflix original series *Huge in France*.



Reuben Uy is thrilled to be collaborating again with AAP after *tot: The Untold*, *Yet Spectacular Story of (a Filipino) Hulk Hogan*. Last seen as Sykes in *OliveRio: A Brazilian Twist*. Film: *Metro Manila* (Sundance Audience Award Winner 2013), TV/New Media: *Bosch*, *The Web Opera* (Best Shorts Competition Award of Merit), Theater: *Beijing Spring*. IG: [@reubenuy](https://www.instagram.com/reubenuy)

VAUDEVILLE

A popular form of entertainment in the United States from the 1890s through the early 1930s. Vaudeville shows consisted of about a dozen individual acts, including magicians, comedians, singers, and dancers. The Great Depression and the growth of radio, and then television, led to the rapid decline of vaudeville.

RAGTIME

Probably the most popular type of music in early-twentieth-century America, ragtime was a lively, syncopated music and a precursor to jazz. It was influenced by African American banjo music, minstrel shows, honky-tonk pianists, and some elements of European music. Ragtime is exemplified by piano compositions featuring an accented beat and a bouncing, syncopated melody.

ABOUT THE FOUR IMMIGRANTS

Charlie, Frank, Fred, and Henry are Japanese immigrants pursuing the American Dream in San Francisco in the face of obstacles including the 1906 earthquake, racial prejudice, and exclusionary laws. The score was inspired by the vaudeville and ragtime music that was popular in the United States in the early twentieth century.

JAPANESE IMMIGRANTS IN EARLY-TWENTIETH-CENTURY SAN FRANCISCO

The first Japanese immigrants to San Francisco arrived in 1869. The community was small for the next several decades, until a surge of Japanese immigration in the first quarter of the twentieth century, when about 100,000 Japanese nationals arrived in the United States.

At first, many of them worked as migrant laborers in farms, mines, canneries, and railroads. During this time, they established many of the foundational institutions of the Japanese American community. By 1920, Japanese immigrant farmers owned a significant amount of California farmland and produced about 10 percent of the state's farm revenue. They also increasingly faced anti-immigrant sentiment—labor unions scapegoated them as enemies of American workers and banned them from union membership; Japanese men were subject to the racist notion that they were a threat to white women, a tactic that has been used against many people of color, especially Black men, to shore up white supremacy throughout U.S. history.

A series of anti-immigrant policies were enacted:

1907: In the “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” the Japanese government agrees to limit emigration to the United States.

1913: The California Alien Land Law prohibits “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from owning land in California—even land they had previously purchased. This law especially affects Asian farm owners.

1924: The Immigration Act of 1924, including the Asian Exclusion Act, imposes severe restrictions on immigration from all non-European nations.

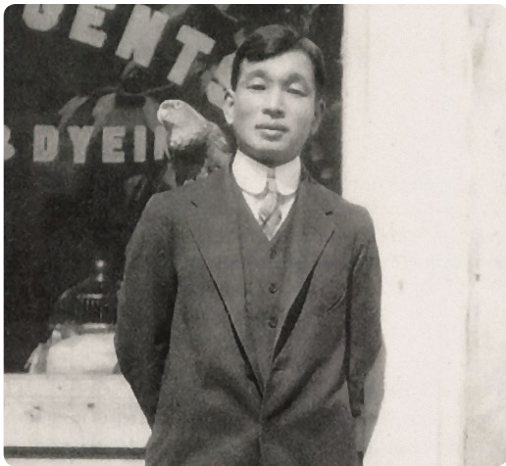
Still, Japanese Americans continued to build community and lives in California. They established a Buddhist church in Oakland in the 1900s that later became a place where those interned in camps during World War II could store their belongings. First-generation Japanese immigrant women founded their own independent YWCA in San Francisco in 1912. Japanese immigrant farmers formed cooperatives and associations to share financial support and advice. San Francisco’s current Japantown was settled in the wake of the 1906 earthquake, and stands today as one of the largest and oldest ethnic enclaves in the United States.

ASIAN AMERICANS IN AMERICAN THEATRE

According to a 2018 report by the Asian American Performers Action Coalition, while racial and ethnic diversity is increasing on the stages of New York City (the U.S. theatre capital), there is still scant representation of Asian Americans. The 10-year average for the hiring of Asian American actors on Broadway is 3.1 percent, the report found. As of the 2010 Census, the population of New York City was 12.7 percent Asian. While Broadway stages are getting more and more diverse, “Caucasians continue to be the



President Coolidge signs the Immigration Act of 1924 on the White House South Lawn.



Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama



The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924

only ethnicity to over-represent compared to their respective population size in New York City,” the report concluded.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What does musical theatre offer to the telling of historical narratives that you might not get from other mediums?
- Do you see any parallels between the experiences of Japanese American immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century and immigrants today?
- What do you think motivates anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation?
- Do you think musical styles are products of their time and place? How so?

IF YOU LIKED TONIGHT’S PERFORMANCE, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT

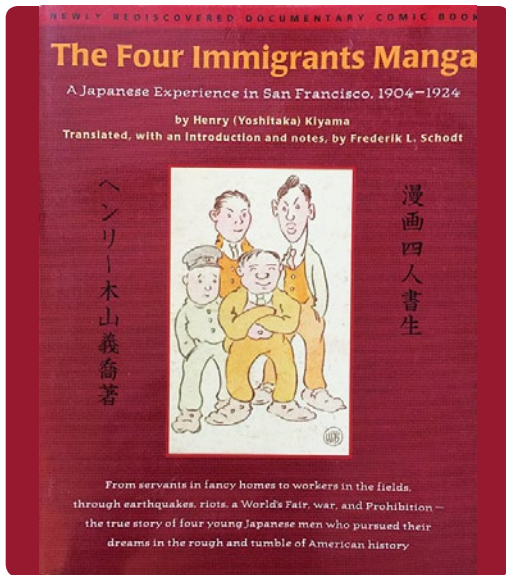
- Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo jacc.org
- Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo janm.org
- Artists at Play artistsatplayla.blogspot.com
- Some of L.A.’s other theatrical producers and venues centertheatregroup.org, eastwestplayers.org, thelac.org, geffenplayhouse.org, playwrightsarena.org, coerage.org, celebrationtheatre.com, companyofangels.org

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ANDREW JUSTICE of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight’s discussion and performance. Those with a call number (e.g., books, CDs, and DVDs) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g. journal articles and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

ARTICLES

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