

MASTERS OF THE CURRENTS

A Conversation with the Creators and Cast

Wednesday, April 7, 2021, at 5 p.m. PT

Live via Zoom

University of Southern California

WHAT TO KNOW

- TeAda Productions' *Masters of the Currents*, created by Leilani Chan and Ova Saopeng, is the first nationally touring play about Micronesians in the United States.
- This event will feature a video excerpt from the show, followed by a panel conversation moderated by Marie-Reine Velez (Visions and Voices, Artists at Play), with Chan and Saopeng alongside cast members Innocenta Sound-Kikku, Emeraldrose Hadik, Jayceleen Ifenuk, and Jermine Kaipat.

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Micronesia is a subregion of Oceania, which comprises thousands of small islands in the western Pacific Ocean. The Micronesian community is very diverse, with many languages, ethnicities, islands, states, and countries listed under this imposed regional name and category, which was not chosen by the people. Many Micronesians who have recently immigrated to Hawai'i fled their island nations due to environmental and economic pressures, yet are facing resistance and struggling for equality in Hawai'i. *Masters of the Currents* combines community-based story collection and social justice practices with devised ensemble techniques to create a theatrical performance built with the involvement of this community. The production was created with the contributions of numerous voices and stories from the Micronesian community in Hawai'i, including elementary-school children, elders, at-risk youth, and community leaders and scholars. Stories were collected through interviews, story circles, and workshops. Community members played important roles in every aspect and phase of production.



ABOUT THE CREATORS

Leilani Chan (co-creator, playwright) is an award-winning performance artist, actor, playwright, director, cultural worker, and founding artistic director of TeAda Productions. Chan was awarded the 2019–20 Santa Monica Artist Fellowship and is co-chair of the National Asian American Theater Conference and Festival. Born and raised in Hawai'i, she attended Hampshire College and obtained her MFA from UC Irvine in 2004.

Ova Saopeng (co-creator, actor) is a Los Angeles-based actor and writer, born in Savannakhet, Laos, and raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i. He is an associate producer and teaching artist with TeAda Productions. Saopeng received his BA in theatre from USC and has performed nationally with theatre companies including the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Mark Taper Forum/P.L.A.Y., East West Players, and hereandnow.

TEADA PRODUCTIONS

TeAda Productions is a nomadic theater of color rooted in the stories of immigrants and refugees. The company is committed to healing and honoring the lives of the displaced, exploited, and overlooked. Their artistic process starts and ends with conscious listening, community building, and creative courage.

Founded in 1996, TeAda creates cross-disciplinary performances and theatre workshops that address issues affecting communities of color such as health, education, and social justice. TeAda's productions include *Refugee Nation*, the first nationally touring play about Laotian refugees in the United States, and *Global Taxi Driver*, which was inspired by the real-life experiences of immigrant taxi drivers from L.A. to Minneapolis and Bangkok to Guadalajara.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How is the creation of *Masters of the Currents* different from your perception of how theatre is made?
- *Masters of the Currents* centers on the stories of youth from the Micronesian immigrant community in Hawaii and the struggles they face as a marginalized group. What are some of the new or recycled issues faced by new immigrant groups today?
- What is the importance of representing a community that has never seen itself on stage or on screen? And how might this affect the creation process?
- Why do you think TeAda Productions is committed to community-based storytelling?
- What is the relationship between climate change and migration?



Leilani Chan (co-creator, playwright)



Ova Saopeng (co-creator, actor)



Artists at Play

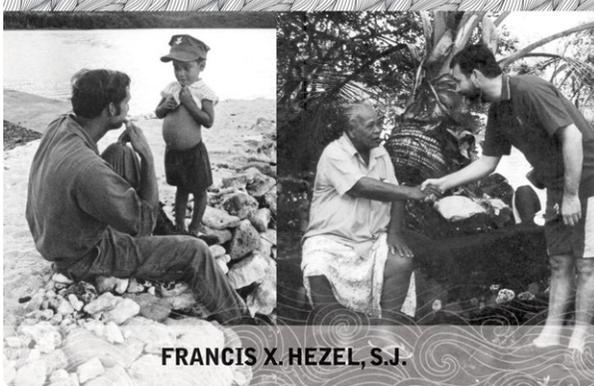


TeAda Productions

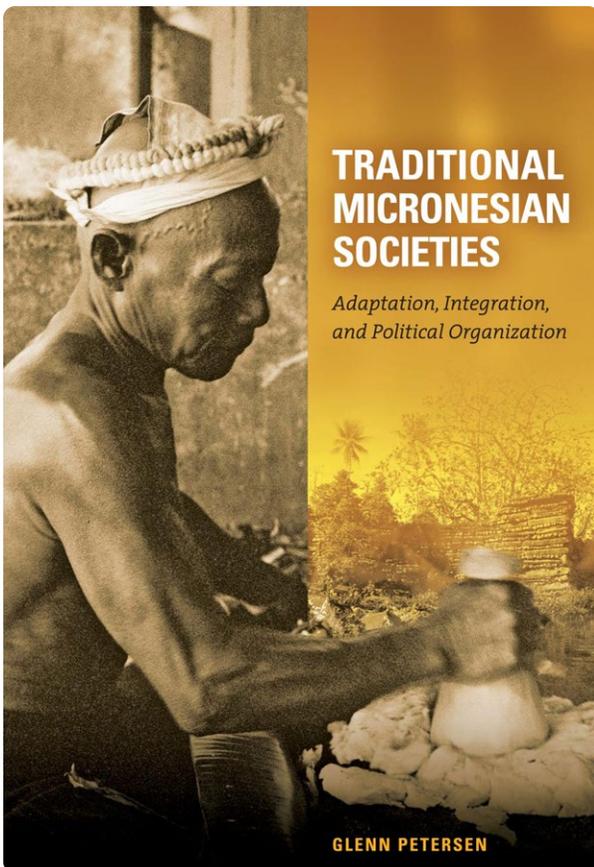


MAKING SENSE OF MICRONESIA

THE LOGIC OF PACIFIC ISLAND CULTURE



FRANCIS X. HEZEL, S.J.



TRADITIONAL MICRONESIAN SOCIETIES

*Adaptation, Integration,
and Political Organization*

GLENN PETERSEN

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

LISA CROW of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this evening's 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

- Francis X. Hezel, [*Making Sense of Micronesia: The Logic of Pacific Island Culture*](#) (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2013).
- Glenn Petersen, [*Traditional Micronesian Societies: Adaptation, Integration, and Political Organization in the Central Pacific*](#) (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2009).
- Mac Marshall, [*Namoluk Beyond The Reef: The Transformation Of A Micronesian Community*](#) (Boulder: Routledge, 2004).
- Therese M. Quinn et al., [*Art and Social Justice Education: Culture as Commons*](#) (Florence: Routledge, 2012).
- Rickie Solinger et al., [*Telling Stories to Change the World: Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims*](#) (London: Routledge, 2008).

ARTICLES

- Lanxing Fu and Jeremy Pickard, "[A Climate of Change: Theatre-makers May Be Uniquely Qualified to Lead the Way to a Regenerative Culture of Climate Justice](#)," *American Theatre* 37, no. 2 (2020), 14.
- Geoffrey R. Clark, "[A 3000-Year Culture Sequence from Palau, Western Micronesia](#)," *Asian Perspectives* 44, no. 2 (2005), 349–80.
- Glenn Petersen, "[Aesthetics, Beliefs, Values, and Behavior](#)," *Traditional Micronesian Societies* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2009), 187–212.
- "[Leilani Chan](#)," *American Theatre* 26, no. 6 (2009), 19.
- Paul Rainbird, "[Taking the Tapu: Defining Micronesia by Absence](#)," *The Journal of Pacific History* 38, no. 2 (2003), 237–50.
- Erin E. Robinson, "[Sharing Stories: The Role of Personal Narratives in Community Mobilization](#)," *Humanity & Society* 40, no. 4 (2016), 442–61.

JOURNALS

- [*Oceania*](#)
- [*The Journal of Pacific History*](#)

WEBSITES

- TeAda Productions | www.teada.org
- Artists at Play | artistsatplay.org
- East West Players | eastwestplayers.org
- The L.A. Theatre Center | www.thelatc.org
- Trailer for *Masters of The Currents* National Touring Production | vimeo.com/266971752