

THEATER MU PRESENTS

140 LBS

HOW
BEAUTY
KILLED
MY
MOTHER

BY
SUSAN
LIEU

DIRECTED
BY SARA
PORKALOB



CREATOR'S NOTES

At 32, my eggs weren't getting any younger but I couldn't bring myself to take out my IUD. If I became a mom, I would feel like a coward and out of integrity with my future offspring. How could I encourage them to live the life of their dreams if I sidestepped my own? The stage had been calling my entire life—and while I dipped my toe as a stand-up comic, spokesperson for my chocolate company, MC for numerous events—I never fully committed. I was too scared.

Years ago, I enrolled in a solo performance class. The first assignment was to tell a five-minute story. This was my first line: "I wanted to avenge my mother's death." And so my journey with creating 140 LBS began. During my first 25-minute show, I laid out programs with my mother's picture, an expose of the doctor's malpractice history, and reflection questions. I resolved, "after this show, I will have then proved once and for all I am enough!"

But when I walked through that fire of fear, I found something completely unexpected on the other side — a community that felt safe to reflect their own traumas to me. The more vulnerable I became, the more the community grew; and the more we grew, the more we began to heal, inside and outside the theatre walls. Then the letters started to come: reflections on broken families; pursuing secret dreams; examining the body with a new curiosity; going through grief long forgotten. After the world premiere of 140 LBS in February 2019, I knew I was ready to become a mom.

I want you to know that I am my parents' wildest dreams. As Vietnamese refugees who came to the States in 1983, my family were those nail salon workers who gave you sparkling manicures and pedicures. And now, with the privilege of those who have come before me, I get to be a playwright, performer, and activist. 140 LBS has several through-lines: the multi-generational immigrant experience; body insecurity and shame; repression and subsequent examination of personal loss; lack of accountability in the medical system.

But these themes are not just remnants of the 90s—they persist today. Southeast Asian Americans and so many other first-generation immigrants are under threat from I.C.E. People are not taught how to deal with death, especially in Asian American communities where seeking mental support is heavily stigmatized. People in the hundreds of thousands continue to die in the United States every year from preventable medical accidents, of which my mother was a victim. Furthermore, doctors are not obligated to disclose they are on probation to their patients (except for a newly passed law in California for specific cases) and in some states, medical malpractice damage caps have not adjusted to inflation since the 70s. Even though it may feel like the cards are stacked against us, there are people out there fighting the good fight and they always need a helping hand.

With Metta,

Susan Lieu



CAST

BA (father)
DÌ HIỆP (aunt)
DÌ PHƯƠNG (aunt)
DORIS (lawyer)
HANG (second eldest brother)
KANG AKA ANTHONY (eldest brother)
MÁ (mother)
MARVIN (husband)
SIZZLER GUY
SUSAN
WENDY (older sister)

PRODUCTION TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT & PERFORMER	Susan Lieu
DIRECTOR	Sara Porkalob
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Jenny Crooks
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Emily Leong
MEDIA DESIGNER	Derek Edamura
SOUND DESIGNER	Erin Bednarz
GRAPHIC DESIGNER	Stacy Nguyen
VIDEOGRAPHER	Brad Curran

RUN TIME

Approximately 75 minutes. No intermission.
You can pause the show at any moment.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

During the show you will hear English spoken with a Vietnamese accent and then Vietnamese people speaking to each other with an American English accent—why is that? It is based on the languages in which each of the characters think. Susan thinks in English. When she speaks to her elders, they think in Vietnamese, hence the pronounced contrast displayed by the English with a Vietnamese accent. Elders will have grammatical errors not out of mistakes, but rather by the elder's translation of their native language of Vietnamese to English. Conversely, when elders who think in Vietnamese speak to each other, there are no grammatical errors—language is smooth, even poetic. To convey this, they speak in clear English to each other for the audience to fully understand their message. Don't worry, you'll get it.



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Susan Lieu is a Vietnamese-American activist playwright and performer who tells stories that refuse to be forgotten. With a vision for individual and community healing—made possible through the interplay of comedy and drama—her work delves deeply into the lived realities of body insecurity, grieving, and trauma. Her first work, *140 LBS: HOW BEAUTY KILLED MY MOTHER*, is a solo theatrical show about the true story of how Lieu lost her mother to plastic surgery malpractice when she was 11 years old and her search to find the man responsible for her mother's death.

The San Francisco Chronicle calls her show “fascinating, touching, upsetting, poignant, startling, affecting, engrossing, emotional, informative and, more than anything, humane.” In February 2019, Lieu held the world premiere of *140 LBS* with a sold-out 9 show run. In May 2019, Lieu made her San Francisco premiere with a sold-out 7 show run in partnership with CAAMFest and The Marsh. Her work has been showcased with The Moth at Benaroya Hall, On the Boards, RISK!, Bumbershoot, LitCrawl and The World Economic Forum. She has been profiled on NPR's KUOW 94.9, *The Seattle Channel*, and *ABC7 News*, among other outlets. Her work is also on display at The Wing Luke Museum as part of the *Where Beauty Lies* exhibit through September 2021. In addition, Lieu collaborated with The Seattle Public Library and Book-It Theatre to adapt an excerpt and play the main character of *The Best We Could Do*, a graphic novel on the Vietnamese refugee experience.

Susan began performing comedy in 2011, at venues including the Purple Onion, Carolines on Broadway, and Jet City Improv. She has been the Artist-in-Residence at The Collective and The Dent Conference and is an alumna of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers Program and Coro Fellowship in Public Affairs. She has a BA from Harvard, an MBA from Yale and is the co-founder of Socola Chocolatier, an artisanal chocolate company in San Francisco. Her production company, Nasus Media, produced *140 LBS*. To learn more about Susan's work, go to www.susanlieu.me or follow her on Instagram @susanlieu.

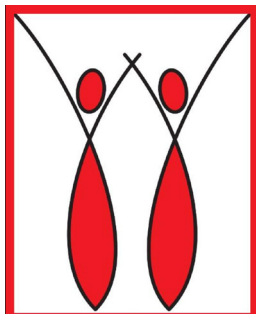


ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Sara Porkalob is a storyteller and activist who has been featured in *Seattle Magazine's* Most Influential People of 2018, *City Art's* 2017 Futures List, and served as Intiman Theatre's 2017 Co-Curator. She is a co-founder of *DeConstruct*, an online journal of intersectional performance critique. Her one woman musical *Dragon Lady* is the recipient of three 2018 Gregory Awards for Outstanding Sound/Music Design, Outstanding Actress in a Musical, and Outstanding Musical Production. In 2019, she will have her 5th Avenue

Theatre debut in *Rock of Ages*, American Repertory Theatre in Boston will produce *Dragon Lady* and *Dragon Mama*, the first two shows in her trilogy of autobiographical plays *The Dragon Cycle*, and Nordo's Culinarium will produce her new play, *4 5 7th and Jackson*, a historical fiction with music and immersive dining, inspired by Seattle's International District. She is also collaborating with the City of Seattle and their new Creative Strategies Initiative (CSI), a new City effort that uses arts-and-culture-based approaches to build racial equity in non-arts policy areas like the environment, housing, workforce and community development. Go to www.saraporkalob.com to learn more.



140 LBS: How Beauty Killed My Mother is presented with support from SIS Productions, a production company that strives to create, develop and produce quality works that involve Asian American women, their themes, and Asian American issues. Learn more at www.sis-productions.org



Jennifer Crooks (Assistant Director) is an artistic collaborator who has worked as an actor, deviser, director, dancer, choreographer, and teaching artist. Her directing work includes *Backyard Bard* with GreenStage, *From Kings to Controllers* at Ghost Light Theatricals, and directed for the Intiman Emerging Artist Program in 2017. She has created a number of original devised works: *Iconicity*, *Twisted*, *Flora/Dora*, and *The Juliet Project* (for which she received The ECC Centennial Cup award from the Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies in Antwerp, Belgium). She has also worked with ReAct Theatre, The Rogue Gallery, Play List Seattle and Akropolis Performance Lab.

Emily Leong (Lighting Designer) is excited to collaborate with this fierce group of women. She is a freelance lighting designer in the Seattle area whose previous work has been seen with Cafe Nordo, Pony World Theater, and ArtsWest. She is on staff at Theatre Off Jackson as the technical liaison and resident lighting designer. In 2015, Emily received The Gregory Awards: Melissa Hines Award for her work as a theatre Practitioner.

Erin Bednarz (Sound Designer) is an interdisciplinary artist currently based out of Seattle, WA. A working performer, producer, dramaturg, DJ, and designer of 8 years, her off-broadway, national and institutional work includes Rattlestick Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Red Bull Theater, Magic Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, On The Boards, and American Contemporary Theatre Seattle, among others. She has held sound design residencies at University of Washington, Seattle University and Cornish College of the Arts, and recently became the first female recipient of the Gregory Award in outstanding sound design. Erin has served on 14/48 Invitations, Seattle Fringe Festival and Gregory Award Nominator committees, and is co-founder of new play accelerator Umbrella Project. Her produced work has gained literary nods from HowlRound, CityArts, and Encore. Erin's late band Hearts Are Thugs was featured on television network The CW and earned her a 2015 RAW Artist Award. As a dramaturg, Erin is co-founder of new play accelerator Umbrella Project and co-creator of Cheat Day Collective, a 4Culture grant funded project. She is resident sound designer at Washington Ensemble Theatre and artist liaison with LiveGirls! Theatre.

Derek Edamura (Media Designer) is a Seattle-based filmmaker, a digital artist, resident teaching artist, and youth mentor. His mission is to marry his passion for things artistic with things philanthropic in ways that promote others to do the same.





ABOUT THEATER MU

As one of the largest Asian American theater companies in the nation, Theater Mu produces great performances born of arts, equity, and justice. Founded in 1992, Mu tells stories from the heart of the Asian American experience, presenting a fusion of traditional and contemporary artistic influences, which range from classics to up-and-coming voices in our community. Theater Mu's continuing goal to celebrate and empower the Asian American community through theater is achieved through mainstage productions, emerging artist support, and educational outreach programs.

Theater Mu is a member of the Consortium of Asian American Theaters & Artists as well as a member of the Twin Cities Theatres of Color Coalition, proudly standing alongside New Native Theatre, Pangea World Theater, Penumbra Theatre, and Teatro Del Pueblo.

THE MEANING OF MU

Mu (pronounced MOO) is the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character for the shaman/artist/warrior who connects the heavens and the earth through the tree of life.

SUPPORT MU

Artists are a vital part of our communities and many have been out of work since the beginning of the pandemic. That's why we are committed to employing as many artists as possible for our virtual events, educational programming, and corporate trainings. Donate today and join us in supporting artists during these challenging times. [THEATERMU.ORG/SUPPORT](https://theatermu.org/support)



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