



hereandnow theatre company

biography

hereandnow is a compelling theatre company that tours across the nation performing a variety of theatrical vignettes which present the unique Asian American perspectives of its cast.

hereandnow theatre company was founded in 1989 by John Miyasaki, with a group of young Asian Americans frustrated by the lack of non-stereotypical roles in plays, musicals, television, and film. From its humble beginnings at Occidental College in Los Angeles, hereandnow has had over two hundred cast members over the years. While being Artists-in-Residence at East Los Angeles College (ELAC) from 1998 – 2001, hereandnow theatre company had taken on the role of producer, having had put up three successful runs of “Romeo & Juliet: Pinoy/Pinay Style,” with sell-out crowds and wonderful reviews from the Rafu Shimpo and L.A. Weekly, as well as a run of the world-premier play “Fentor,” written by former cast member Jason Fong. hereandnow is currently partnered with the Armory Center of the Arts, a passionate organization dedicated to promoting cultural arts in the community of Pasadena, CA.

Traditionally, hereandnow brings their stories to college venues, conferences, and festivals, but are expanding to perform forty-five minute high school presentations in the Southern California area and the response has been overwhelming from students and educators. hereandnow is also currently developing a children’s theatre show.

Along with its touring shows and productions, hereandnow has also been commissioned by various organizations to promote causes and awareness about social issues from the community. Such commissions include the “Day of Remembrance” by the National Coalition for Redress and Reparation, and most recently, “World Aids Day” by the Pasadena Health Department.

Sample comments about hereandnow

... the best I've ever seen! It really hit home!

Kumi Michelle Kato, Seattle, WA

It was so inspirational... incredible stories that really stir the heart and stimulate the mind.

Cammi Pham, Charlottesville, VA

... the funniest and most educational show I have ever seen.

Huai-Jen Yang, Boston, MA

I saw your performance at the University of Houston several years ago and I still remember how touching your performance was. I still believe that the experiences you portray are not simply Asian-American experiences, they are human experiences. I am not Asian and yet every skit you performed touched me and related to something that happened or was happening in my life.

Scott M. Stolz, Houston, TX

... It is unlike anything I had ever seen. I was quite impressed. Keep up the good work, and I can't wait to see the show again next year.

Kristi Petet, Seattle, WA

... It was wonderful and moving. I first saw hereandnow as a freshman during welcome week. Now, in my last quarter at UCSD, you have provided me with a sense of closure for my Asian-American experience here. Thank you.

Manfred Lee, La Jolla, CA

Your performance demonstrates a special love and understanding that should be shared with the masses... Your format and message would translate through the airwaves the way they penetrated our hearts.

Bruce Cox, Indianola, IA

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming here and doing what you do. I walked away looking at things a little more open-mindedly and with more enthusiasm.... You put on a wonderful show!!!!!!!!!!

Tim Halferty, Chariton, IA

I went to the show at UIC and was very much moved. Thank you very much. Keep up what you're doing-- it's a great help to everyone involved.

Yvonne, Chicago, IL

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Marlboro High School
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APSU Conference
ECASU Conference
Lambda Phi Epsilon Con.
APAHE Conference
MAASU Conference
APEX Conference
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El Pueblo de Los Angeles
CASFAA/EDC Conf.
Japanese Youth Conference
KALC Conference
NACAC Conference
NACAC Nat'l Conference
USDA Forestry Service
Chinese Historical Society
SNAPY Conference
Chiapas Benefit
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Union Center Café
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JANM
Lotus Festival
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Kansas Asian Youth Conf.

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August 16, 1996

We Tell Stories, Inc.
Here and Now
2100 Panamint Drive
Los Angeles, California 90065

Dear Susan,

On behalf of NACAC and the participants of the Counselors of Color Workshop, I would like to extend our thanks to John and the performers of Here and Now.

The presentation was nothing short of phenomenal. Throughout the performance, it was evident how deeply each audience member had been touched. As I was moved to tears, I glanced around at my colleagues and realized how very powerful this program was. Upon its conclusion, many of the workshop participants approached John regarding booking future engagements. I certainly hope this program was as beneficial to Here and Now as it was for NACAC.

I'm certain I will be in touch within the coming months to discuss the possibility of Here and Now joining NACAC at our 53rd National Conference in San Francisco September 27-30, 1997.

Sincerely,



Donna Raczynski
Coordinator of Professional Development

Enclosure

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

December 7, 1999

Hereandnow
C/O John Miyasaki
2043 Stratford Av.
So. Pasadena, CA 91030

Dear John,

Thank you for the time and effort Hereandnow took to come to Michigan State University and the Asian Pacific American Student Organization annual conference. Our theme of PRIDE was well served by the performance and work shop facilitated by your members. Our students were particularly moved by the performance, and emotions elicited by the performers will be remembered for many years.

We would be happy to serve as a reference for your efforts, so please feel free to refer potential patrons as you feel necessary. In addition to myself, our students would be happy to communicate with anyone who has any questions regarding Hereandnow. I'm happy to know that there are Asian Americans working to reflect the current community as well as the history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Performing arts are one of the most influential media for perpetuating cultural knowledge and history, so we are enthusiastic supporters of Hereandnow. Along with our thanks is a commendation to you and the members of Hereandnow for your vision and tenacity in continuing to teach as well as to learn.



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Thomas M. Nishi, Coordinator
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February, 2001, Backstage West



Boba Stories: Tales from the hereandnow Kitchen

At the Edison Performing Arts Center

By Angela Phipps Towle

A collection of original stories--some personal, some fantasy, and some silly half-remembrances--the hereandnow Theatre Company's newest production is a many-layered look at Asian American experiences in Los Angeles. One of the early pieces is a well-composed ensemble narrative of five actors chronicling their individual families' migration to Los Angeles. I like the way the stories are told in rotation, and I love the way it shows, in such a simple way, the variety and range that is the experience of immigrants and those who straddle more than one culture. There are several moments in *Boba Stories* that are personal and touching, and several that made me laugh out loud. Other segments I enjoyed included a spoken word piece on hate crimes in memory of slain postal worker Joseph Iletto, a monologue about living in L.A., and the story of a son learning to make one of his mother's recipes.

This paper will self-destruct ...
OK, not really. But if you read Monday's issue, you can see Ving Rhames and John Wood's thoughts on what went into the making of "M-2."

4/19, 2000

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Now & again



dney Benedetto Ferrao performs in "Erasmus Tour," in honor of an Pacific Heritage Month.

With warmth and heart, Hereandnow evokes both laughter and tears in its portrayal of the life experiences of Asian Americans

By **Amie Howell**
Daily Bruin Contributor

Everyone has a story to tell, and the cast members of the Asian American theater company Hereandnow are no different.

This young group of non-profit performers played at UCLA's Northwest Campus Auditorium May 10, presented by CAPSA (Concerned Asian Pacific Islander students for action), Sangam, the Office of Residential Life and Hedrick Hall Six North.

Varifying between comical satire, touching sincerity and social commentary, provided audience members with a wide array of emotions in order to confront topics pertaining to Asian American life.

One example of Hereandnow's unique blend of humor and commentary was the "Sushi" vignette. Absurd humor laced with subtle social com-



Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month



Photo by Robin Lipschultz

Traci Akemi Kato-Iriyama and Armando Candido Gutierrez embrace during a Hereandnow performance about growing up as an Asian American in America.

as a stepping stone for television or film. It's not a job ... it's more of a family," Suda said.

Rather than work together for a short runtime, like many theater casts, some members of Hereandnow have been part of the performance group for seven years.

This view of the Theatre Company is shared by cast member Rima Anosa, a UC Berkeley graduate. "Hereandnow is kind of a second family for some," Anosa said. "I'm learning a lot."

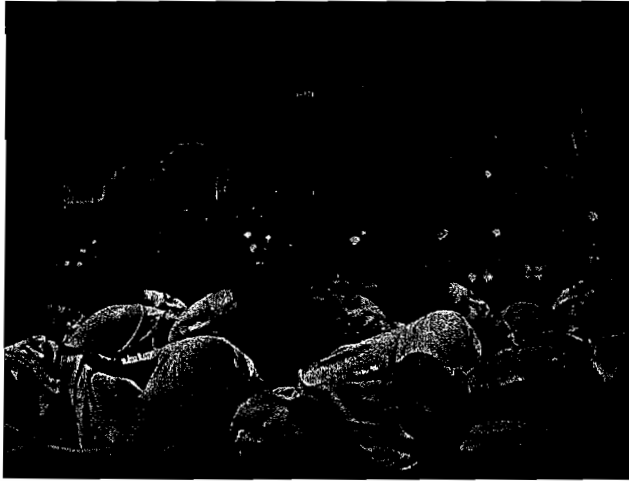
Anosa, who is one of the six new members brought into the company, is learning to adapt. "It's been challenging. I was really shy," Anosa said.

The intimate atmosphere is evident during their performances, along with a sense of chemistry between the performers - which adds to the production.

These friendships aid in the overall quality of the performance. "Everyone adds their own energy," said Par.

"You take those friendships on stage and it shows," Suda said. Together, these friends and performers join together to form Hereandnow. They share humor, sadness, insight and commentary with their audiences, speaking from the heart and experience.

Most importantly, however, they share their stories.



Spring, 2001, USC Bamboo Offshoot volume VII, Issue III

Right Here, Right Now

Raw, lulling and original, these performers share real-life stories and emotions of pain, conflict, injustice, and joy of the Asian American and immigrant experience on the stage.

By Lena Fung Warmack, Staff Writer

Offering a provocative approach to mainstream theatre venues, hereandnow is a nonprofit, grassroots, Asian Pacific American theatre company that has performed shows such as "Romeo & Juliet Pinoy & Pinay Style" and "fentor" and also tours university campuses across the country. It recently finished "Boba Stories: Tales from the hereandnow kitchen" at the East L.A. College's Edison Theatre. The touring group of 11 actors is conquering new genres in acting by creating multi-dimensional characters--unlike the common staple of rigid and narrow archetype roles usually taken on by today's APA actors.

"In mainstream culture, Asians and Pacific Islanders..don't really find interesting or exceptional (characters," said hereandnow founder Artistic Director John Miyasaki. "We're not allowed to play different genres."

The company's main objective is to make APAs a part of the theatre experience through the art of storytelling. Although the performers are not being paid for their work--something that soon will be changed, said Miyasaki--their dedication to the craft is apparent in their rehearsal schedules and nation-wide tours. Miyasaki spends countless hours with each actor,

developing characters through verbal and written thought-provoking techniques. "Artists are thinking while they are creating," Miyasaki said. "The more someone knows themselves, the more they're able to really adapt and go through a certain process on stage."

The idea

It all started during a casual dinner conversation with friends, and it didn't take long for the concept of a homegrown APA acting troupe to turn into reality.

"In the beginning, it really was kind of this growing passion, but then the more that I grew, I realized that this is really something that I wanted to do," Miyasaki said.

Then there was the problem of finding a catchy but genuine company name. The term hereandnow was introduced at one of their first performances, when an actor was asked what the group went by. The actor, caught off guard and without an answer, said, "Well, we're here now."

Since it began touring seven years ago, more than 100 actors have been a part of the company. Many members didn't have any previous acting experience or formal training; but, said Miyasaki, hereandnow's philosophy transcends the notion that only a select, exclusive few can succeed as actors. "We believe that everybody can be on stage," he said.

Some notables who fine-tuned their craft through hereandnow include Keiko Agena of the WB's *Gilmore Girls*, as well as other actors and playwrights who went on to work in other theater companies, television, and independent films.

The process

"I think we're very real about what we do," said Bryan Yamami, a USC alum who has been acting with hereandnow since 1997, after he attended a campus-hosted performance. "We're just doing it because we love it. I have a better understanding about myself and have been able to deal with things that I normally wouldn't have," said Yamami.

The company focuses on addressing APA issues ranging from politics, stereotypes and family relationships. Because many of the actors themselves grapple with such issues in their personal lives, bringing them out onto the open stage and inviting an audience to be a part of it is sort of a healing process for both parties, explained Miyasaki. This intimate environment is what distinguishes hereandnow from other theatre groups.

"It's us--it's roles that are us and I think a lot of people can relate to them," Yamami added.

The work

It's well-known that keeping a grassroots company on its feet is tough, but being a nonprofit is even more difficult. One of the drawbacks of being a nonprofit theatre company is relying on donations and ticket sales to fund productions, but thanks to a strong support base, hereandnow has plans to relocate from a theater at East L.A. to a permanent space that they can call home. "We want our own space to cultivate theatre more...it's the dream of the company," Yamami said.

Another challenge hereandnow faces is the difficulty in booking shows. "Since we are an APA theatre company, we get classified as that," Miyasaki said. "People will only think of us for Asian American month or Chinese New Year--we get categorized into all these different kinds of things, or segregated into certain genres."

But APAs should not let this hinder their theatre ambitions and instead, explore different avenues in the arts to see what feels right. "People that want to get into theatre, they kind of have to decide what kind of theatre they want to do," Miyasaki said, "They should understand and really think about what it is or what they want to get out of the performing arts."

The shows

Workshops help develop the majority of hereandnow's shows.

In their most recent piece, "Boba Stories," the central theme is the family kitchen--the centerpiece of the home, where conversation and creation take place, Yamami said. He uses the kitchen as an analogy to describe how the actors are able to come together, start with raw ingredients, put it all together and see what works. "When we find the right taste, we go with that and we put it on stage," he said.

The show is indeed an eclectic concoction, a mixture of several sketches that reflect the actors' personal experiences on being Asian Pacific American and what it means. It is technically more elaborate than past shows, weaving together advanced lighting effects, music, video, and several backdrop changes, thus taking the audience to the next artistic and creative level.

Creators of the show ultimately hope the audience leaves their performances inspired and thinking about family history and relationships.

Hereandnow performed at USC's Bovard Auditorium on April 2. The company will host a workshop on APA theater at the APA Issues Conference on April 14, to be held at USC's Taper Hall of Humanities.