

**CHARLES
FRANCIS CHAN
JR.'S EXOTIC
ORIENTAL
MURDER
MYSTERY**

BY LLOYD SUH



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

CHARLES FRANCIS CHAN JR.'S EXOTIC ORIENTAL MURDER MYSTERY
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CHARLES FRANCIS CHAN JR.'S EXOTIC ORIENTAL MURDER MYSTERY was originally commissioned and produced by NAATCO (Mia Katigbak, Artistic Producing Director) at Walkerspace in New York City in October 2015. It was directed by Ed Sylvanus Iskandar, the scenic design was by Jason Sherwood, the lighting design was by Seth Reiser, the costume design was by Loren Shaw, the sound design was by Jeremy S. Bloom, the projection design was by Olivia Sebesky, the original compositions were by Alan Schmuckler, the dramaturg was Kimber Lee, and the production stage manager was Andrea Jess Berkey. The cast was as follows:

FRANK Jeffrey Omura
 KATHY Jennifer Ikeda
 SUZY KK Moggie
 SERGEANT Jeff Biehl
 CHUCK Peter Kim
 MONKEY Orville Mendoza

The regional premiere of CHARLES FRANCIS CHAN JR.'S EXOTIC ORIENTAL MURDER MYSTERY was a Mu Performing Arts production presented at the Guthrie Theater's Dowling Studio, opening in May 2017. It was directed by Randy Reyes, the scenic design was by Sarah Brandner, the lighting design was by Angelina Vyushkova, the costume design was by Samantha Fromm Haddow, the sound design was by Matthew Vichlach, the projection design was by Kathy Maxwell, the props design was by Abbee Warmboe, and the production stage manager was Lyndsey R. Harter. The cast was as follows:

FRANK Eric Sharp
 KATHY Hope Nordquist
 SUZY Stephanie Bertumen
 SERGEANT Luverne Seifert
 CHUCK Song Kim
 MONKEY Randy Reyes

CHARACTERS

FRANK CHAN
(*Asian American male, 23*)

as
HASTINGS

KATHY CHING
(*Asian American female, 20s*)

as
LINDA

SUZY TAKIGAYAMA
(*Asian American female, 20s*)

as
ELEANOR

SERGEANT DAVID FITZWALLACE
(*white male, 30s or 40s*)

as
CHARLIE

CHUCK CHAN
(*Asian American male, late 20s*)

as
COP, BARTENDER, and ALFRED

MONKEY
(*Asian American, any age, any gender*)

CHARLES FRANCIS CHAN JR.'S EXOTIC ORIENTAL MURDER MYSTERY

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A mansion in the Marina, San Francisco, California, 1967. It contains the largest television that a person might have in 1967, facing the audience. On-screen, at low volume, is a news broadcast about military conscription. It plays as the audience enters.

There is a telephone prominently placed on a decorative telephone table. Beside it is a very expensive-looking armchair. The back of the armchair faces the audience. In it sits a man. We can see his arm. In his hand is a drink. There is ice in it. The phone begins to ring.

It rings about three or four times before a voice from offstage can be heard.

ELEANOR. Earl, darling, telephone!
I said Earl!
Telephone!

There is no response from Earl.

My gracious, Earl, I'm taking a bath!
Can you please answer the telephone please?

EARL!

Still nothing from Earl.

Eleanor enters in a bathrobe. We may not be able to tell, but she is a white woman in her 70s played by an Asian American woman in her 20s, with heavy makeup.

And you left the TV on too, good heavens!

She turns off the TV. The phone continues to ring.

Yes alright I can hear you, I'm coming I'm coming!

She answers.

Hello! Biggers residence Eleanor speaking.

...

Who's calling please?

...

I beg your pardon!

...

Who is this?

WHO ARE YOU?

...

WHY I NEVER!!

Whatever she hears next causes her to gasp loudly and slam the phone down on the receiver and step away from it.

Earl, you won't believe what just...

Earl, wake up, I—

She goes to wake him and he slumps down off the armchair, the drink falls, his body lands on the ground with a thud.

He is dead.

AIIIEEEEE!

Blackout.

Scene 2

Frank is getting his physical with the local draft board.

FRANK. The purpose of stereotypes is to maintain order. The dominant culture assigns a system of behaviors to a group of people with the expectation that this model will become an actual pattern within the culture being stereotyped, and it works! We *assimilate* because this is our path of least resistance, we do the work of the white devil on behalf of the white devil by becoming what the white devil wants us to become. Does that answer your question?

SERGEANT. No.

FRANK. What was the question again?

SERGEANT. What is your name?

FRANK. My name is Charles Francis Chan, Jr., but referred to by the middle of my names, I'd appreciate you calling me Frank.

SERGEANT. Your name is Charlie Chan?

FRANK. My name is Frank.

SERGEANT. Date of birth.

FRANK. August 6, 1945.

SERGEANT. August 6, 1945?, wait, isn't that the date that

FRANK. Yes it is! At precisely 8:15 A.M. on August 6, 1945 Hiroshima time, the *Enola Gay* releases the Little Boy gravity bomb which takes forty-three point three seconds to fall to its detonation height of one thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven feet above the city. Meanwhile it is 3:15 P.M., August 5, in Oakland, California, where my mother believes she is still several weeks away from delivery; however!, shock waves from that nuclear blast traveled at a rate of four point four miles per second, tapering at a rate of point zero eight miles per mile, meaning those waves reached the shores of the San Francisco Bay at precisely 12:04 A.M. Pacific Standard on August 6, 1945, causing me with no contractions or labor pangs to just pop out of my mother golden yellow and naked.

SERGEANT. Okay, so then birthplace is Oakland, California.

CHARLES FRANCIS CHAN JR.'S EXOTIC ORIENTAL MURDER MYSTERY

by Lloyd Suh

3 men, 2 women, 1 n/s

In 1967, Berkeley grad student Frank Chan and his artist-activist girlfriend Kathy Ching are staging a revolution. Amid the backdrop of ongoing war in Vietnam and a peak in the Civil Rights movement, they devise a wild, impulsive theatrical trip through the history of Asians in America, from the ancestral railways of their forebears to the shameful legacy of Charlie Chan stereotypes, all in pursuit of establishing a brand new political identity they've decided to call "Asian America." CHARLES FRANCIS CHAN JR.'S EXOTIC ORIENTAL MURDER MYSTERY is a harmless sing-song orientalist minstrel show that ends in a grotesque carnival of murder!!!

"Ah. So. You'd be surprised just how much hilarity and invective the playwright Lloyd Suh can work out of those two tiny syllables. They are among the stock sayings of Charlie Chan...whose legacy Mr. Suh inspects and implodes in the very messy, very funny, very angry CHARLES FRANCIS CHAN JR.'S EXOTIC ORIENTAL MURDER MYSTERY..." —**The New York Times**

"[Suh]...achieves the ambitious goal of presenting heavy political issues in an altogether delightful and personal manner. Its hard-hitting political incorrectness seems the completely correct course for political theater to take..." —**Theasy.com**

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