



under the artistic direction of:  
PHILIP W. CHUNG  
CHIL KONG

## THE MIKADO PROJECT

Produced by Jai Lim

Phil Young

Juliet Wong

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Contact: Chil Kong

(818) 554-0977

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LODESTONE THEATRE ENSEMBLE PRESENTS THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

### *The Mikado Project*

Lodestone's First Musical Mainstage Production Takes a Fresh Look at a Theatre Classic

LOS ANGELES, CA –Following on the heels of its successful production of the comedy *Telemongol*, the award-winning theatre company continues its eighth season with an original play by Doris Baizley and Ken Narasaki. Directed by Lodestone's Co-Artistic Director Chil Kong, the show will run at the GTC Burbank (1111-B West Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91506), located inside George Izay Park. *The Mikado Project* runs six weeks, opening on Saturday, April 14 and closing on Sunday, May 20, 2007.

Lodestone's first musical production, *The Mikado Project* follows a struggling Asian American theater company as it tries to create its own deconstructed, politicized version of Gilbert and Sullivan's classic "Japanese" musical *The Mikado*, while dealing with grant deadlines, interpersonal problems, sexual/political issues and an ex-lead actor-turned-TV star-turned-has-been.

*The Mikado Project* stars Allen C. Liu - just off his recent National Tour and Broadway Revival of *Flower Drum Song* - as Lance, the Artistic Director of the Asian American theater company who is inspired to produce the first ever all Asian American production of *The Mikado*. Veteran actor Ronald M. Banks - who most recently received the 2006 Garland Awards Honorable Mention for his portrayal of Sweeney in East West Players' *Sweeney Todd* - joins the cast as Ben. Erin Quill also joins the "company" as Viola - fresh from the Original Broadway cast of *Avenue Q*. The rest of the cast include: Blythe Matsui as Cheryl, Kennedy Kabasares as Teddy, Julia Cho as Terry and Feodor Chin as Jace.

"When I get two strong and conflicting thoughts at the same time I usually suspect there's a play coming," explains co-writer Baizley. "That happened after I saw and loved *Topsy Turvy*, Mike Leigh's movie about the first production of *The Mikado*. I'd been working with many terrific Asian American actors and writers and I thought: How awful, I can't love *The Mikado* anymore. I started imagining a politically correct version I could write with someone who knows the Asian American theatre scene from the inside - and that's when Ken Narasaki walked right into my trap."

Narasaki didn't need much convincing to come on board as a collaborator. "I've always wanted to write some kind of valentine to our particular brand of theatre, because I think it takes a particular kind of person to fall in love with the idea and ideals of ethnic theatre," Narasaki says. "When Doris Baizley approached me with this idea - How could anyone do *The Mikado* in this day and age without being totally gross? - I realized that this was the perfect play on which to pin our valentine."

Doris Baizley is a playwright whose work includes the plays *Shiloh Rules*, *Mrs. California* and her adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. Her plays have premiered in regional theatres all across the country including the Mark Taper Forum, ACT Seattle and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Her new play *Sexting* opens at the Salt Lake Acting Company in February 2007.

Ken Narasaki started his career as an actor thirty years ago before moving into writing. As a writer, his first play *Ghosts and Baggage* was produced at Los Angeles Theatre Center, and his *Innocent When You Dream* has had staged readings at East West Players, Pan Asian Rep, Mu Performing Arts, San Diego Asian American Repertory and won the 2006 Kumu Kahua Pacific Rim Playwrights Award.

Performances for *The Mikado Project* are Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm, Sundays at 3 pm., April 14 - May 20, with special low-priced previews on April 12 and 13. Tickets are \$15 for general admission, \$13 for students and seniors. Group rates of \$11 each are available for reservations of ten or more. Tickets for the April 14th Opening Night Gala with a post-show reception are \$25. All Sunday matinees (except May 20) will be pay-what-you-can admission with a \$1 minimum.

For more information, call the Lodestone Theatre Ensemble hotline at (323) 993-7245 or visit [www.lodestonetheatre.org](http://www.lodestonetheatre.org) or [www.myspace.com/themikadoproject](http://www.myspace.com/themikadoproject)

Founded in 1999 by Philip W. Chung, Alexandra Chun, Chil Kong and Tim Lounibos, Lodestone is committed to providing a forum for Asian American artists in all aspects of the theatre arts. It seeks to challenge limited perceptions of Asian Americans through the creation of original theatrical productions as well as a fresh retelling of established works.

Lodestone Theatre Ensemble is a Company-in-Residence at GTC Burbank.

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HOWARD HSIEH  
TED KIM  
MICHELLE KO  
CHIL KONG  
TIM LOUNIBOS  
QUAN PHUNG  
JULIAN CHANG ZOLKIN  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

P.O. BOX 1072  
STUDIO CITY  
CALIFORNIA  
91614

TELEPHONE  
323/993.7245

FAX  
323/669.0983

E-MAIL  
SHPLodestone@aol.com

[www.lodestonetheatre.org](http://www.lodestonetheatre.org)

SOON-TEK OH  
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ALINA SZPAK  
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