

history theatre



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RELEASE**

HISTORY THEATRE & THEATER MU COMMISSION & PRODUCE *BLENDED 和 (HARMONY): THE KIM LOO SISTERS THIS MAY*

See the true story of how four Chinese Polish sisters from Minnesota rise to stardom in the 1930s swing era.

(Minneapolis/Saint Paul) – From May 4–26, 2024, History Theatre and Theater Mu’s world premiere *Blended 和 (Harmony): The Kim Loo Sisters* will shine the spotlight on the real story of the Kim Loo Sisters, four Chinese–Polish American sisters who made their way from Minneapolis to Broadway and Hollywood during the 1930s Swing Era. The two theaters co-commissioned Jessica Huang (book and lyrics) back in 2017, and Jacinth Greywoode joined her in 2020 to write the score. The pair has been working closely with Leslie Li, author of *Just Us Girls* and creator of *The Kim Loo Sisters* documentary; Li is also the daughter of Genevieve “Jenée” Li, the second youngest Kim Loo Sister.

Huang says, “After the bulk of the research was done, I asked myself, ‘What story do I want to tell?’ And one of the things I want to explore is why more people don’t know about these women. What a gift it would have been for me, being a young person of mixed Chinese Ukrainian descent, to have these women as role models.”

Greywoode adds, “What a great opportunity to dive into the world and sounds of the Swing Era, and with a story that brings attention to voices that often get ignored in the history of American music and entertainment. Particularly as the theater community works to expand the voices and stories that get heard and told, working on this show is an exciting privilege in integrating worlds and genres.”

During the Kim Loo Sisters’ career, Alice (named Sophie in the play), Margaret (“Maggie”), Jenée, and Patricia (“Bubbles”) rose to prominence with George White’s Scandals on Broadway and became known as the “Chinese Andrews Sisters.” However, racism, xenophobia, and stereotypes hindered their journey to true fame. They weren’t the only performers facing this societal pressure, as the musical chronicles through its inclusion of superstar Ann Miller, who was Cherokee.

Mu artistic director Lily Tung Crystal—who is also directing the co-production—says, “*Blended 和 (Harmony)* is unique in that it not only tells the narrative of the mixed-race diaspora of the Asian American community, but it tackles the question of Asian American representation in entertainment.” She continues, “While the show tells a story that’s nearly 100 years old, it remains remarkably relevant today. That’s both sad and exciting—it’s unfortunate we haven’t made more progress towards equity in the last century, and it’s inspiring to be able to direct and produce a musical that addresses these issues with such heart and artistry, and with such incredibly talented Asian American theater makers.”

“This heartwarming story of a family of fabulous entertainers who impacted music, and also movies and stage. Their story is one of triumphs in the face of adversity in a multicultural America,” says

History Theatre artistic director Richard D. Thompson. "It's wonderful to partner with Theater Mu to present yet another interesting part of Minnesota History."

Actors Kelsey Angel Baehrens, Suzie Juul (History Theatre credits include *The Defeat of Jesse James, Glensheen*; Mu credits include *Man of God, A Little Night Music*), Morgan Kempton, and Audrey Mojica will portray the sisters. The rest of the cast includes Ann Michels (Mama, History credits include *Sweet Land*), Ariel Estrada (Papa/General Li, Mu credits include New Eyes Festival 2023), Ethan Yaheen-May Chan (Youlin), and Audrey Parker (Ann Miller, History credits include Raw Stages 2023).

All Sunday matinees will be followed by Afterthoughts talkbacks with community partners or actors, but to celebrate Opening Weekend, May 5's Afterthoughts will feature Leslie Li, Huang, Greywoode, and Tung Crystal. History and Mu are also pleased to offer performances that are captioned (May 25 matinee & May 26), and ASL-interpreted and audio-described (May 19).

Please contact Lianna McLernon (lianna@theatermu.org) with any media requests such as press tickets, interviews, and photo/video assets. Press night is Saturday, May 24.

For a full list of the company; selected headshots; and selected bios for the playwright, composer, director, and cast; see the [press kit](#).

TICKET INFORMATION: Tiers 1-4: \$43-\$74. Tier 5: \$30. History Theatre and Theater Mu strive to make the performing arts accessible. Anyone can use the code MU23-24 for a discount of up to 50% in honor of Mu's Pay As You Are ticketing for all performances. Other discounts (not valid with the MU23-24 code) are available for seniors, students, and patrons under 30 years old (must call to purchase, ID required at pick up), as well as for groups of 10 or more. Preview performances: Pre-reserve for \$20 or purchase at the door at a Pay What You Can rate on May 2 & 3 at 7:30 pm. For tickets, call (651) 292-4323 or visit historytheatre.com.

HISTORY THEATRE entertains, educates, and engages through creating, developing, and producing new and existing works that explore Minnesota's past and the diverse American experience. Its work provides a unique lens which links our past to the present, explores our common heritage, and illuminates our understanding of what it means to be American. | historytheatre.com

THEATER MU (pronounced MOO) is one of the largest Asian American theater companies in the nation and the largest in the Midwest. 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 main-stage 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. | theatermu.org

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