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by Velina Hasu Houston
directed by Peggy Shannon

A Contemporary Theatre



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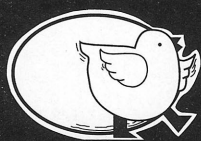
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- 4** Program Notes
- 6** Next at ACT
- 7** Title Page
- 10** The Actors
- 10** Directors and Production Staff

3 ACT Board & Staff

12 General Information & Acknowledgements

14 Donors

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Cover design by Gable Design Group. Illustration by Wilhelmina Palanca.

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87 Wall Street • Seattle, WA 98121

ENCORE is a regional publishing services company serving the performing arts and business community. For information regarding publishing services, contact Paul Heppner, Publisher.

For information about advertising in publications for:

A Contemporary Theatre; Bumbershoot; Broadway Center for the Performing Arts; KCTS/9; Pacific Northwest Ballet; Seattle Art Museum; Seattle Opera; Seattle Repertory Theatre; Seattle Symphony or Tacoma Actors Guild please call 206.443.0445 or fax 206.443.1246.

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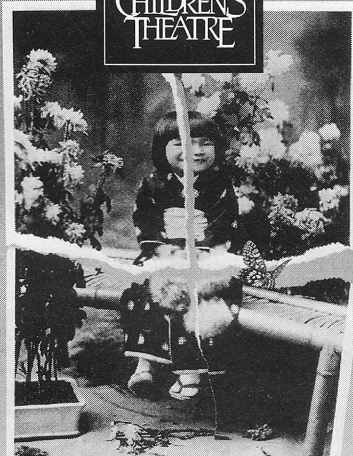


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Director's Notes

I first met Velina Hasu Houston almost eight years ago. We were both working in Los Angeles when I interviewed her to write a musical for the now defunct Los Angeles Theatre Center. We were neighbors but had never met before that day. When we finally sat down opposite each other, I was struck by her passion and commitment to theatre, her articulate and insightful comments about American racial and cultural issues, her success as a single parent, and her ability to live life to its fullest.

Houston's career as a playwright and screenwriter was flourishing. She was completing a screenplay based on Sawako Ariyoshi's novel, *Not Color*, which would be directed by Lee Grant. Set in the late '50s, the story dealt with a relationship between a Japanese woman and an African-American man. Shortly following our first meeting, she was commissioned by Sidney Poitier and Columbia Pictures to write the screenplay *Summer Knowledge*. Meant as a vehicle for Poitier, the script featured an African-American man in his 50s who goes back to his hometown in the South to put old ghosts to rest.

Houston's parents met and married during World War II. Her father was half African-American and half Native American, and her mother Japanese. The playwright was born in Japan and brought stateside at age two, growing up in a Kansas town near Fort Riley.

"When I was four," she told an interviewer, "I first asked my mother about race. I said, 'Why are you vanilla and my father chocolate?' My father went out and bought Neapolitan ice cream, and showed me the colors, and then he mixed all three together. And he said, 'Now, can you separate them back into what they were?'"

The location of *Tea* actually reflects the policy that the U.S. Army had for folks like Houston's parents. Over 100,000 Japanese women married American servicemen during the Occupation of Japan after World War II. Depending on the time of their return, GIs who came back to the States with "Oriental" wives were stationed in certain remote Midwestern and Southwestern locations, such as Fort Riley, Kansas, away from the centers of Japanese-

continued on page 6



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Director's Notes (continued)

American population on the West Coast.

Houston's memories of her childhood, along with the commitment to her Japanese heritage that both parents encouraged, provide the emotional landscape for her play *Tea*. The character Setsuko is based on the playwright's own mother. The other characters are portraits of other women Ms. Houston knew in Kansas — strangers in a strange land, war brides, stranded on the prairie with only young love for a lifeline.

When first reading *Tea*, what struck

me most about this community of women was that they shared the profound experience of being Japanese war brides isolated in Kansas. Yet in a desperate attempt to assimilate, they were estranged from each other. It took a tragedy to bring this community of women together to offer each other understanding and support. This sad fact demonstrates how difficult it is for any immigrant to become "American". What are the sacrifices to one's primary culture? In a beautiful and poignant way, Houston tackles these themes in *Tea*.

Peggy Shannon

Next at ACT

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by Velina Hasu Houston

Director	Peggy Shannon
Set/Lighting Designer	D Martyn Bookwalter
Costume Designer	Sarah Nash Gates
Sound Designer	David Pascal
Original Music	Ray Guarna
Assistant Director	Carl Flanigan
Stage Manager	Jeffrey K. Hanson

Cast

Himiko Hamilton	Marilyn Tokuda
Setsuko Banks	Sherryl Ray
Chizuye Juarez	Diana Tanaka
Teruko MacKenzie	Cynthia Gates Fujikawa
Atsuko Yamamoto	Ako

Time: 1968 and earlier
Place: The home of Himiko Hamilton
in Junction City, Kansas

Cultural Advisor: Naho Shioya

Tea is produced by special arrangement with the author and Bret Adams, Ltd., 448 West 44th St., New York, NY 10036.
It was originally produced by Manhattan Theatre Club on October 6, 1987.

This production is made possible in part by the generous support of Key Bank of Washington.



A Contemporary Theatre is a member of the League of Resident Theatres, the American Arts Alliance, the Washington State Arts Alliance, and is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group. This theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Directors and choreographers at ACT are members of the Society of Stage Directors, an independent national labor union.

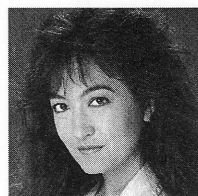
The Actors



Ako
Atsuko Yamamoto

Ako grew up in Tokyo and is a former member of the world-famous

Takarazuka Theatre Company, where she won the President Award, Best Singer Award and Best Student Award. Following a successful career in Japan, Ako moved to New York. This spring she played Yasako in *Kokoro* by Velina Hasu Houston in N.Y., and recently she played Yoshiko Nagase in the BBC film *Prisoner in Time* with John Hurt. Her roles have included Nurse Fumino in *A Class 'C' Trial in Yokohama* at ESIPA and Alley Theatre, Ogress in *Sleeping Beauty* at ESIPA and F.I.T., Namiji in the workshop *Sansho the Bailiff* at BAM directed by Andrzej Wajda, and she performed as the critically-acclaimed Katsumi in *Sayonara* throughout the U.S. including the 5th Avenue Theatre in 1993. Ako is also well known as a Kabuki choreographer and a Japanese authenticity advisor. She gives much thanks to her mentors Elain Aiken and Murasaki Fujima.



Cynthia Gates Fujikawa
Teruko MacKenzie

Cynthia has appeared with San Francisco's Encore Theatre

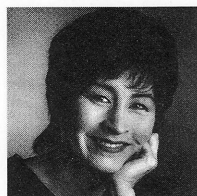
Company in the West Coast premiere of Arthur Kopit's *Road to Nirvana*, as well as *Boys' Life*, *Saved*, *La Ronde* and *Marry Me A Little*. She played in the latter at L.A.'s Coronet Theatre, and was seen with the East West Players in *Into the Woods*. Other credits include *Kokoro*, also by Velina Hasu Houston, *A Little Night Music* at Theatre West (L.A.) and *Godspell* at San Jose Repertory. Her one-person show, *Old Man River*, made its premiere this year in New York at Mabou Mines where Cynthia is a resident artist. She is a graduate of the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco.



Sherryl Ray
Setsuko Banks

Sherryl last appeared at ACT in *A Christmas Carol* in 1994. Her other Seattle credits include *Face to Face*, a Young ACT production; *And The Soul Shall Dance* at Northwest Asian American Theatre; and the Seattle Children's Theatre touring show, *The Secret of N Power*. She also works in association

with G.A.P. Theatre. Sherryl was a company member of Honolulu Theatre for Youth and has trained in and performed Kabuki, Noh, and Beijing opera. She held the title role in an opera which toured China in 1991. Her work as a director was seen in the recent Northwest Asian American Theatre production, *Age of Wonders*.



Diana Tanaka
Chizuye Juarez

Diana reprises the role of Chizuye from productions at The Old Globe, Syracuse

Stage, and The Odyssey, and she portrayed Himiko in TheatreWork's rendition of *Tea*. Recent stage appearances are *A Piece of My Heart* at Utah State University (guest artist) and *New Wives' Tales*, an ensemble created piece exploring female archetypes, at Los Angeles Children's Museum. She has worked at Berkeley Rep, Asian American Theater Company, South Coast Rep and Indiana Rep among others. TV credits include *Matlock*, *The Rockford Files: I Love LA* and *The Simpsons*. Diana is a member of We Tell Stories, a national touring company of multi-ethnic storytellers.



Marilyn Tokuda
Himiko Hamilton

A native Seattleite, this is Marilyn's second production of *Tea*; she was last seen

in the role of Chiz at the Whole Theatre in New Jersey. She has performed at other theatres such as Los Angeles Theatre Center, Mark Taper Forum, East/West Players and Burt Reynolds' Jupiter Theatre. Her TV credits include *Magnum P.I.*, *Tour of Duty*, *Columbo* and, most recently, *Friends*. Films include *Xanadu*, *All of Me*, and *Farewell to the King*, and she will be seen in Rea Tajiri's upcoming *Strawberry Fields*. She would like to dedicate this performance to her mother for giving her courage, to Mr. Nicholas for his never-ending belief in her, and to Velina, for giving the women of *Tea* a voice.

Tickets for *A Christmas Carol* go on sale September 15 to subscribers and groups of 20 or more. They go on sale to the public on October 10.

Directors and Production Staff

Peggy Shannon Artistic Director

arrived at ACT last fall from Los Angeles, where she was associate producing director of L.A. Theatre Works and the artistic director of the School of Theatre at the University of Southern California. Seattle audiences may remember her work at The Empty Space, The Group Theatre, Pioneer Square Theatre and Theatre Off-Jackson. She directed *Hunting Cockroaches* at the Seattle Rep in 1988 and earlier served as assistant director and dramaturg at ACT. Peggy's credits as a free-lance director include work at the Los Angeles Theatre Center, The Matrix Theatre, Portland Repertory, San Jose Rep, and most recently *You Can't Take It With You* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. She has also directed many plays for National Public Radio.

Susan Trapnell Moritz Managing Director

joined ACT in 1982 as Administrative Manager and became Managing Director in 1989. Susan holds a B.A. in French from the University of North Carolina and attended the University of Lyons in France. She also did graduate work in dance education at George Washington University. Prior to coming to ACT, Susan spent four years with Bill Evans Dance Company/Dance Theatre Seattle as Educational Director and then General Manager. She served as a UNESCO bilingual aide in Paris and held writing and editing positions in the Washington, D.C., area. Other experience includes work with the National Urban League and a teaching position in Algeria. She is a member and past president of the Washington State Arts Alliance, a member of the King County Arts Commission, and a member of the Leadership Tomorrow class of 1992. Susan is a native of Arlington, VA.

Phil Schermer Producing Director

has been working in professional theatre for over 25 years. He began his career at the Seattle Repertory Theatre as a painter and then scenic carpenter. He has also designed lighting for the Seattle Rep and its Second Stage, The Bathhouse Theatre, The Empty Space Theatre, The Seattle Group Theatre, Tacoma Actors Guild and Montana Repertory Theatre as well as numerous productions at ACT. He served as Technical Director and Production Manager at ACT before being named Producing Director in 1989. For the past five years, he has been actively involved in the design process for ACT's new facility. Phil received a B.A. in Literature/History from Reed College in Portland and an M.A. in Lighting Design/Technical Production from the University of Washington.

Velina Hasu Houston Playwright

is an award-winning author of plays, screenplays, poetry, essays and books. Her plays have been presented at the Old Globe Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, The Kennedy Center, New York's Lincoln Center and many other theatres nationally and internationally. She has written screenplays and teleplays for Columbia Pictures, Sidney Poitier's Verdon-Cedric Productions, American Film Institute, PBS and others. Among her many honors she has been awarded the inaugural Remy Martin New Vision Award from Sidney Poitier and the American Film Institute, has twice been awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship, and was named one of the top 100 Asian Americans of 1991 by *Transpacific* magazine. She currently heads the playwriting program at the University of Southern California.

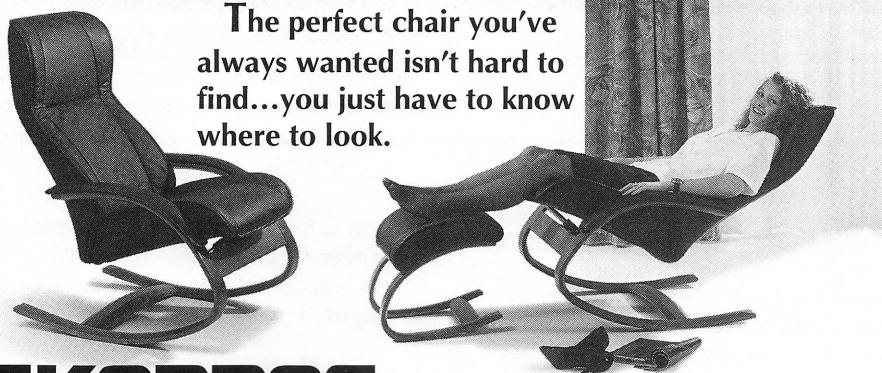
D Martyn Bookwalter Set & Lighting Designer

is glad to return to Seattle, where in 1980 he designed *Othello* and *The Cherry Orchard* for Intiman Theatre. He has designed over 300 theatre productions across the country. Most recently he designed the scenery for *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* for Colorado Shakespeare Festival, lighting for *Man of La Mancha* at Long Beach Civic Light Opera and *Sleuth*, directed by Peggy Shannon, for San Jose Rep. He has designed several shows for Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles, including *The Wood Demon*, *Frankie & Johnnie in the Claire de Lune*, *Hunting Cockroaches* and *Passion* for the Mark Taper Forum; *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* for the Ahmanson at the Doolittle and the re-dedication celebration for the new Ahmanson Theatre last December. Martyn was staff art director for the NBC network and now teaches design at California Institute of the Arts. He is married to Ann Wareham.

Sarah Nash Gates Costume Designer

Sarah's designs last appeared at ACT in *Amadeus* and *Communication Cord*. Her work has been seen at Seattle Opera, Seattle Children's Theatre, Intiman, and Alice B. In several seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival she designed *Tempest*, *King John* and *Member of the Wedding* among others. Sarah has also designed for the Denver Center Theatre Co. and Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus. She honed her administrative skills as president of the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology (1992-94) and now uses them as Executive Director of the U.W. School of Drama where she also teaches costume design.

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Jeffrey K. Hanson Stage Manager

Since 1990, Jeff has stage managed more than a dozen productions for ACT, among them *Later Life*, *The Gospel at Colonus*, *The Revengers' Comedies*, *Sunsets and Glories*, *Halcyon Days*, *The Illusion*, and *Lloyd's Prayer*. Jeff has also staged managed productions at Intiman Theatre Company and The Bathhouse Theatre. Regional credits include the Arizona Theatre Company and two seasons at New Mexico Repertory Theatre. While living in the Land of LA LA, Jeff staged managed a dance company, coordinating a research laboratory in the UCLA Department of Psychology, and earned a graduate degree in theater history. In addition, Jeff is a graduate of St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN.

David Pascal Sound Designer

has had his work as a composer, sound designer, synthesizer programmer and music director heard at ACT, Seattle Repertory, Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, The Empty Space, Pioneer Square Theatre, New City, The Seattle Group and Tacoma Actors Guild, as well as the Club at La MaMa E.T.C. in New York. He has produced music and sound effects for KOMO-TV and since 1975 has worked as a bassist in show and club bands, recording studios, theatre orchestras, and as backing for national acts. He holds a musical engineering degree from the University of Washington.

ACCESS

A Contemporary Theatre is pleased to offer these services. The building itself is accessible for the physically challenged.

We invite you to attend sign-interpreted performances for the following plays:

Tea, September 29
The Language of Flowers, November 3
A Christmas Carol, December 8

Audio-described performances are provided by AVIA (Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences), funded in part by the Seattle Arts Commission, the King County Arts Commission, the Washington State Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts. These are scheduled as follows:

Tea, October 1
The Language of Flowers, November 5
A Christmas Carol, December 9

Assistive listening devices are available at no charge for all performances (except those which are audio-described). They are provided by Ackerley Communications, Inc. Please see the House Manager for them.

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