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Director of Communications

Joseph Henderson, Associate Producer &
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Amanda Denbeck, Creative Content Director

Emanuel Loarca, Associate Director of
Special Latiné Programs

PLAYWRIGHT & DIRECTOR

Velina Hasu Houston's (Playwright) literary career began Off-Broadway at Manhattan Theatre Club, expanding globally. With 30 commissions, she's been honored by institutions such as the Japan Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and Theatre Communications Group. She founded graduate playwriting at the University of Southern California and directed dramatic writing there for 31 years; she is a presidentially appointed Distinguished Professor, USC Resident Playwright and School of Dramatic Arts/Iovine Young Academy faculty. A Fulbright Scholar, she served on the state department's Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission. She is Writers' Odyssey Associate Artist, Odyssey Theatre Ensemble, Los Angeles, and affiliated with New Circle Theatre Company, New York. Archives: Huntington Library.

Rebecca Wear (Director) is a Southern CA-based theatre director. Select directing credits include *Hometown Boy* (Actor's Express, Atlanta, World Premiere), *Mongrel* (Know Theatre of Cincinnati, World Premiere), *The Chinese Lady* (Greenway Court, Los Angeles, West Coast Premiere), *Obedient Steel* (HERE Arts Center, New York, World Premiere), *Gang Sines* (UC Santa Barbara, Educational Premiere), *Samsara* (Coourage Theatre, Los Angeles), and site specific locations including Pyramid Hill Sculpture Garden and Metro Baptist Church (New York). Associate directing credits include 2017 Pulitzer Prize Winner, *Sweat* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Arena Stage, World Premiere). Rebecca has developed work with East West Players, Ojai Playwrights Conference, The Echo Theater, Circle X, Rogue Artists Ensemble, and others. Recent awards and fellowships include: 2022 Kathryn Davis Fellowship for Peace (Middlebury College), 2019 National Directing Fellow (O'Neill Theater/National New Play Network/The Kennedy Center/SDC), 2019 Critical Refugees Studies Arts Grantee, Chancellor's Fellowship (UC Santa Barbara). Affiliations: HERO Theatre Resident Director.

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HERO THEATRE

presents

TEA

by Velina Hasu
Houston

directed by
Rebecca Wear

A powerful tale of women overcoming
prejudice and hardship after leaving Japan
post World War II for the "land of the free."

April 21 - May 15, 2022

CAST



Elaine Ackles (Chizuye) is excited to return to the stage in this production of Tea. She graduated with a BA in theatre from Cal State, Northridge. And in the last few years, has studied under Gregory Berger-Sobeck, Desean Terry and most recently, Joy Brunson. Her other work includes, the films Tagulan and Beyond Methuselah, as well as the audio drama, Carcerem. She is profoundly grateful to Elisa (& the entire Hero team), Rebecca and Velina for this incredible opportunity; T.H.O.H. - "...I feel at home with you women..." And finally, she would like to thank her family and friends for all their help, constant support and love. G & G-you make all this possible, you are my heart.



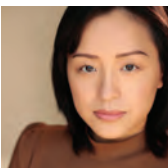
Olivia Cordell (Teruko) is a classically trained actress who has performed in numerous stage, film, television, and digital productions. Tea is her first post-pandemic stage production, previously having performed at the La Jolla Playhouse and the LJP WOW Festival. Her film credits include Freeform's Grown-ish, HBOMax's The Flight Attendant, and additional productions from Hulu, Amazon Prime, YouTube Premium, and more. She is also an award-winning playwright and produced screenwriter. Join her other hundred thousand followers on TikTok @theprincessliv or subscribe to her Sweet and Spooky channel on YouTube.



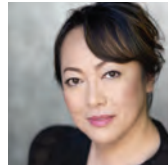
Hiroko Imai (Setsuko) A native Japanese actor Hiroko Imai is honored to be part of TEA. She is grateful for this opportunity and support of Hero Theatre, casts, and Velina Hasu Houston. Her theatre credits include HANJO, THE VAJINA MONOLOGUES, and TWELVE ANGRY WOMEN.



Tomoko Karina (Himiko) Tomoko's theater credits include "Balm in Gilead" and "Blood", both directed by Obie Award-winning, two-time Golden Globe nominee Robert Allan Ackerman, "Three Sisters(tpt)". Tomoko played 2 lead roles ("Voice" and "Pecan in the Field") at the prestigious Tokyo Metropolitan Art Theater. TV/ Film credits include "Cobra Kai" (Netflix), "Haunting in Silver Falls: Returns" (Netflix) "Another Tango" (Hallmark Movie) and many. As a writer/ director, Tomoko wrote/ directed a short film "Camellia- Kerria- Pink" (the Best Foreign Mini Film Winner at BPPI Film Festival), "Japanese Love Story - Shizuka", which earned Best Play nominations at Broadway World Regional Award. Representation: Bohemia Group.



Hua Lee (Atsuko) holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Dramatic Arts from the University of California, Davis. She has acted in several theatre venues, including Theater Mu in Minneapolis, and has also studied at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. She also has experience acting in film, television, and new media, including with SMOSH Productions, and most recently booked a supporting role in the feature film, "The Harvest" which stars Perry Yung ("Warriors", Netflix) and Doua Moua (Mulan, Gran Torino). In addition, Lee also writes & produces her own creative projects, including music, short films, and stage-plays. As a singer/songwriter, Lee has released two full-length albums and several music videos, performing in numerous venues to tens of thousands of people. Her music has garnered nearly one million views on YouTube. Lee has been featured in several publications, including Asian American Press, Fresno Bee, and more.



Yukari Black (Setsuko) Actor, Singer, Songwriter, Dancer, Producer, Director. As an actress, her film credits include Letters from Iwo Jima and Flags of our Fathers. Theatrical credits include Lady Thiang in The King and I, Sakiko in the Operetta Nadeshiko, Wife in the Rashomon. She is the owner of Kuro Productions and made her U.S. directorial debut with an award winning production of Vengeance Can Wait at the 2014 Hollywood Fringe Festival. Yukari is thrilled to be in this wonderful Tea with Hero Theatre. She is grateful for all the support from her friends and family.



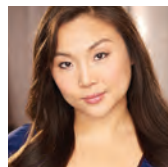
Alix Yumi Cho (Teruko) is feeling blessed and honored to be part of Tea. Thank you for supporting live theatre. Play: Scapino! (Mia), Film: Moonset: The Darkest Hour Before Sunrise (Alix), The Letter (Li-Wei), and Jello (Justine Hahn). University of La Verne graduate.



Ariel Kayoko Labasan (Chizuye) is an LA Native, tea lover and super excited to play one of her dream roles for the stage. It has been two years since she has been on stage and is honored to bring such a personal story to life. She graduated from Broadway's only theatre conservatory, Circle in the Square Theatre School, in New York City and continued to produce theatre after she graduated. During quarantine, Ariel was able to develop two online acting classes focusing on providing affordable training for people of color. Look out for her film debut in Bid for Love, Kanashimi, Amaru coming out this year! She would like to dedicate this play to her grandparents and family. www.ariellabasan.com, Manager: Infinitum LA, infinitum.kw@gmail.com, Aqua Talent Agency, Courtney Peldon, cpeldon@aquatalent.com



Sayaka Miyatani (Himiko) Born and raised in Kagoshima, Japan, Sayaka Miyatani is a Los Angeles based actor, comedian, writer and producer. Classically trained, Sayaka has played roles from Shakespeare to a modern rock opera off-Broadway, as well as numerous films, web series and stand-up comedy shows. Her recent work includes a short film "I'm Not Special" which was pre-qualified for an academy award nomination, and "Made in Japan, Shipped to USA" a half an hour comedy show she performed and received the "Best of the Festival" award at the Crazy Woke Asian Comedy Festival. Sayaka is very excited to play a role of Himiko, and be able to tell an important story of Japanese women.



Bolor Saruul (Atsuko) studied at the Elizabeth Mestnik Acting Studio in addition to training in Shakespeare, Fitzmaurice Voice, and improv at Groundlings. She has a background in dance and singing, and enjoys reading, trying new food, and creating artwork in her free time. She is of Mongolian descent and is thrilled to be taking part in a play representing Japanese women.

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PRODUCTION

Ashley Weaver (Stage Manager) is a theatre artist who specializes in Stage Management and Choreography. This is her first full production since the pandemic, and she is thrilled that it is with Hero Theatre. Recent credits include the staged reading of FLEX(Stage Manager), Punk Play (Stage Manager) with Circle X Theatre, Cabaret (choreographer) with The University of La Verne, Into the Woods (Stage Manager) with Yucaipa Little Theatre, Vietgone (Stage Manager) with The University of La Verne. She has previously worked on productions for Antaeus Theatre Company and The Bootleg Theatre. Ashley is very excited to be working with Hero Theatre Company, and is thankful to her cast and crew for making it a memorable experience.

Dean Harada (Music & Sound Designer) Hawaii born and raised, Dean went on to study theory and performance with MacArthur Fellow Ran Blake at the New England Conservatory. Collaboration with Grammy winner Oswaldo Golijov set his path towards composition. Moving to Los Angeles, his romantic minimalism blending acoustic instruments and abstract sound served as underscore for film and broadcast television. Now with his studio practice back in Hawaii, his work continues an interest in exploring conversive, narrative, and figurative processes. Making music for picture and theater reconciles the contradictory things that Dean loves: collaboration and solitude, narrative structure and nonlinear thinking, technology and the human touch.

Carlo Maghirang (Scenic Design) (he/they) is an installation artist and scenic designer from Los Angeles, CA. He specializes in sculptural and kinetic spaces, bridging the gap between art object and environment, with a particular emphasis on new works. Previous credits include 'Sweet Land' (The Industry), 'Terra' (LA Contemporary Dance Company), and 'Vibration Group' by Anna Luisa Petrisko (LACE). www.carlomaghirang.com

Azra King-Abadi (Lighting Design) recently designed Murray Mednick's, Three Tables at the Zephyr Theatre and premiered a new opera, Tres Mujeres de Jerusalén at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. Prior works include Apartment Living with Skylight Theatre, Poor Clare with Echo Theatre; Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time and The Color Purple with Greenway Court Theatre, Women Beyond Borders with Rubicon Theatre, The Ridiculous Darkness with Son of Semele, Under Milk Wood with Coeurage Theatre, Lunatics and Actors with Four Clowns, Madama Butterfly with Opera Santa Barbara, Alexander's Feast with LA Master Chorale, Wonderful Town with LA Opera, Angels in America opera with the LA Philharmonic. azrakingabadi.com

Maggie Dick (Costume Design) is a Hero board member, costume designer and technician, artist, friend, wife, mother, and gardener. She has over 25 years of experience in costuming performers from New York City to Los Angeles. Maggie is a staff member of the UCLA Costume shop, where she has been mentoring and teaching students since 2019. Past credits with Hero Theatre are Troy and the staged reading of Flex. Maggie is a Union member of United Scenic Artists Local 829, and a former member IASTI 764 in NYC. She is happy to be putting down roots in Southern California and excited to be part of the design team for Tea.

Marvin Hidalgo (Costume Assistant) is a Los Angeles native fashion and costume designer. New to the world of theater, Tea is his first production.

Lighting Technicians: McLeod Benson, Rowan Waugh

**Performances on April 23rd and 24th will
feature the following Cast:**

Chizuye: Elaine Ackles

Teruko: Olivia Cordell

Setsuko: Hiroko Imai

Himiko: Tomoko Karina

Atsuko: Hua Lee