



LINCOLN
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July 10–July 30

Festival 2006

PLAYBILL

LINCOLN CENTER
FESTIVAL 2006

TheatreWorks Singapore

July 27–30 NEW YORK PREMIERE
GERALD W. LYNCH
THEATER at
JOHN JAY COLLEGE

Geisha

Concept and Direction **Ong Keng Sen**
Text **Robin Loon**
Lighting Design **Scott Zielinski**
Costume Design **Mitsushi Yanaihara**

There will be no
intermission

Cast

Dreamweaver **Karen Kandel**
Geisha **Gojo Masanosuke**

Post-performance
SYMPOSIUM
July 28
Gerald W. Lynch
Theater

Shamisen **Kineya Katsumatsu**
Electronic Music **Toru Yamanaka**

Commissioned by the Singapore Arts Festival in association with Lincoln Center Festival and Spoleto Festival USA.

Sponsored by Mitsui & Co. (U.S.A.), Inc., Toyota, and Sumitomo Corporation of America Foundation.

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Notes on the Program

I first discovered geishas when I visited Japan in 1988. During the many visits that followed, I became particularly interested in their dance and music, which I researched in Kyoto in 1999. The geisha's world is very closed, very intricate, and much misunderstood because it is often equated with sex, rather than art. It has also become a "sunset industry," since contemporary women prefer to choose other careers and contemporary men prefer the karaoke bars instead of this highly codified "artificial" world. In this production, I have opted to present a vision of contemporary and traditional Japan, rather than a drama set in the past.

I have been intrigued by the dream world of illusion that geishas create in private with their clients. Geishas are said to be from the "water and willow world," and in this floating world of illusion, any desire, any fantasy of the self is possible. I am inspired by how this is parallel to the space of dreams and illusion that is created for an audience in the theater. In some ways, the artist and the geisha are both dreamweavers.

I am also interested in misunderstandings between cultures and in how different cultures contextualize each other. For *Geisha*, we consulted many source materials that are Japanese, not so much for authenticity but because I am interested in how different cultures perceive the same event, the same individual. I think misunderstandings are very potent sources of creating art.

Since 1988 I have constantly experimented with traditional and contemporary culture in my work, and this piece takes on an added dimension in that I've tried to integrate questions of gender and cultural identity. I believe that art can be separate from cultural identity. There is no authenticity in art in an ever-changing and evolving world: there can only be the presentation of diverse perspectives and a multiplicity of positions.

So I deliberately moved away from a Japanese or Asian actress to portray the geisha. Instead I chose a Japanese man, Gojo Masanosuke, to play a female role (a tradition in Kabuki dance and theater for 300 years) and an African American actress, Karen Kandel, to be our geisha for the evening. By transgressing expectations, we again open the discussion of what is cultural representation in art and consider the importance of hybridity as a way to explode easy categorizations that ultimately imprison cultural positions rather than liberate us from cultural hierarchies.

For me, the geisha is the projection of the ideal woman constructed by a man. Artifice plays a very important role in our social lives. We value "truth," but what about the artificial? By having a man play the geisha, perhaps our prejudices and expectations of gender relationships can be revealed. Bringing Karen Kandel onstage also questions our expectations of the word "geisha": what do we see when we say the word

Scenes

- Scene 1** The Dreamweaver in a dream: Lovers' suicide
- Scene 2** The Dreamweaver's Geishas
Maiko 1 (apprentice Geisha), the eager girl
The Geisha with the cigarette
The Geisha teacher
Maiko 2, the anxious girl
Teruha, the 90-year-old Geisha
Marianne, a former Geisha
Maiko 3, the resentful Geisha in training
Maiko 4, the girl with the itching hair
The Mama-san
- Scene 3** The Dreamweaver in a dream: Transformation
- Scene 4** The Geisha dresser
- Scene 5** Shamisen solo: "Sitting face to face"
- Scene 6** The game we all agree to play: the buying and selling of dreams
Yukiko, a homemaker
Geisha clients:
George Montgomery from Calgary, Alberta
Toru Kobayashi, salaryman
- Scene 7** Maniac Maiko (the Electric Geisha)—or, the Geisha who left
- Scene 8** The struggle between two Geishas
- Scene 9** Kyoto Geisha wigmaker, on wigs
- Scene 10** Sisters of the Gion: Two Geishas in dialogue
- Scene 11** Geisha at a banquet
- Scene 12** The Mama-san's daughter who became an actress

"geisha"? When we say the words "rap" and "hip-hop," do we instantly see black gangster violence? I would like to move away from these simple cultural essentialisms to explore a larger universal experience of self and other. Art should be a space of freedom to imagine the impossible. The suspension of disbelief allows us to radically break stereotypes, which have been unconsciously absorbed through socialization. In *Geisha*, this dialogue between two "others," rather than with an authentic geisha, will help shatter some of the cultural hegemonies that inhabit our perceptions of tradition, authenticity, and identity.

I have been particularly happy with how we have been able to generate such diverse material from interviews with individuals from the geisha community that were conducted in 2005 and from other source materials. What I have enjoyed in particular is giving fluidity to this diversity of voices, which also includes references to a 1936 film by Kenji Mizoguchi, *Sisters of the Gion*, and to *M. Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang. Finally, one of the great joys of live theater is that we can easily move between multiple styles, from kitsch to camp to a tongue-in-cheek moment to a fantastically aesthetic frame to a very emotional memory. I am taking full advantage of this theatricality in *Geisha*.

The geisha world is very close to my world as an artist. The theater and the *ozashiki* (geisha functions) both thrive on illusion. I am a little like a geisha in that I also spin a dream world for the audience. The geisha points to the need in all of us to dream. To dream is to live.

—Ong Keng Sen, Concept and Direction

Acting as hosts, and not as maids, geisha are called upon to exercise initiative, individuality, and ingenuity in dealing with customers. They should be able to draw out a shy guest, turn the conversation toward subjects they know their customers are interested in, and generally be sensitive to the mood of the gathering as it develops. No one could accomplish such goals by being servile. Geisha are remarkably self-possessed women, I have found; and this, among other characteristics, sets them apart from the common bar hostess, who is likely to be a cynical panderer to the worst excesses of the Japanese male ego. The interaction between guest and geisha depends on mutual respect, and it is much less one-sided than many male-female interactions in Japan. A geisha usually gives as good as she gets. The older ones, especially, will brook no nonsense from rude customers.

—Liza Dalby, from her book *Geisha* (1983)

Selected Songs

From the Edo era (17th to 19th centuries).

Lies and Truth

(Song of the love suicide)

Of lies and truth
Trying not to be deceived but yet deceived
After us the deluge
My feelings are because of you
Inside the boat on Mitsumata River,
Please understand my profound feelings

Sprinkling of the Garden

When I sprinkle the garden
Dewdrops sparkle on the grass
Burning with love
The pathetic crying of insects
The more I listen
The more wretched I feel
Who can be the cause of this loneliness?

Selected Songs (continued)

The Seasons

- Spring** Have the plum blossoms come out? How about the cherry blossoms?
A willow tree yielding to the wind
A Japanese rose flirting and showing off its color
Which shall I choose, blossoms of plum or cherry?
On the branch of a green pine tree
I want to make plum and cherry blossoms bloom
- Summer** Crossing a pier with a lantern
Walking with light steps
Flowing away from Ryogoku
Leaving for Ohkawa
Aboard a pleasure boat on the moon-lit Sumida River
Lowering the bamboo blind and whispering
Drunk and sitting face to face
"Boatman, we've got through."
"We have arrived at Komagata. Oops! We're going to collide!"
"When I hear the word Azuma, it reminds me of my wife."
- Autumn** Carrying a blade of silver pampas grass
Tipsy in a pumpkin garden
He's in a merry mood, having sake or dumplings
The water trench is filled with thick algae
Late into the night, enticing the rain
Music from a distant village is heard, under the moon
- Winter** Snow is falling heavily around us
The folding screen is the go-between of love
A triple-layered mattress with butterfly and plover patterns
A nesting bird returning to its home tree
It's still too early to leave
- The New Year** The new year—pines and bamboos on the gate
Lobsters
Sour oranges
Cedar leaves
Her serenading voice
The Lion Dance to drive away evil spirits
Children bouncing balls rhythmically
Playing battledore and shuttlecock
One, two, three, and four—wishing the world a good year
As always, a long strip of dried seaweed attached to gifts

About the Artists

Ong Keng Sen
Concept and
Direction

An interdisciplinary performance practitioner, curator, and researcher of artistic process, Ong Keng Sen has been artistic director of TheatreWorks Singapore since 1988. He is now artistic director of the newest creative space in Singapore, 72-13. Ong graduated in 1988 from the National University of Singapore with a degree in law. In 1992 he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for postgraduate studies in intercultural performance at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. For Lincoln Center Festival 2002, Ong directed *The Silver River*, an opera co-conceived by Ong, composer Bright Sheng, and librettist David Henry Hwang.

Ong's productions have toured cities in Asia, Australia, Europe, and the United States, and his initiatives reflect his interest in theater that is transcultural, interdisciplinary, and collaborative. In 1994 Ong founded the Flying Circus Project to bring together traditional and contemporary Asian artists from theater, music, dance, video, visual arts, documentary film, and ritual. In 1999 Ong started Arts Network Asia to enable young Asian artists to collaborate and research across borders in Asia. In 2002 he initiated the Continuum Asia Project, a Laos-based arts project that involved local youth, elder artists, and international Asian artists in the recovery of local *Ramayana* traditions and the documenting of local narratives. Ong's Asian Shakespeare Trilogy, *Lear* (1997), *Desdemona* (2000), and *Search: Hamlet* (2002), fused different theatrical traditions and toured internationally, after premiering in Tokyo, Adelaide (Australia), and Elsinore Castle, Denmark, respectively.

Recent collaborations include the docu-performance *The Continuum: Beyond the Killing Fields* (2001), created with four artists imprisoned in concentration camps in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime; *The Myths of Memory* (2003), which combined *The Killing Fields* with a new piece about genocide in the former Yugoslavia; and *Sandakan Threnody*, performed by artists from Australia, Japan, and Singapore at the Melbourne International Festival (2004). Ong also directed *The Global Soul: The Buddha Project* in Berlin (2003) and Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* at the Schauspielhaus, Vienna (2005). He recently created a new dance, *Like the Cat*, for Centre National de la Danse in Paris. Since becoming the curator and director of the In-transit Festival in Berlin (2001-03), he has begun curating interdisciplinary projects at The Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; *Politics of Fun*, an exhibition of Southeast Asian art at the House of World Cultures, Berlin; the Tanzquartier, Vienna; and The Göteborg Festival, Sweden. Ong is the first Singaporean artist to have received both the National Arts Council's Young Artist of the Year Award (1992) and the Cultural Medallion for Theatre (2003).

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THEATREWORKS
SINGAPORE

Robin Loon
Text

Robin Loon has worked closely with TheatreWorks Singapore since 1990. A member of the company's Writers' Laboratory since 1991, Loon's collaborations with TheatreWorks include *Us in Singapore* (1993), *Longling* (1994), *Broken Birds* (1995), the SPH Festival of New Writing (1996), *Destinies of Flowers in the Mirror* and *Workhorse Afloat* (1997), *The Global Soul* (2003), and *Shanty: Follow That Dream* (2004). Currently an assistant professor in the Theatre Studies Programme at the National University of Singapore, Loon hopes to encourage a new generation of adventurous and risk-taking writers for the Singapore stage.

Scott Zielinski
Lighting Design

Scott Zielinski has created lighting designs for theater, dance, and opera throughout the world. His work was seen previously at Lincoln Center Festival in *The Silver River* (2002), directed by Ong Keng Sen. Other designs in New York include *Topdog/Underdog* on Broadway, as well as productions at the Public Theater, Theater for a New Audience, Manhattan Theater Club, Playwrights Horizons, New York Theater Workshop, Signature Theatre Company, and Classic Stage Company, among others. He has also designed extensively for regional theaters throughout the United States, and he has worked on productions in London, Paris, Edinburgh, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Berlin, Zurich, Vienna, Stockholm, Oslo, Adelaide (Australia), Singapore, and Fukuoka (Japan). He has designed for dance performances at the Joyce Theater; the Kennedy Center; American Dance Festival; American Ballet Theatre; National Ballet of Canada; Centre National de la Danse in Paris; and the San Francisco, Boston, and Kansas City Ballets. His many opera credits include productions at New York City Opera, English National Opera, Berkshire Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, Spoleto USA, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Mitsushi Yanaihara
Costume Design

After graduating from Kuwasawa Design Institute in 1995, Mitsushi Yanaihara established his own clothing label, "un peu trop." In 2001 he established the brand "Nibroll about street" and has since launched a number of collections. Yanaihara's brand concept is to blur the line between daily life and less-ordinary situations. With "Nibroll about street," his intent is to erase the sense of distance between fashion and art. *Geisha* is Yanaihara's first collaboration with TheatreWorks Singapore and Ong Keng Sen.

Karen Kandel
Dreamweaver

Karen Kandel is a New York-based performer who thrives on intercultural artistic interaction. Although *Geisha* marks her third production with Ong Keng Sen, following *The Silver River* in Lincoln Center Festival 2000 and *The Global Soul* in 2003, this is their first collaboration on a project from inception. Kandel is the recipient of three OBIE Awards, as well as Drama League, Dramalogue, San Diego Critics, and Connecticut Critics Circle Awards. In March 2006 she received an Asian Cultural Council grant to conduct performance research in Japan. Kandel is an artistic associate with the avant-garde theater group Mabou Mines.

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- Gojo Masanosuke**
Geisha Gojo Masanosuke is a dancer and choreographer of the Gojo School of Japanese dance. Founded by Gojo Tamami, a popular female dancer who detached herself from the Hanayagi School in 1941, the Gojo School occupies a unique position in the world of Japanese dance through its foundation in the classical repertory and its creation of new works. A leading dancer of the school, Masanosuke has earned praise for his dramatic expressiveness in performing a wide range of both female and male classical roles. He has also created and performed new works, including *Nijinsky-sho (Nijinsky Encomium)* and *Yoma Densetsu (A Weird Legend)*. As a scholar of traditional music and dance at the Kunitachi College of Music and the Musashino Academia Musicae Graduate School in Tokyo, he has conducted workshops in many cities, including Paris, London, Dusseldorf, and Rome. Masanosuke is also a lecturer at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music.
- Kineya Katsumatsu**
Shamisen Born in Gunma Prefecture in 1962, Kineya Katsumatsu began learning the shamisen when he was eight years old, studying *minyo* (Japanese folk song) with Hidesuke Fujimoto and Hideo Fujimoto. At age 12, he began to learn *nagauta* (epic song) with Katsusyo Kineya and was given the name Ktatsushoya Kineya. After studying under both Katusaburo Kineya and Katukuni Kineya, he then studied *kouta* (ditty) under second headmaster Shigeko Koroku and was given the name Shigeya Koroku. He continued studying *kouta* under the headmaster of Chie Senshi and went on to learn *utazawa* (a popular type of Japanese ballad) under the 6th Shibakin Utazawa. He attained the name of fifth Katumatsu Kineya in 2005. Katsumatsu has performed widely in Europe and has collaborated on many productions in Japan.
- Toru Yamanaka**
Electronic Music Toru Yamanaka was born in Osaka, Japan. As a composer, music producer, and club DJ, Yamanaka collaborates with various artists from around the world. From 1984 to 2000, he worked with the renowned Japanese group Dumb Type as a composer and sound designer. He has produced many albums and continues to perform live worldwide, creating art with a strong connection to the ever-changing nature of society.
- TheatreWorks**
Singapore Established in 1985, TheatreWorks Singapore is an international performance company known for its reinvention of traditional performance through a juxtaposition of cultures. Its work reflects a concern with cultural negotiation and artistic exchanges between traditional and contemporary artists from different disciplines. In September 2005 TheatreWorks opened a new creative space, 72-13, for the purpose of encouraging collaboration among artists from around the world, as well as hybrid creative expressions from young Singaporeans. The company has also expanded to include the International Centre of Asian Arts (ICAA) and the Singapore Creative Arts Nucleus (SCAN). ICAA is a research and development center, a performance center, and a forum to explore Asia's creative expression and its relationship to the rest of the world, while SCAN is an incubator for emerging artists.

TheatreWorks continues to support and nurture Singapore arts through developmental programs such as the Writers' Lab, which produces and promotes Singapore writing, and education and outreach programs that work closely with schools and other institutions. To date, TheatreWorks has created and presented more than 165 productions. TheatreWorks also continues to develop productions and programs that gain international recognition. Homegrown research and development projects like *The Flying Circus* have become internationally known laboratory processes, and its progressive outlook results in works that have challenged accepted history through documentary performance. TheatreWorks continues to produce new works commissioned by international festivals and institutions and to initiate new programs internationally, such as the Continuum Asia Project in Laos, which helped revive the Laotian *Ramayana*, and the Arts Network Asia, a network of independent artists and arts activists promoting regional artistic collaborations and exchanges.

Geisha
Production Staff Producer **Tay Tong**
Technical Manager **Jim Larkin**
Stage Manager **Kathryn Hindley**
Translator **Sumida Michiyo**
Wig Designer for Karen Kandel **Tomoya Nakamura**
Kabuki Costume Consultant **Taiji Yashiro**
Wig Technician/Specialist **Yuji Hosono**
Dresser for Gojo Masanosuke **Teruo Miyazaki**
Assistants to Toru Yamanaka **Akira Ishihara, Rie Yamanaka**

TheatreWorks
Staff Artistic Director **Ong Keng Sen**
Managing Director **Tay Tong**
Associate Artistic Director for Education and Outreach **Jeffrey Tan**
Project Managers **Nora Lim, Mervyn Quek**
Education and Outreach Executive **Janice Seah**
Finance Executive **Christine Lai**
Administrative Executive **Ong Soo Mei**

TheatreWorks
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Assistant Technical Director **Jason Marsh**
House Electrician **Michael Whitton**
House Carpenter **John Daines**
House Audio Engineers **Shannon Slaton, Zachary Williamson**
House Wardrobe/Hair/Makeup **Joseph Bellissimo**
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**Lincoln Center
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Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. As a presenter of more than 400 events annually, LCPA's series include American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, and the Mostly Mozart Festival. The Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center* extends Lincoln Center's reach to millions of Americans nationwide. As a leader in arts and education and community relations, LCPA takes a wide range of activities beyond its halls through the Lincoln Center Institute, as well as offering arts-related symposia, family programming, and accessibility. And as manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and its 11 other resident organizations.

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