

Young Vic



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Headlong

Press Release – Tuesday 9 May 2023

Images can be downloaded [here](#)

FULL CAST ANNOUNCED FOR WORLD PREMIERE OF *untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play*

Today the full cast for **Kimber Lee's** *untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play* directed by Royal Exchange Joint Artistic Director **Roy Alexander Weise** has been announced by **Royal Exchange Theatre, Factory International on behalf of Manchester International Festival, Young Vic Theatre and Headlong.**

Winner of the inaugural Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting 2019, International Award, this powerful production will receive its world premiere at the Royal Exchange Theatre as part of MIF23 (24 June - 22 July 2023), before transferring to the Young Vic Theatre in London (18 September - 4 November 2023). Tickets are on sale now.

Olivier Award nominee **Mei Mac** (*My Neighbour Totoro*) leads an ensemble cast as Kim, with **Lourdes Faberes** (*Boiling Point*) as Rosie / Cio-Cio, **Jennifer Kirby** (*Call the Midwife*) as Evelyn / Richards, **Tom Weston-Jones** (*Sanditon*) as Clark, **Rochelle Rose** (*Rockets and Blue Lights*) as the Narrator / Brenda and **Jeff D'Sangalang** (*The Ocean At The End Of The Lane*) as Afi/Goro.

'Very well. I will do what I must do, Mother.'

Kim (Mei Mac) is having one of those days. A terrible, very bad, no-good kind of day, and the worst part is...it all feels so familiar. Caught up in a never-ending cycle of events, she looks for the exit but the harder she tries, the worse it gets and she begins to wonder: who's writing this story? She makes a break for it, smashing through a hundred years of bloody narratives that all end the same way. Can she find a way out before it's too late?

With breathless hilarity *untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play* jumps through time – wriggling inside of and then exploding lifetimes of repeating Asian stereotypes, wrestling history for the right to control your own narrative in a world that thinks it can tell you who you are.

*untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play* is designed by **Khadija Raza** with costume design by **Loren Elstein**, lighting design by **Joshua Pharo**, composition by **Ruth Chan**, sound design by **Giles Thomas**, movement by **Shelley Maxwell**, fight and intimacy direction by **Haruka Kuroda**, Jerwood Assistant Director is **Caroline Yu** and casting by **Helena Palmer CDG**.

Mei Mac says: *"I'm thrilled to be bringing Kimber Lee's play to life. It's a bold and delicious opportunity to reclaim the narrative of East and South East Asian women in the diaspora, from years of dehumanisation and denied agency. It's empowering to explore the conversations I've had with my sisters and in my communities with a wider audience in such a fun, spicy, theatrical way. A genre, timeline defying way. Because that's what's so exciting about this play; its refusal to be reduced by the patriarchy and its determination to take full autonomy."*

Kimber Lee says: "I cannot wait to get in the rehearsal room with this wonderful cast! A play craves embodiment, and I'm looking forward to getting to know these incredibly gifted actors, and seeing how each person brings their humor, intelligence and passion to the process."

Roy Alexander Weise says: "When I first read Kimber's play it blew me away and I knew we had to programme it. We received it on the first day of our tenure so it's serendipitous that it's my last production as Artistic Director. It's the greatest privilege to be asked to direct this brilliantly funny, uniquely voiced and skilfully crafted masterpiece. We've pulled together an amazing team to shape the story ready for the stage. The cast are fantastic and I can't wait to get into a rehearsal room and to show the world how f*cking funny Kimber's play is. I can't wait!"

Olivier Award nominee **Mei Mac** is best known for playing Mei Kusakabe in the world premiere *My Neighbour Totoro* at the Barbican theatre. Other stage credits include: *Dear Elizabeth* (Gate Theatre), *Five Plays - Tongues* (Young Vic), *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (Bridge Theatre), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), *Under The Umbrella* (Belgrade/Tamasha/Yellow Earth Theatre), *The Hundred And One Dalmatians* (Birmingham Rep). Television credits include: *East Mode* (Comedy Central) and *Call The Midwife* (Neal Street Productions).

Actress and filmmaker **Lourdes Faberes** just wrapped filming a new series of Neil Gaiman's *Anansi Boys* for Amazon. Her film credits include: *Boiling Point* (Netflix), *Operation Fortune* (Miramax/STX Global), *No Time To Die* (Eon Productions), *Someone You Love* (Zentropa Productions Intl), *Room 204* (Alphaville Pictures), *Spread* (Katalyst Films), *State Of Play* (Universal Pictures). Television credits include: *The Power* (Amazon), *The Sandman* (Netflix), *Grenslanders: Floodland* (Eyework Netherlands/Belgium/C4), *Good Omens* (Amazon/BBC 2), *Holby City* (BBC). Her theatre credits include: *Rescuing One's Sister In The Wind and the Dust* (Almeida Theatre), *Richard II* (Shakespeare's Globe), *The Tide Whisperer* (National Theatre of Wales), *Tamburlaine* (Arcola Theatre), *Cruel and Tender* (Young Vic).

Stage and screen actress **Jennifer Kirby** is best known for her role as Valerie Dyer in *Call The Midwife* (Neal Street Productions). Other TV credits include *Endeavour* (Mammoth Screen), *Vampire Academy* (My So-Called Company) and *Holby City* (BBC). Her stage credits include: *Henry V* and *Henry IV* (RSC), *Teddy* (Snapdragon Productions), *The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary* (Jermyn Street Theatre) and *Pride and Prejudice* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre).

Tom Weston-Jones is due to appear in the third season of *Warrior* for HBO. Prior screen credits include: *Sanditon* (PBS/ITV), *Shadow and Bone* (Netflix), *The Terror* (AMC), *Troy* (BBC/Netflix), *Dickensian* (BBC), *Not Safe For Work* (Channel 4), *Copper* Season 1 and 2 (BBC America), *World Without End* (Channel 4). Theatre credits include: *Labyrinth and Enlightenment* (Hampstead Theatre), and *The Merchant of Venice* (Almeida Theatre).

Rochelle Rose's stage credits include: *Rockets and Blue Lights* (National Theatre / Royal Exchange Theatre), *salt. (Royal Court)*, *The Ridiculous Darkness* (Gate Theatre), *The Mountaintop* (UK Tour), *Cinderella and Aladdin* (Oxford Playhouse), *The Winter's Tale* (Orange Tree Theatre) and *One Monkey Don't Stop No Show* (Kiln Theatre / Eclipse Theatre). Her screen credits include: *Boxing Day (Film 4)*, *Ear for Eye* (BBC Films), *Death in Paradise* and *Lawful Killing* (BBC One).

Jeff D'Sangalang's stage credits include: *The Ocean At The End Of The Lane* (West End / National Theatre), *That Pesky Rat* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *Shut Up I'm Dreaming* (National Theatre UK tour/ The Pappyshow), *Boys* (The Pappy Show), *To Kill A Mockingbird* (National Youth Theatre).

Kimber Lee's plays include *the water palace* (2021 Susan Smith Blackburn Special Commendation), *to the yellow house* (La Jolla Playhouse), *untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play* (2019 Bruntwood Prize International Award), *saturday* (2022 Colorado New Play Summit), *antarctica* (Radio Play for Two River Theatre), *tokyo fish story* (South Coast Rep, TheatreWorks/SV, Old Globe), *brownsville song (b-side for tray)* (Humana Festival, LCT3, Long Wharf Theatre, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Seattle Rep, Moxie Theatre, Shotgun Players), and *different words for the same thing* directed by Neel Keller (Center Theatre Group). She has also developed work with Lark Play Development Center, Ground Floor/Berkeley Rep, Page 73, CTG, Denver

Center, O'Neill NPC, Hedgebrook, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Seven Devils, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Great Plains Theatre Conference, ACT Theatre/Seattle, Premiere Stages, and Magic Theatre. Lark Playwrights Workshop Fellow, Dramatists Guild Fellow, member of Ma-Yi Writers Lab, and recipient of the Ruby Prize, PoNY Fellowship, Hartford Stage New Voices Fellowship, 2020-2021 Hodder Fellowship, 2020 Helen Merrill Award, 2020 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Finalist, 2021 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation, inaugural winner Bruntwood Prize International Award 2019, 2021 Edgerton New Play Award, 2023 Hermitage Artist Retreat Fellow, and 2021 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts. MFA: UT Austin.

Roy Alexander Weise is Joint Artistic Director of the Royal Exchange Theatre. He was the 19th annual winner of the James Menzies-Kitchin Award and directed his critically acclaimed, sell-out production of *The Mountaintop* by Katori Hall at the Young Vic. Roy was nominated at the 2018 Evening Standard Awards for the 'Emerging Talent' Award for his production of *Nine Night* at the National Theatre and in the West End. As Joint Artistic Director at the Exchange he has directed, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and on stage and as a digital reading *The Mountaintop* and developed projects such as *All I Want For Christmas* and *Oh Woman* for the theatre. Recent productions include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*(Royal Exchange), *Much A Do About Nothing* (RSC), *Master Harold And The Boys* (National Theatre), *The Trick* (Bush Theatre and UK Tour), *Nine Night* (National Theatre & West End), *Dead Don't Floss* (National Theatre), *The Dark* (Fuel Theatre & UK Tour), *Br'er Cotton* (Theatre 503), *The Ugly One* (Park Theatre), *Primetime* (Royal Court) and *Stone Face* (Finborough Theatre).

ENDS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Su-Ann Chow-Seegoolam - Young Vic Theatre
su-annchow-seegoolam@youngvic.org | 07577 636 465

Karl-Lydie Jean-Baptiste - Young Vic Theatre
karllydie@youngvic.org

Kate Hassell - MIF 23 and Headlong
kate@breadandbutterpr.uk | 07921 264 564

Paula Rabbit - Royal Exchange Theatre
Paula.rabbitt@royalexchange.co.uk | 07948 380 362

Download images: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/532xixn4bbyrntI/AADUjB6IJ6xGcR4iVKrylHzpa?dl=0>

Listings

untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play

By Kimber Lee

Directed by Roy Alexander Weise

Royal Exchange Theatre as part of MIF23

24 June – 22 July, 7.30pm Tues - Sat, in addition Wed and Sat, 2.30pm and Sun, 2pm

Press performance: 30 June, 7.30pm

Young Vic Theatre

18 September - 4 November, 7.30pm Mon - Sat, in addition Wed and Sat, 2.30pm

Press performance: 22 September, 7pm

A Royal Exchange Theatre, Factory International for Manchester International Festival, Young Vic Theatre and Headlong co-production.

Cast

Kim: **Mei Mac**

Rosie / Cio-Cio: **Lourdes Faberes**

Evelyn / Richards: **Jennifer Kirby**

Clark: **Tom Weston-Jones**

Alfi / Goro: **Jeff D'Sangalang**

Narrator / Brenda: **Rochelle Rose**

Creative Team

Set Design: **Khadija Raza**

Costume Design: **Loren Elstein**

Lighting Design: **Josh Pharo**

Composition: **Ruth Chan**

Sound design: **Giles Thomas**

Movement: **Shelley Maxwell**

Fight Director / Intimacy Director: **Haruka Kuroda**

Jerwood Assistant Director: **Caroline Yu**

Casting: **Helena Palmer CDG.**

About Royal Exchange Theatre

Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre Company transforms the way people see theatre, each other and the world around them. Our historic building was taken over by artists in 1976. Today it is an award-winning cultural charity that produces new theatre in-the-round, in communities, on the road and online.

Exchange remains at the heart of everything we make and do. Now our currency is brand new drama and reinvigorated classics, the boldest artists and a company of highly skilled makers - all brought together in a shared imaginative endeavour to trade ideas and experiences with the people of Greater Manchester (and beyond).

The Exchange's unique auditorium is powerfully democratic, a space where audiences and performers meet as equals, entering and exiting through the same doors. It is the inspiration for all we do; inviting everyone to understand the past, engage in today's big questions, collectively imagine a better future and lose themselves in the moment of a great night out.

About Manchester International Festival & Factory International

Factory International is the organisation behind both Manchester International Festival (MIF), and the landmark new space which will open in 2023, creating a global destination for arts, music and culture in the heart of Manchester. Factory International will commission and present a year-round programme of original creative work, music and special events at its new venue, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It will also stage the city-wide Manchester International Festival (MIF) every other year at its new home and in spaces and venues across Greater Manchester.

Factory International builds on the legacy of Manchester International Festival, one of the world's leading arts festivals, and the only one entirely focused on the commissioning and producing of ambitious new work. Staged every two years in Manchester since 2007, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Tracey Emin, Akram Khan, David Lynch, Ibrahim Mahama, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Marta Minujín, Cillian Murphy, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, Christine Sun Kim, The xx, and Robert Wilson.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture, staged across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. Working closely with cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects

possible, much of the work made at MIF also goes on to travel the world, reaching an audience of 1.6 million people in more than 30 countries to date.

The design of Factory International's landmark new cultural space is led by Ellen van Loon of the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). Built with flexibility in mind, the building is based around large, open, adaptable spaces that can be constantly reconfigured, enabling artists to develop and create large-scale work of invention and ambition, of a kind not seen anywhere else in the world. Driven by the same interests and ambitions that defines MIF, artists will be encouraged to create work in new ways, to collaborate across disciplines and blur the boundaries between art and popular culture. Audiences will be able to enjoy the broadest range of art forms from major exhibitions and concerts to intimate performances and immersive experiences, while the venue's outside areas will come alive with pop-up performances, events and markets, creating a thriving new riverside destination for all.

Manchester residents play a key role in Factory International, participating in flagship commissions, co-designing programmes of activity, and shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums. Skills, training and development opportunities for local people are provided through the Factory Academy, helping to build the technicians, producers and other talent that will bring the future alive, and providing opportunities for careers in Manchester's ever-growing Creative Industries.

Factory International will strengthen the city's status as a national and international centre for culture, creativity and innovation, as well as a major visitor destination. The economic impact of Factory International will be considerable, creating or supporting up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs and adding £1.1 billion to the city's economy over a decade.

The venue's development is led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and Arts Council England.

Factoryinternational.org

About Young Vic Theatre

Founded in 1970 as a space for world-premiere productions as well as innovative and unexpected takes on classic plays, boldly conceived, that speak urgently to our present, the Young Vic Theatre has been one of London's leading theatres for more than fifty years. We foster future artists and collaborate with some of the world's finest directors, performers and creatives; creating award-winning productions which engage with the world we live in.

Built upon the principles of access, innovation, and community, the Young Vic stands out for balancing commercial success, drive and artistic flair with genuine grassroots social impact change in our neighbourhood.

Recent productions in the West End and on Broadway include: *Best of Enemies* at the Noël Coward Theatre and Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* at Wyndham's Theatre; and on Broadway, *Death of a Salesman* at the Hudson Theatre and *The Collaboration* at Manhattan Theatre Club's Samuel J. Friedman Theatre. Bringing together artists and audiences on a global scale and using the power of stories to change our world, the Young Vic extends well beyond the boundaries of its walls.

Artistic Director: Kwame Kwei-Armah

Executive Director: Lucy Davies

youngvic.org

About Headlong

We're Headlong.

We make theatre with the power to move.

Big, exhilarating productions that use the unexpected to connect everyone we reach, right across the nation.

Whether a work is old or new, there are always different questions we can ask.

So our productions are an invitation: to come and see something in a new way. Join us.

Previous Headlong productions include *Henry V*, *Jitney*, *Corrina, Corrina*, *Best of Enemies*, *People, Places & Things*, *The Nether*, *1984* and *Enron*, and major digital theatre innovations *Signal Fires* and *Unprecedented*.

Artistic Director - Holly Race Roughan

Executive Director - Lisa Maguire