TODAYIS

THEATER

MY BIRTHDAY

by **SUSAN SOON HE STANTON** directed by **LILY TUNG CRYSTAL**

Feb 6 – 21, 2021 | Broadcast Online

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I first discovered Susan Soon He Stanton's *Today Is My Birthday* last April in a Facebook post asking for recommendations for plays that could live in the virtual world. At the time, the idea of a play told through telephone, FaceTime, and radio understandably intrigued me. And we quickly programmed it for Mu Mondays, our weekly artist salon, where Asian American theater artists from around the country gather to read plays by Asian American writers.

As we, some 50, mostly Asian American, artists sat together in that virtual space, unable to touch and grieving the closure of theater, we connected, listened to, and supported each other. We witnessed Emily's journey of loss and discovery, quietly experienced her sense of separation, and shed tears as she and we questioned our new and unknown place in the world.

Stanton must have been prescient. *Today Is My Birthday* premiered in 2017, with characters who now in 2021 feel all-too-familiar. Never in space together, they desperately seek connection through their isolation.

Over this past year our global community at large and the arts community in particular have suffered unimaginable grief, separation, and loss. But here in this moment what *Today Is My Birthday* has given us is hope. It has allowed us to reach out across time and space to touch, imagine, and create and share art together.

My gratitude knows no bounds for the fearless, talented, inspiring, and superhuman company of this production. Thank you to all the artists and staff who agreed to jump off this cliff with me into the unknown. Like Emily, we stumbled our way through the dark in an effort to create something beautiful. And now we share that beauty with you.

Enjoy!

Lily Tung Crystal Artistic Director, Theater Mu

CAST

Katie Bradley*	EMILY
China Brickey*	HALIMA, DJ SOLANGE, and others
Emily Kuroda*	MOM, MRS. ASUNCION, and others
Eric Sharp*	KURT, RICHARD, SEBASTIAN, and others
Jomar Tagatac*	DJ LOKI, LANDON, and others
Greg Watanabe*	DAD, BILL TAPIA

PRODUCTION TEAM

Lily Tung Crystal	DIRECTOR
Rich Remedios	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
Lyndsey R. Harter*	STAGE MANAGER
Kyla Moloney	ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
Leanna Keyes	STREAMING PRODUCER/
	PRODUCTION MANAGER
Mina Kinukawa	SCENIC DESIGNER
Sara Ryung Clement	COSTUME DESIGNER
Wu Chen Khoo	LIGHTING DESIGNER
C Andrew Mayer	SOUND DESIGNER
Abbee Warmboe	PROPS DESIGNER
Annie Jin Wang	DRAMATURG
Joshua Dyrud	CAMERA & TECH CONSULTANT
Sasha Andreev	"EMILY" CAMERA OPERATOR/
	BACKSTAGE COORDINATOR
Leslie Vincent	UKULELE PLAYER
Jessica Yates	DIRECTING INTERN
Aidan Endo	DESIGN INTERNS
Sandy Zhao	

* Member of **ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION**, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States

SETTING Oʻahu, Hawaii. Fall 2019.

RUN TIME

Approximately 2 hours. No intermission. You can pause the show at any moment.



ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

she/her. Lily Tung Crystal is an actor, director, and Artistic Director of Theater Mu. After taking the helm of Theater Mu in 2019, Tung Crystal directed Jiehae Park's *peerless*. Soon after, she initiated the creation of virtual events throughout the pandemic shutdown, such as the TwentyPho Hour PlayFest, RE:Plays, and Mu-tini Hour. Outside of Theater Mu, Tung Crystal's directing work includes David Henry Hwang's *Chinglish* and his revival of *Flower Drum Song* at Palo Alto Players, and the San Francisco leg of the simultaneous world premiere of Leah Nanako Winkler's *Two Mile Hollow* at Ferocious Lotus.

For all three shows, she was named a Theatre Bay Area Award finalist for Outstanding Direction. She also directed the Bay Area premiere of the musical *Allegiance* at Contra Costa Civic Theatre. Tung Crystal is a 2016 YBCA 100 honoree, named by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts as a "creative pioneer making the provocations that will shape the future of culture." She dedicates this show to her mother, who has made her artistic life possible.



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

she/her. **Susan Soon He Stanton** is a playwright, screenwriter, and TV writer from Aiea, Hawai'i. Her plays include *we, the invisibles* (Actors Theatre of Louisville Humana Festival), *Today Is My Birthday* (Page 73), *Takarazuka*!!! (Clubbed Thumb and East West Players), *Solstice Party*! (Live Source), *Moana Jr.* (book for Disney Theatrical Group), and more. She is a Sundance Theater Lab Resident Playwright and was awarded Leah Ryan's FEWW and the Venturous

Playwrights Fellowship at the Lark. She is a member of New Dramatists. Commissions include Yale Repertory, American Conservatory Theater/Crowded Fire,

South Coast Repertory, and Ensemble Studio Theatre, among others. She has received a Feature Film Development Grant from the Sloan Foundation. Her film *Dress* won the audience award at the Hawaii International Film Festival. She is a writer and producer for HBO's *Succession*. BFA: NYU Tisch's Dramatic Writing, MFA from Yale School of Drama. susansoonhestanton.com



Today Is My Birthday was produced with support from our friends at East West Players, the nation's premier Asian American theater. Visit <u>www.eastwestplayers.org</u> to learn more about their virtual season.



KATIE BRADLEY (Emily)

she/her. Katie Bradley is an actor based in Minneapolis. Select theater credits include: Guthrie Theater (Guys and Dolls, A Christmas Carol - four seasons, South Pacific); Oregon Shakespeare Festival (The Cocoanuts, Into the Woods); Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Los Angeles (Into the Woods – OSF production); Indiana Repertory Theatre and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park (Murder on the Orient Express – co

production); Children's Theatre Company (Disney's Mulan Jr.); Theatre de la Jeune Lune (Antigone), Full Circle Theater, Ten Thousand Things, History Theatre, and several productions since 2006 with Theater Mu including The Korean Drama Addict's Guide to Losing Your Virginity, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Ching Chong Chinaman, and Flower Drum Song.

CHINA BRICKEY (Halima, DJ Solange, Goddess Sweet Leilani, Restaurant Hostess, Generic Female Voice)

she/her. China Brickey is so excited to return to theater with her Theater Mu debut! This summer she was named the City Pages' "Best Actor in the Twin Cities 2020!" Before the pandemic, she was to star in the Midwest Premier of Brittany K. Allen's *Redwood* at The Jungle Theater when the world shut down on the day before opening night. Selected pre-pandemic Twin Cities credits include Park Square Theatre (Lizzie in Kate Hamill's Pride

and

Prejudice, Juliet in Romeo & Juliet), Ordway Center for the Performing Arts (Smokey Joe's Café), and Children's Theater Company (Ms. Honey in Matilda the Musical). She feels so lucky to be able to tell this story in a way that is, not only safe for cast, crew, and audience, but is also brand new, forcing us all to learn new skills and innovate, and shares a BIPOC story nationally! ChinaBrickey.com

EMILY KURODA (Mom, Mrs. Kobayashi, Danielle, Joyce, Mrs. Asuncion)

she/her. Emily Kuroda worked at Theatreworks (Language Archives, Calligraphy), New York Theatre Workshop (Endlings), Pan Asian Repitory Theatre (*The Brothers Paranormal*), American Repertory Theater (Endlings), Page 73 (Today is My Birthday), Actors Theater of Louisville (we, the invisibles), Huntington Theater (Tiger Style, Woman Warrior), Artists at Play (Two Mile Hollow), South Coast Rep (Fast Company, Ballad of Yachiyo, Our Town), Alliance (Tiger Style), East West Players, Kirk Douglas, Mark

Taper Forum, Public Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Seattle Rep, Singapore Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, The Doolittle, LATC, Zephyr, LA Women's Shakespeare Company, and the Los Angeles Shakespeare Festival. Recent TV: All Rise, The Good Doctor, The Resident, Drop Dead Diva, Gilmore Girls. Recent Films: Take the 10, Party Boat, Red, Sensei. Dramalogue Award for Ikebana, The Maids, Minamata, The Golden Gate, Visitors from Nagasaki; LA Commendation for About Love; Garland Award for Straight As a Line. Entertainment Today Award for Winter People.



ERIC SHARP (Kurt, Richard, Sebastian, Franklin, Keoni, Jonathan)

he/him. Eric Sharp is happy to be working virtually with his family at Theater Mu. A multidisciplinary theater artist based in Minneapolis, he has appeared onstage nationally and internationally at the Guthrie Theater, Ten Thousand Things, The Jungle Theater, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Atlanta's Alliance Theatre, and the Toronto and Edinburgh Fringe Festivals. He played Mowgli in *The Jungle Book* at Children's Theatre

Company, and the young Dalai Lama on multiple tours of TigerLion Arts' *The Buddha Prince*. A member of the Artistic Advisory Committee at Theater Mu, Eric wrote and starred in the world premiere of *Middle Brother* and was seen in *Hot Asian Doctor Husband, Two Mile Hollow, Twelfth Night* and many more. <u>www.WorkSharp.org</u>

JOMAR TAGATAC (DJ Loki, Grandpa Z, Dr. Johannes Connection, Landon, Amazingpresence83, Harumi)

he/him. Jomar Tagatac most recently appeared at San Francisco Playhouse (Mark in Art, Writer #3 in Tiny Beautiful Things), American Conservatory Theatre (Mr. Botard in Rhinoceros, Bob Cratchit in A Christmas Carol) as well as Playwright and others in Vietgone, Fortinbras in Hamlet, and Fortunado/ Mata in Monstress. His recent Bay Area credits include Theatreworks (The

Language Archive), San Francisco Playhouse (King of the Yees, You Mean to Do Me Harm), Capital Stage Company (Vietgone), Crowded Fire Theater (You For Me For You), California Shakespeare Theater (The War of the Roses, Macbeth, Everybody, As You Like It, Life Is a Dream). Other credits include Ubuntu Theater Project (Rashomon), Shotgun Players (Caught), Magic Theatre (Jesus in India, Every Five Minutes, The Happy Ones, Dogeaters, New Conservatory Theatre Center (Rights of Passage). Jomar is a recipient of a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for Principle Actor in a Play, and TBA Award for Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role. He earned a BA in theater from San Diego State University and an MFA from A.C.T.

GREG WATANABE (Dad, Bill Tapia)

he/him. Greg made his Broadway debut in *Allegiance* and was recently seen in *Cambodian Rock Band* at Victory Gardens, The City Theatre Pittsburgh, Merrimack Repertory Theatre. Other appearances include world premiere productions of *The Ballad Of Yachiyo* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Public Theater-New York), *The Summer Moon* (A Contemporary Theater, South Coast Repertory Theatre), *The Happy*

Ones (South Coast Rep, L.A. Drama Critics Circle nomination for Best Featured Performance) and *Extraordinary Chambers* (The Geffen Playhouse, Ovation nomination for Best Featured Actor).



RICH REMEDIOS Associate Director

he/him. Rich Remedios is Minneapolis-based director, actor and teacher. Directing credits include *The Pillowman* (Theatre Coup d'Etat) and the world premier *Trust* (Woehrligig Productions). He also directed *O, the Caucasity of it All* for Theater Mu's TwentyPho Hour PlayFest this summer and served as Assistant Director for Mu's production of *Charles Frances Chan's Exotic Oriental Murder Mystery*. His acting credits include work on Broadway and regional theater (including originating the role of Orville Huang for

Theater Mu's production of *Purple Cloud*) as well as featured roles in the feature films *The Public Domain, To Say Goodbye,* Lifetime's hit show *Drop Dead Diva,* and recurring roles on the daytime dramas *All My Children, As the World Turns,* as well as numerous commercials, independent films, short films and industrial videos. He is a certified teacher of the Sandford Meisner and Michael Chekhov acting techniques and teaches acting in his studio, Twin Cities Actor Training and at Augsburg University.



LYNDSEY R. HARTER Stage Manager

she/her. Lyndsey R. Harter is returning for her fifth production with Theater Mu after stage managing *Charles Francis Chan Jr.'s Exotic Oriental Murder Mystery, The Korean Drama Addict's Guide to Losing Your Virginity,* and *peerless* and assistant stage managing *Flower Drum Song.* She is thrilled to be diving further into this new virtual platform after stage managing Mu's TwentyPho Hour PlayFest this fall. Lyndsey has also

collaborated with Minnesota Opera, Theater Latté Da, New Dawn Theatre, Playwrights' Center, History Theatre, Park Square Theatre, and Great River Shakespeare Festival. Her next endeavor will be with the Guthrie Theater, on Regina Marie Williams' project called *Dining* with the Ancestors. Lyndsey is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.



LEANNA KEYES Streaming Producer & Production Manager

she/her. Leanna Keyes of Transcend Streaming is a multi-hyphenate theater professional ecstatic to bring this groundbreaking digital production to life with Theater Mu. Her most well known digital productions are Downtown Crossing with Company One in Boston and the 2020 Bay Area Playwrights Festival with Playwrights Foundation in San Francisco. She specializes in shows that are fully live: the way we're meant to be. As a

playwright, you can find her play *Doctor Voynich and Her Children* in <u>The Methuen Drama Book</u> <u>of Trans Plays</u>, available for pre-order with Bloomsbury for a May 2021 release. Leanna coedited this first-of-its-kind anthology of trans plays by trans playwrights about trans characters.



MINA KINUKAWA Scenic Designer

she/her. Mina Kinukawa is a scenic designer who has been freelancing in Minnesota for the last decade. Born and raised in Tokyo, she studied interior architecture in Milan before receiving a B.F.A. in Theatre Design and Production from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and her M.F.A. in Scenic Design from the University of California, San Diego. After receiving her M.F.A., she worked in film & TV productions in Los Angeles, and designed

scenery for theatres such as East West Players, Echo Theatre Company, Lodestone Theatre Company, and Company of Angels. In Minnesota, she has worked with The Jungle Theater, Penumbra Theatre, Park Square Theatre, Theater Mu, Stages Theatre Company, Steppingstone Theatre, Pangea World Theater, and Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts.



SARA RYUNG CLEMENT Costume Designer

she/her. Off-Broadway credits include Second Stage Uptown (Somebody's Daughter), Ma-Yi Theatre (Fruiting Bodies). Regional credits include the Guthrie Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, Denver Center Theatre Company, Geffen Playhouse, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Folger Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse, Seattle Rep, Mixed Blood Theatre, TheatreWorks, Center Stage Baltimore,

Boston Court, Perseverance Theatre, East West Players, Cornerstone Theater Company, A Noise Within, Yale Repertory Theatre, and others. Set design faculty at UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television and is a recipient of the Donald and Zorca Oenslager Fellowship in Design. MFA, Yale School of Drama; AB Princeton University. <u>sararyungclement.com</u>



WU CHEN KHOO Lighting Designer

he/him. Wu Chen Khoo is a lighting designer, stagehand, production manager and labour organizer. He is based in Minneapolis and works internationally. He co-founded the education program Technical Tools of the Trade, which aimed to train, connect and support people through the skills of technical theatre. He is a founding member of the Class & the Arts collective and The Mothership, both groups of workers organizing to build Solidarity and hold space for

critical engagement with issues of social justice including through the arts & entertainment industry. He shares his life with his partner Kristin and children Teng Jin and Yi Lian.



C ANDREW MAYER Sound Designer

he/him. C Andrew Mayer is a Minneapolis-based designer. Previously for Theater Mu he designed *Happy Valley, Circle Around the Island, Asiamnesia*. He has worked with many fine theater companies in the Twin Cities, including Guthrie Theater, The Jungle Theater, Minnesota Opera, Mixed Blood Theatre, and Theater Latte Da, and elsewhere, including Everyman in Baltimore, ACT in San Francisco, Seaglass in Los Angeles,

Arkansas Rep in Little Rock, and New York City, where he won an Audelco Award for *Pure Confidence* at 59E59. He was a McKnight Theatre Artist Fellow, and in summer serves as Producing Director at the Acadia Repertory Theatre on Mount Desert Island in Maine.

AR B

ABBEE WARMBOE Properties Designer

she/her. Abbee Warmboe is a freelance props designer based in Minneapolis. Having grown up in Minnesota she is happy to have made a career for herself here, working on over 200 productions with 36 different companies over the last decade. Most recently her work could be seen at Theater Latte Da, Penumbra Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre, History Theatre, and The Ordway Center, among others. Recent

Theater Mu projects include Shine a Light, *Fast Company, Hot Asian Doctor Husband* and *The Brothers Paranormal*. Abbee is a 2020-2021 McKnight Theater Artist Fellow at the Playwrights' Center.

ANNIE JIN WANG Dramaturg

she/her. Annie Jin Wang is a first-generation Chinese American dramaturg, writer, and designer whose body of work investigates constructs of race, gender, and citizenship. She is humbled to return to Theater Mu, where she produced Mu Mondays and served as the production dramaturg on *peerless*. Other recent productions include Croatian National Theatre (*Carmen*), Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company (*Two Mile Hollow*), Columbia University (*In The Blood*). Annie is the

Communications & Marketing Manager at PlayCo and the Literary Manager at Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company; as a playwright, her work has been incubated with Fresh Ground Pepper. MFA: Columbia University, BA: Wellesley College. Gratitude to this company for their creativity and resilience! As always, for mom and dad. <u>wang-annie.com</u>

JOSHUA DYRUD Camera & Tech Consultant

he/him, A multidisciplinary technician and engineer, Joshua Dyrud builds on decades of work with live audio to naturally expand into lighting and video. Add in an enthusiasm for custom computers and technology and you get a mixture of experience and skills to suit any event or production studio. He has worked with many organizations including Intermedia Arts, The Loft, Release MN8, and now honored to be involved with a Theater Mu production! Thriving in productions while collaborating with musicians, youth organizations, filmmakers, and more. All of these experiences make him an expert in finding solutions for audio-visual hurdles on any budget level.

SA SA

SASHA ANDREEV "Emily" Camera Operator / Backstage Coordinator

he/him. Sasha Andreev is a Minneapolis-based artist who has performed on stages throughout the US. He was most recently seen in the PBS national broadcast of Theater Latté Da's Drama Desk winning production of *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914*. On screen, Sasha has appeared in numerous commercials, films, as a host on HGTV and A&E/FYI, and as a tech expert on ShopHQ. Behind the scenes, he has

contributed to films, brand campaigns and live events as a designer, producer and director. Sasha is proud to put his tech skills to use in his first collaboration with Theater Mu.

JESSICA YATES Directing Intern

she/her. Jessica Yates is a Theater Major with a Directing focus at Macalester College. She is thrilled to be working with Theater Mu and this production's company. Her collaboration experience includes directing and performing with the One-Minute Play Festival (#1MPF), 2020 Freestyle Collegiate Company, Macalester College Theater & Dance Department, Sod House Theater, and the Sheldon Theater in Red Wing, MN. Jessica's next project is stage managing the premiere of ecojustice musical *Como La Tierra (like the earth)* at Macalester College. Deep thanks to Lily & Rich for their mentorship, and to the company for their wonderful energy!



POKE SHOP & STREET FOOD

Special shoutout to our local restaurant partner for this production—The Cove in Minneapolis. We love sharing meals with our audiences because sometimes the most revolutionary act is asking someone "Have you eaten?" Thank you for your delicious food! <u>www.thecovempls.com</u>



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MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION





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AND TO OUR MU CHAMPION CIRCLE

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

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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**

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