

Asian American Leaders Panel to Convene at
King of the Yees
By Lauren Yee

Directed by Joshua Kahan Brody

Asian American Leaders Panel: Wednesday, February 6, following the 7:00 P.M. performance of *King of the Yees*

San Francisco, CA (January 2019) – **San Francisco Playhouse** is thrilled to announce a post-show discussion featuring an **Asian American Leaders Panel** following the performance of ***King of the Yees*** on Wednesday, February 6. The panel will feature **Thi Bui, Vanessa Hua, Karen Mok, Angela Yip**, and playwright **Lauren Yee**. **Andrew Hsieh** will moderate.

King of the Yees, centered on San Francisco's Chinatown, was inspired by Lauren Yee's family and their deep connections within the community. After the performance this panel of Bay Area based Asian American Leaders will discuss the changing landscape, challenges and joys of creating for the Asian American community, and how the idea of being "Asian American" has changed over time. The event is free for all ticket-holders of the **February 6th** performance.

ABOUT KING OF THE YEES

For nearly 20 years, playwright Lauren Yee's father Larry (played by **Francis Jue**) has been a driving force in the Yee Family Association, a seemingly obsolescent Chinese American men's club formed 150 years ago in the wake of the Gold Rush. But when her father goes missing, Lauren (played by **Krystle Piamonte**) must plunge into the rabbit hole of San Francisco's Chinatown and confront a world both foreign and familiar. At once biting hilarity and heartbreakingly honest, ***King of the Yees*** is an epic joyride across cultural, national, and familial borders that explores what it truly means to be a Yee.

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

King of the Yees

Continued:

The cast features **Francis Jue*** as Larry Yee and includes **Krystle Piamonte**, **Jomar Tagatac***, **Rinabeth Apostol***, and **Will Dao***.

“I always felt that my father deserved to have a play written about him—so who better to write it than me?” said Yee. “***King of the Yees*** is a love letter to my family, and to San Francisco and its vibrant and historic Chinatown community. It’s an extreme honor to be back in my hometown and making art for the people I grew up with.”

San Francisco Playhouse’s production of ***King of the Yees*** is made possible by Season Producer Andrew Teufel; Executive Producers Clay Foundation – West, William & Marsha Adler; Producers Margaret Sheehan, Betty & Clifford Nakamoto, Geoffrey Jue, Cynthia and David Bogolub, Phyllis & Jerry Rosenberg; Associate Producers Linda Brewer and Margot Golding.

ABOUT THE PANELISTS

Thi Bui (Eisner-nominated Cartoonist and Author/Illustrator of *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir*) was born in Vietnam three months before the end of the Vietnam War, and came to the United States in 1978 as part of the "boat people" wave of refugees from Southeast Asia. Her debut graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do* (Abrams ComicArts, 2017) has been selected for a 2018 American Book Award, the San Francisco Public Library and the Seattle Public Library’s One City One Book read, a National Book Critics Circle finalist in autobiography, an Eisner Award finalist in reality-based comics, and a Common Book for UCLA, University of Oregon, University of Chicago and other schools, and made several best of 2017 book lists, including Bill Gates' top five picks. She is also the Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator of *A Different Pond*, a picture book by the poet Bao Phi (Capstone, 2017). Her short comics can be found online at The Nib, PEN America, and BOOM California. She is currently researching and drawing a work of graphic nonfiction about how Asian American Pacific Islanders are impacted by detention and deportation, to be published by One World, Random House, as well as working on a children’s book with her son, the Pulitzer-prize winning writer Viet Thanh Nguyen, and his son, to be published by McSweeney’s this fall. Thi taught high school in New York City and was a founding teacher of Oakland International High School, the first public high school in California for recent immigrants and English learners. She is a faculty member of the MFA in Comics program at the California College of the Arts since 2015. She lives in the Bay Area.

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

King of the Yees

Continued:

Andrew Hsieh (Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *The Slant*) is the founder and editor-in-chief of *The Slant*, a weekly newsletter featuring Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) culture. With a focus on marginalized AANHPI communities, *The Slant*'s mission is to uplift voices lost in mainstream Asian American discourse. Hsieh has also written for the Asian American Literary Review.

Karen Mok (Co-Founder of AAPI women's empowerment organization *The Cosmos*) is an experience designer and community builder, and Co-Founder & COO of *The Cosmos*. Born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina, she identifies as the daughter of Chinese immigrants. Her experience growing up between cultures inspired her passion for empowering Asian women as Co-Founder of *The Cosmos*. At age 16, Karen started her first company through the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, a non-profit with the mission to provide entrepreneurship education in low-income communities. This ignited a passion for supporting entrepreneurs and creators in underserved communities. She went on a journey working for and with Stripe, The Omidyar Network, Google, and The Inter-American Development Bank on empowering entrepreneurial communities in emerging markets. Karen lived *The Alchemist* - journeying far and at one point even managing a continent only to realize that her impact was back home. In more fun news, she writes poetry on an anonymous tumblr and moonlights as a dumpling chef.

Vanessa Hua (Award-winning Journalist and Author of *A River of Stars: A Novel*) is an award-winning, best-selling author and columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Her novel, *A River of Stars*, was named to the Washington Post and NPR's Best Books of 2018 lists, and has been called a "marvel" by *O, The Oprah Magazine*, and "delightful" by *The Economist*. Her short story collection, *Deceit and Other Possibilities*, received an Asian/Pacific American Award in Literature and was a finalist for a California Book Award. For two decades, she has been writing about Asia and the diaspora, filing stories from China, Burma, Panama, South Korea, and Ecuador. She began her career at the Los Angeles Times before heading east to the Hartford Courant. Her work has appeared in the New York Times, San Francisco Magazine, Washington Post, The Atlantic, and Newsweek, among other publications. A Bay Area native, she received a Rona Jaffe Writers' Award, the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan literary award, and a Steinbeck Fellowship in Creative Writing. She is a graduate of Stanford University and UC Riverside's MFA program. Other achievements include the Dr. Suzanne Ahn Award for Civil Rights and Social Justice coverage; the Asian American Journalists

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

King of the Yees

Continued:

Association's National Journalism Award — online/broadcast, print, and radio; the Society of Professional Journalists, the James Madison Freedom of Information Award, the San Francisco Press Club Greater Bay Area Journalism Award, San Francisco Press Club, and Best of the West. She was the Featured Literary Artist at APAture, an Asian American arts festival in San Francisco, and her short story collection was El Cerrito's pick for One City, One Book. Her fiction has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Guernica*, *The Sun*, and elsewhere. She received an Emerging Writer Fellowship from Aspen Words, a fellowship at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and a writer's residency at Hedgebrook, among other honors. She works and teaches at the Writers' Grotto in San Francisco, and is on the faculty at the 2019 Tin House Winter Workshop and the Community of Writers at Squaw Valley. Find her work at your local independent bookstore, Indiebound, and other online retailers.

Angela Yip (Director of Social Justice at AAPI youth mentorship organization

AAMPLIFY) is a co-founder and Director of Social Justice at AAMPLIFY, an Asian American youth empowerment organization based in SF Chinatown where she focuses on AAPI identity and how to become agents of change. She is an active AAPI advocate and South San Francisco native. Angela is also currently a State Fellow at the California State Capitol., as well as a Senate Fellow at the California State Senate. Education: University of California, Los Angeles. "I grew up attending schools around SF where I saw a lack of structural support for people of color, including unequal education, disempowerment, isolation, and feelings of inferiority. An ongoing goal of mine is to figure out how to bridge community organizing and public policy to uplift communities of color."

Lauren Yee (Playwright) *Cambodian Rock Band*, with music by Dengue Fever, premiered in March 2018 at South Coast Rep and will open at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, and Victory Gardens in 2019. Her play *The Great Leap* premiered this past season at Denver Center, Seattle Repertory, and Atlantic Theatre with 2019 productions slated for the Guthrie, American Conservatory Theater, Arts Club, and InterAct Theatre. Also upcoming for 2018-19: *The Song of Summer* at Trinity Rep. Recent honors include the Horton Foote Prize, Kesselring Prize, Primus Prize, a Hodder Fellowship at Princeton, and the #1 and #2 plays on the 2017 Kilroys List, as well as a finalist of both the ATCA/Steinberg Award and the Edward M. Kennedy Prize. She is a Ma-Yi Writers' Lab member and an alumni playwright of Playwrights Realm. She currently writes for *Mixtape* (Netflix). Current commissions include Geffen Playhouse, La Jolla Playhouse, Lincoln Center/LCT3, *Mixed Blood*, Portland Center Stage,

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

King of the Yees

Continued:

Second Stage, South Coast Repertory, and Trinity Repertory Company. BA: Yale. MFA: UCSD. www.laurenyee.com

San Francisco Playhouse

Founded in 2003 and boasting 2800 subscribers, San Francisco Playhouse is the only mid-sized professional venue in downtown San Francisco; an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square Theater fare. Presenting a diverse range of plays and musicals, **San Francisco Playhouse** produces new works as well as re-imagined classics, “making the edgy accessible and the traditional edgy.” And with its bold Sandbox Series, dedicated to nurturing World Premieres, the Playhouse has become a significant player in developing new works as well. **San Francisco Playhouse** is committed to providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create and experience dramatic works that celebrate the human spirit.

**Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.*

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: For nearly 20 years, playwright Lauren Yee's father Larry (played by **Francis Jue**) has been a driving force in the Yee Family Association, a seemingly obsolescent Chinese American men's club formed 150 years ago in the wake of the Gold Rush. But when her father goes missing, Lauren (played by **Krystle Piamonte**) must plunge into the rabbit hole of San Francisco Chinatown and confront a world both foreign and familiar. At once biting hilarity and heartbreakingly honest, ***King of the Yees*** is an epic joyride across cultural, national, and familial borders that explores what it truly means to be a Yee.

WHEN: Asian American Leaders Panel: Wednesday, February 6, 2019, following the 7pm performance

Performances: January 22nd through March 2nd, 2019

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday at 7 p.m.; Friday, Saturday at 8 p.m.

Matinees: Saturday at 3 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Preview Performances: January 22, 23, 24, 25 at 8 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

King of the Yees

Continued:

WHERE: 450 Post Street, San Francisco, 2nd floor of the Kensington Park Hotel

TICKETS: For tickets (\$35 - \$125) or more information, the public may contact the San Francisco Playhouse box office at 415-677-9596, or online at <https://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/2018-2019-season/king-of-the-yees/>