

STAGEBRIDGE & ASIAN AMERICAN STORYTELLERS IN UNITY

PRESENT



May 20, 2021 | 3 - 5:30p PT

www.stagebridge.org/findingourselves



Asian American
Storytellers in UNITY

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

WELCOME

with Co-producer Eleanor Clement Glass, Co-producer & Emcee Linda Yemoto, and Stagebridge Executive Director Shannon McDonnell

The Mochi Race by Linda Yemoto

I. IMMIGRATION | Recounting stories of how we came to America

My Dad, the Gangster by Emil Guillermo

War Bride by Eleanor Clement Glass

Secrets by Anne Shimojima

Atama Yama: The Man with a Tree on His Head by Motoko Dworkin

II. SELF-IDENTITY AND DISCRIMINATION | Asking: Who are we, in America?; How were we perceived and welcomed?; and What were some of the challenges?

Southern Belle by Nancy Wang

Hairspray Bus by M.J. Kang

The Others by Karin Amano

More Than a Box by Dr. Joel Ying, MD

I Am Not a Virus! by Bowen Lee

Magic Act by Yasu Ishida

III. CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING | Sharing our traditions and special encounters that contribute to cross-cultural understanding

Bindi...Not Just a Dot! by Roopa Mohan

Unexpected Encounter by Tobey Ishii Anderson

The Bugler and the Pilot by Alton Takiyama Chung

Origami Planet by Kuniko Yamamoto

Ripple in Time by Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo

THANK YOU & CLOSING

with Shannon McDonnell and Linda Yemoto

FINDING OURSELVES IN AMERICA: ASIAN AMERICAN VOICES

As a direct response to the recent anti-Asian attacks across the United States, this one-of-a-kind digital event brings together 16 nationally-recognized storytellers for a stimulating and informative gathering. Through personal narratives, historical stories, folktales, magic and music, these storytellers will elevate immigration experiences, discrimination, struggles with self-identity, and cross-cultural understanding. **Finding Ourselves in America** is a Stagebridge series highlighting BIPOC voices through storytelling partnerships with artists from Oakland and beyond.

ABOUT ASIAN AMERICAN STORYTELLERS IN UNITY

Asian American Storytellers in Unity is a network of professional storytellers from across the US. Our goal is to encourage, support and develop the art and business of storytelling from the diverse voices of our Pan-Asian American community. Our performances include the telling of traditional folktales and myths of Asia, as well as personal narrative and biographical narratives drawn from our history, heritage and community experiences of the Asian Diaspora in America. We work in schools, theaters, libraries, community centers, corporations, festivals, universities, and museums. It is our intent that these stories, told from our voices, contribute to the richness of an inclusive, diverse and socially just society.

ABOUT OUR EMCEE



Linda Yemoto

Oakland, California | Third-generation Japanese American

Linda Yemoto has served as master of ceremony for six National and thirty-three Bay Area Story Telling Festivals. For more than thirty years, she was “Ranger Linda” to thousands of children and adults in the San Francisco Bay Area. Now retired from her Park Naturalist career, Linda is a School Tour Docent and member of the Volunteer Storytelling Corps at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. She continues to tell stories that convey an appreciation of both natural and cultural

histories. Linda will perform **The Mochi Race**, a Japanese folktale about a monkey, a bullfrog, and an usu (mortar) full of mochi.

Contact: lyemoto@sbcglobal.net



Emil Guillermo | *My Dad, The Gangster*

Extreme East Bay, California | Asian American Filipino

Emil Guillermo is an award-winning journalist, commentator, and humorist who has taken his stories of Filipino American life to the stage in one-person plays at theater festivals around the country. He is a former host of NPR's "All Things Considered" where he blended the personal with history for a unique perspective on the Asian American experience. Emil will perform ***My Dad, The Gangster***, an excerpt from his one-man show, "Amok Monologues." On the day he graduated from Harvard, he

understands his father's journey as a colonized Filipino in 1928.

Contact: emilamok@gmail.com | www.amok.com | Twitter: [@emilamok](https://twitter.com/emilamok) | Facebook: [@emilguillermo.media](https://www.facebook.com/emilguillermo.media)



Eleanor Clement Glass | *War Bride*

Oakland, California | Black and Filipina American

Eleanor Clement Glass is a member of the Volunteer Storyteller Corps and a School Tour Docent at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. As a Teaching Artist with Stagebridge's *Storybridge* program, she works in Oakland, Pinole and San Jose public elementary schools, delighting children with folktales from around the world. She has performed personal stories from her Black and Filipina cultures at the 2020 National Storytelling Conference, Artists Standing Strong Together and local

community venues, including The Marsh and Silk Road. Eleanor will perform ***War Bride***, the story of her Filipina mother and Black father, an Army Officer, who met in the Philippines after WWI, fell in love and, against many odds, married.

Contact: eleanor7171@icloud.com



Anne Shimojima | *Secrets*

Morton Grove, Illinois | Third-generation Japanese American

Anne Shimojima is a retired elementary school librarian who has been telling folktales and literary stories for almost 40 years. In 2017 she was a New Voice Teller at the National Storytelling Festival and she has twice been Teller-in-Residence at the International Storytelling Center in Tennessee. She shares her favorite Japanese tales on her award-winning CD, *Sakura Tales: Stories from Japan*. Anne will perform

Secrets, the story of the Shimojima family's incarceration during WWII for the

crime of looking like the enemy. It is their story of racial prejudice, imprisonment, and ultimately, acceptance and strength.

Contact: www.anneshimojima.com



Motoko Dworkin | *Atama Yama: The Man with a Tree on His Head*
Amherst, Massachusetts | An immigrant from Japan

Motoko Dworkin has enchanted audiences of every age since 1993. Her repertoire includes Asian folktales, Rakugo and Zen tales, ghost stories, mime vignettes, as well as oral memoirs from her childhood in Osaka and life as an immigrant in the U.S. Her story recordings have won a Parents' Choice Silver Honor Award, a Storytelling World Award, and a National Parenting Publications Award. She is also the recipient of the National Storytelling Network's 2017 Circle of Excellence Award, and the

author of *A Year In Japan: Folktales, Songs and Art for the Classroom*. Motoko will perform ***Atama Yama: The Man with a Tree on His Head***, a Japanese folktale about selfishness.

Contact: motoko.folktales.net

PART II: SELF-IDENTITY & DISCRIMINATION



Nancy Wang | *Southern Belle*
Eastbound, Washington & San Francisco, California |
Fifth-generation Chinese American

Nancy Wang pioneered a unique style of storytelling, weaving movement, gesture, music and the spoken word to create her performances. In 1981, with Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo, they co-founded their storytelling theater nonprofit Eth-Noh-Tec, and have performed around the world in festivals, museums, theaters, schools and libraries. Nancy began her career as a dancer and choreographer, adding theater and playwriting, and

then applying all those skills to storytelling, garnering her work numerous grants and awards, including the Circle of Excellence and the International StoryBridge awards by the National Storytelling Network. Nancy will be performing ***Southern Belle***, a personal story in response to the anti-Asian violence in America. You might ask why "Southern Belle"? Well, Nancy was raised in the South during apartheid. Find out what that was like, and more!

Contact: nancy@ethnohtec.org | www.ethnohtec.org



M.J. Kang | *Hairspray Bus*
Venice, California | Korean American

M.J. Kang is a playwright, actor, director and storyteller and has won multiple story slams, including The Moth (3 times!), Story Collider, and National Storytellers Network slams. Her stories have been featured on PBS, NPR and RISK! She is currently part of the playwright's group for Company of Angels and her play, *Asians Dating* will be featured in Pan Asian Rep's NuWorks Festival June 2021. M.J. will perform ***Hairspray Bus***. As an eight-year-old with dreams of food and the

playground while on a bus heading to her parents' store, she finds out how she is seen in the world.

Contact: mkangj@gmail.com



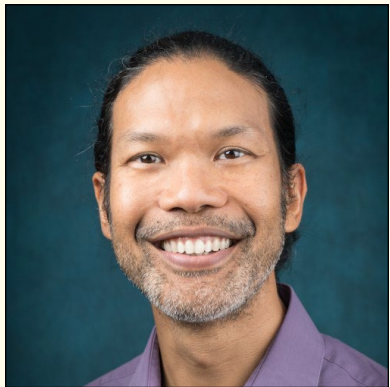
Karin Amano | *The Others*

Gainsville, Georgia | Japanese descent

Karin Amano is originally from Japan, where she was trained in Japanese theatre. Karin moved to NYC, where she studied acting and educational theatre at New York University and performed in off-off-Broadway productions. Since the 1990s, she has been telling Japanese folktales at schools, libraries, festivals, and Walt Disney World. Karin performed at Exchange Place at the National Storytelling Festival in 2019. Karin will perform ***The Others***, a story about her increased

understanding and empathy for Koreans living in Japan.

Contact: www.japanesestoryteller.com



Dr. Joel Ying, MD | *More Than a Box*

Naples, Florida | Jamaican of Chinese and African descent

Dr. Joel Ying is a Physician-Educator-Storyteller. He believes that storytelling is not just a performance art, but also a healing art. He performs, teaches, produces, and loves listening to a good story. Through world folktales and touching personal stories, his storytelling, like his practice of medicine, bridges the traditional with the modern. Joel will perform ***More Than a Box***, a personal story about the struggle to find a place to belong.

Contact: joel.ying@gmail.com | www.joelying.com



Bowen Lee | *I Am Not a Virus!*

Monterey, California | Fifth-generation Chinese American

Born in Oakland, Bowen Lee is storyteller, writer and educator now living in the Monterey Bay Area in California, not far from the location of the Chinese fishing village where her great-grandmother was born and raised. In her debut as a national storyteller, she won the Earth Up! 2021 Story Slam. Bowen conducts a monthly story event, "The Story Circle," for live music and storytelling. She draws many of her personal stories from the historical novel she is writing about her

family history in California since 1848. The story she will perform, ***I Am Not a Virus!***, describes a recent racial harassment experience.

Contact: bowenlyamlee@gmail.com | www.bowenlyamlee.com



Yasu Ishida | Magic Act

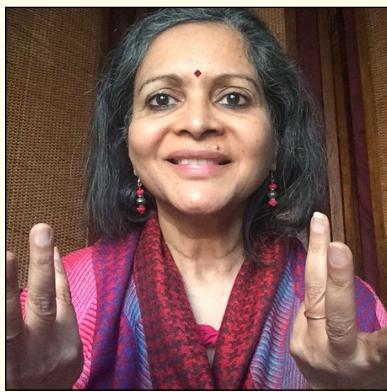
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina | First-generation Japanese American

Yasu Ishida has a Master of Fine Arts in Theater for Young Audiences and is an award-winning magician, director and storyteller. He beautifully imbues the essence of traditional Japanese culture into his magic and storytelling. Yasu has enthralled audiences all over the United States, including Disney Summer Stage Kids in New York and the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C., which is the

world's largest festival of Japanese culture outside of Japan. He is the recipient of the 2015 Jim Rye Fellowship from the International Performing Arts for Youth and the 2014 Elizabeth and Don Hoyle Fellowship from the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. Yasu will perform a **Magic Act** with traditional Japanese music.

Contact: yasutheatre@gmail.com | www.yasutheatre.com

PART III: PROMOTING CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING



Roopa Mohan | *Bindi...Not Just A Dot!*

Walnut Creek, California | First-generation Indian American

Roopa Mohan is a storyteller who tells folktales and sacred stories to school groups at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, where she is also a School Tour Docent. She serves on the Board of the Storytelling Association of California, leading the Jenny Fund Project to introduce storytelling to teachers and students in under-served schools. Her repertoire is expanding to personal stories that she enjoys sharing about her experiences growing up in India. Roopa will perform ***Bindi...Not***

Just a Dot!, exploring how this tradition evolved and changed in her journey as an immigrant and mother.

Contact: roopamohan2000@yahoo.com



Tobey Ishii Anderson | *Unexpected Encounter*

Olympia, Washington | Third-generation Japanese American

Ever since Tobey Ishii Anderson's Japanese grandmother uttered the words, "Mukashi, Mukashi" (Once upon a time), Tobey has been held captive with the wonder of stories. As a Peace Corps volunteer and International School Teacher in South East Asia, she has lived and trekked in numerous countries throughout Asia and Europe. She considers herself a "Third Culture Kid," having lived in many different cultural environments during her formative years, which enabled her

to gather stories from diverse cultures and to turn them into adventures for her audiences. Tobey will perform ***Unexpected Encounter***, a story of two women who met during a time of conflict and fear.

Contact: tobeyanderson1@me.com | www.southsoundstory.org



Alton Takiyama Chung | *The Bugler and the Pilot*

Honolulu, Hawaii & Vancouver, Washington |

Third-generation Japanese Korean American

Alton Takiyama Chung is a Japanese Korean storyteller who grew up with the magic and superstitions of the Hawaiian Islands. Alton tells Asian folktales, stories of Hawaii, and of the Japanese American experience of WWII. He has performed at the Timpanogos and National Storytelling Festivals and is a former Chairman of the Board of Directors for the National Storytelling Network. Alton will perform **The**

Bugler and the Pilot, the meeting and reconciliation of two soldiers from opposite sides of WWII.

Contact: alton@altonchung.com | www.altonchung.com



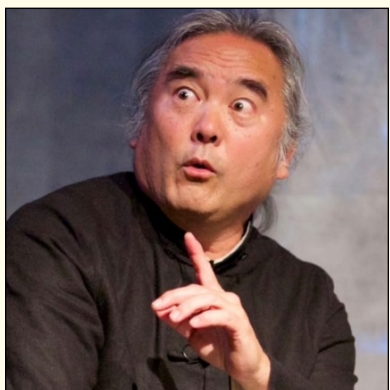
Kuniko Yamamoto | *Origami Planet*

Sarasota, Florida | Japanese descent

Kuniko Yamamoto began performing in her hometown of Osaka, where she grew up studying traditional dance, music and theater. In 1985, Kuniko came to the U.S. to study with Tony Montanaro, the highly-respected actor, and mime master. She has been performing her solo Japanese Storytelling in numerous venues such as The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Disney Epcot Japanese Pavilion, and the National Storytelling Festival. Her show is a mix of mask, music, and origami.

Kuniko will perform **Origami Planet**. On the Origami Planet, there is no country, no race, and no need for greed.

Contact: kunikotheater@gmail.com | www.origamiair.com



Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo | *Ripple in Time*

Eastbound, Washington & San Francisco, California |

Third-generation Japanese Filipino American

Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo is a longstanding cultural activist in the San Francisco Bay Area Asian American cultural scene. He is a master storyteller, musician, songwriter and composer, and part of the storytelling team Eth-Noh-Tec. Eth-Noh-Tec has performed on such notable stages as the International Storytelling Festival, Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, the Smithsonian Discovery Theater,

and the Inaugural Presidential Celebrations for President Clinton and President Obama. Robert will perform **Ripple in Time**, an original song honoring his Filipino grandparents and offering a tribute to America's precious immigration legacy.

Contact: robertentc@gmail.com | www.ethnohtec.org

A LETTER OF SOLIDARITY FROM STAGEBRIDGE

On March 17, a 21-year-old white man's violent and racist rampage in Atlanta resulted in the murders of six Asian American women, one white woman, and one white man.

And, while this event seems to have triggered an awareness around the recent wave of racist attacks against AAPI communities, it represents a problem that has consistently resurfaced in America for over a century.

White supremacy has the ability to turn a blind eye to attacks on communities of color, whether it be physical, financial, or systemic. These attacks usually become dismissed, hidden, or forgotten due to a lack of clear cross-cultural communication, understanding, and connection.

However, such is the unique power of Stagebridge.

Inside of our classes, programs, meetings, and events, the connective ability of performance arts and storytelling gives this community unbelievable tools to improve and teach the world. With that, Stagebridge will be making several organizational shifts to support and foster AAPI individuals, inside and outside of this community.

Firstly, we are developing our new *Finding Ourselves in America* storytelling series, which will highlight Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) voices through storytelling partnerships with artists from Oakland and beyond.

With **FINDING OURSELVES IN AMERICA: ASIAN AMERICAN VOICES** on Thursday, May 20, Stagebridge will partner with Asian American Storytellers in Unity to present 16 nationally-acclaimed storytellers from across the nation. Focused on the healing power of storytelling and narrative, these ethnically and geographically diverse artists will promote cross-cultural understanding responding to an unprecedented wave of anti-Asian sentiment in the modern age.

Secondly, we will continue to promote and invite new BIPOC instructors into the Performing Arts Institute—with a focus on finding AAPI voices to help broaden the spectrum of students' worldview.

Lastly, the Stagebridge Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee will meet regularly to address issues inside our community regarding racism, equity, and accessibility. Additionally, this group will assist in developing a new equity-focused action plan for Stagebridge as a whole.

So, we are not just making a call to action for those outside of our immediate circles. We are making a call to action for our family, friends, and community members.

We ask you to join us to end indifference, hatred, and intolerance.

In honor of Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, Hyun Jung Grant, Soon Chung Park, Suncha Kim, Yong Ae Yue, and all the victims of white supremacist violence, we denounce all attacks and hatred centered against our AAPI communities and we commit to addressing racism by creating programs that uplift and honor BIPOC voices.

Special Acknowledgements to the Finding Ourselves in America Planning Committee and Technical Management Team: Julius Rea, Lily Nguyen, Prescott Cole, Clara Kamunde, Shannon McDonnell, Eleanor Clement Glass, Linda Yemoto, Yasu Ishida & Nick Ishimaru.

ABOUT STAGEBRIDGE



Stagebridge, based in Oakland, California, is the nation's oldest and most renowned performing arts organization for older adults. Founded in 1978 by Dr. Stuart Kandell, the company's mission is to foster a vibrant community where all lifelong learners are celebrated and enriched through the performing arts. Stagebridge accomplishes this with award-winning Creative Aging programs that offer opportunities for lifelong learning and participation in the performing arts. **Finding Ourselves in America** is a Stagebridge series highlighting BIPOC voices through storytelling partnerships with artists from Oakland and beyond.

STAFF

Shannon McDonnell, Executive Director
Lily Nguyen, Director of Performing Arts Institute &
Seniors Reaching Out
Clara Kamunde, Director of Storytelling &
Schools Programs
Julius Rea, Director of Marketing & Communications
Barbara Johnson, Community Outreach Coordinator

BOARD MEMBERS

Claire Wahrhaftig, Board Chair
Prescott Cole
Eleanor Clement Glass
David Sayen
Nader Robert Shabahangi
Mel Terry
Ben Tucker

DIGITAL OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday
10am - 4pm PT

stagebridge.org • info@stagebridge.org • (510) 210-3773

STAGEBRIDGE IS SUPPORTED BY

Alameda County Art Commission, Arts for Oakland Kids, Bernard Osher Foundation, California Arts Council, Clorox Company Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation, Lowell Berry Foundation, Sam Mazza Foundation, West Davis Bergard Foundation, City of Oakland Cultural Fund, and donations from individuals like you!

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS INCLUDE

Albany Senior Center, Theatre Aluminous, Aurora Theatre Company, Alzheimer's Association of Northern California and Northern Nevada, Bridgegood, Center for Elders' Independence, Elder Care Alliance, FICTILIS, First Congregational Church of Oakland, The Marsh, Kindred Medical Hill, Mercy Retirement and Care Center, Northern California Presbyterian Homes, Oakland Unified School District, Piedmont Center for the Arts, Piedmont Players, Real Time Community, St. Mary's Center, Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, Shields Nursing Center, StoryCorps, Storytelling Association of California, Strawberry Creek Lodge, Tell It On Tuesday at The Marsh, Timeslips, UCSF Memory & Aging Center, Wee Poets, Well Connected, West Contra Costa School District, and The City of Oakland Mayor's Commission on Aging.

LOCAL BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT STAGEBRIDGE INCLUDE

Amazon Smiles, Barefoot Wine, C.L.P. Specialties, Grand Copy Center, Grocery Outlet, Momo's Flowers and More, Noah's Bagels, Numi Organic Tea, Oaklandish, Oakland Athletics, The Piedmont Post, RustRidge Winery, Salesforce, Solano Express, Whole Foods, and Z Café and Bar.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Edmund Au Yeung, Dee Bell and Nicki Chapman, Ronnie Casey, B. Avalon and everyone at FCCO, Creative Aging Collective SF, Gray Cathrall and Nancy Kurkjian, Jazmin Mora and RealTime Community, Keye Liu, Denise Pate and Roberto Bedoya at the City of Oakland Cultural Fund, Sue Dichter, Darlene Flynn, and Scott Means.

Stagebridge was founded in 1978 by Dr. Stuart Kandell

Supported by a generous grant from the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program