

## VIDEOGAMES, EARLY ADMISSION, AND CHINESE INDENTURED SERVITUDE: AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE

Lauren Yee's irreverent new comedy *Ching Chong Chinaman* opens Friday, Sep 5, 2008

**BERKELEY, CA, AUGUST 5, 2008**— Impact Theatre opens its 2008–09 Bar Mitzvah season with an award-winning new comedy by up-and-coming Bay Area playwright Lauren Yee, *Ching Chong Chinaman*, directed by former Impact Associate Artistic Director Desdemona Chiang. *CCC* opens September 5, 2008 and plays Thursdays through Saturdays at 8pm until October 10, 2008 at Impact's home, La Val's Subterranean in Berkeley.

Winner of the 2007 Yale Playwrights Festival, among other honors, *CCC* made its debut at the New York Fringe Festival last year, receiving positive reviews ("too smart and funny to miss," NYTheatre.com wrote). The ultra-assimilated Wong family is as Chinese-American as apple pie: teenager Upton dreams of World of Warcraft superstardom; his sister Desi dreams of early admission to Princeton. Unfortunately, Upton's chores and homework get in the way of his 24/7 videogaming, and Desi's math grades don't fit the Asian-American stereotype. Then Upton comes up with a novel solution for both problems: he acquires a Chinese indentured servant—who harbors an American dream of his own.

Skewering every cliché about Asian-American identity and poking fun at our fears of Chinese global dominance, *CCC* will open at Impact under the direction of former Impact Associate Artistic Director Desdemona Chiang, who is now finishing her directing MFA at the University of Washington.

*CCC* represents Impact's drive to find talented local emerging playwrights; the play was presented as part of the company's staged reading series earlier this year. Yee, a Bay Area native who graduated from Yale in 2007, is the founder and executive director of the San Francisco Young Playwrights Festival. An accomplished young artist, Yee has received PlayGround's June Anne Baker prize, a Theatre Bay Area CA\$H grant, and fellowships with the Byrdcliffe Artist Colony, the New York Mills Art Retreat, and the Edward F. Albee Foundation. Yee was also a finalist for the Princess Grace Award.

"Impact is incredibly lucky to be able to present Lauren's work," Artistic Director Melissa Hillman said. "She's an extremely talented young playwright who's about to break nationally. This is a wonderful opportunity to see her work in an intimate space before she's snapped up by the country's biggest stages."

*Ching Chong Chinaman* features an impressive lineup of Bay Area actors. Returning to Impact's stage is Dennis Yen, last seen at La Val's as the Narrator of the first three episodes of *Money & Run*. He's joined by



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Cindy Im (Cal Arts MFA graduate), Lisa Kang (*Satellites* at the Aurora, *Immortal Heart* at Word for Word), Arthur Keng (*King Lear* at Cal Shakes, *Take Me Out* at New Conservatory), Sung Min Park (*First Person Shooter* at SF Playhouse, *Ubu for President* at Shotgun Players), and Pearl Wong (18 Mighty Mountain Warriors).

**“It’s shocking to me that plays with Asian-American themes are produced so rarely now in the Bay Area,”** remarks Hillman, who has a Ph.D. in dramatic art from UC Berkeley and teaches a course on Asian-American theatre at Cal State East Bay. **“Impact is excited to help reverse that trend with this bold, irreverent new comedy.”**

Tickets for *Ching Chong Chinaman* are \$17 general, \$10 student/senior/TBA members. **Advance tickets, featuring \$15 general tickets, are available online at [impacttheatre.com](http://impacttheatre.com).** Pay-what-you-wish rush tickets are available for performances the first two weekends, beginning a half hour before the performance.

For more information, please call 510-464-4468 or visit [impacttheatre.com](http://impacttheatre.com). Press photos in a variety of formats and PR archives can be found at [impacttheatre.com/press](http://impacttheatre.com/press).

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Lauren Yee** has been a finalist for the Princess Grace Award, the Jerome Fellowship, the MacDowell residency, and the Humana Festival’s Heideman Award. She has received commissions from Minneapolis’s Mu Performing Arts, San Francisco’s PlayGround, and New York’s O’Neill Festival. Her work has premiered in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Boston, and other cities. Locally, she has worked with Asian American Theater Company, Bindlestuff Studio, Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, City Lights Theatre Company, PlayGround, and Three Wise Monkeys. Her full-length *Ching Chong Chinaman* was showcased at the 2007 New York Fringe and will premiere at Impact Theatre in 2008 and Mu Performing Arts in 2009. Honors include Kumu Kahua Theatre’s 2007 Pacific Rim Prize, the 2007 Yale Playwrights Festival, and PlayGround’s 2008 June Anne Baker Prize. She has received fellowships from the Byrdcliffe Artist Colony, the New York Mills Arts Retreat, and the Edward F. Albee Foundation. BA: Yale University.

**Desdemona Chiang** is a third-year student in the MFA Directing program at the University of Washington School of Drama. Her recent directing credits include *Ching Chong Chinaman*, *Money and Run 4: Go Straight*, *No Chaser*, and *Crumble (Lay Me Down, Justin Timberlake)* at Impact Theatre in Berkeley CA, where she is also an Artistic Associate. She has worked on new play development with SIS Productions in Seattle, the Bay Area Playwrights Foundation, the San Francisco Young Playwrights Festival, Ross Valley Alternative Works, and the Asian American Theater New Works Incubator. This fall, she will be directing *Women of Tra-chis* at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. She received her BA in Theatre Studies from the University of California at Berkeley and is a member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab.

## **ABOUT IMPACT THEATRE**

Since 1996 Impact Theatre has spoken to a new generation of theatregoers and enthusiasts alike who want to see something fresh and bold on stage. Impact’s audience ranges from students to professionals to seniors, all of whom share a taste for exciting, unpretentious theatre that doesn’t conform to stale assumptions of what constitutes high culture. Impact’s primary mission is to directly contribute to the future of American theatre through focusing on new plays by emerging playwrights. Impact has produced 17 full-length world premieres, including 12 by local playwrights, as well as dozens of world-premiere ten-minute plays

by burgeoning writers nationwide in the *Impact Briefs* series. Impact also prides itself on its fast-paced, vital, contemporary spins on classic drama. Impact shows compel, provoke, and inspire, at prices everyone can afford. And nowhere else in the Bay Area can you eat pizza and drink beer while you're watching a play. **The *East Bay Express* named Impact "Best Small Theatre Company 2008."**

## **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

**PRODUCTION:** Impact Theatre presents *Ching Chong Chinaman*  
by Lauren Yee  
directed by Desdemona Chiang

**WHEN:** September 5–October 10, 2008  
Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays at 8pm

**WHERE:** La Val's Subterranean, 1834 Euclid Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709

**ADMISSION:** Advance tickets: \$15 general / \$10 students/seniors/TBA  
At the door: \$17 general / \$10 students/seniors/TBA  
First two weekends pay-what-you-wish rush, at the door, cash only, no reservations

**MORE INFO:** [impacttheatre.com](http://impacttheatre.com) · press photos and PR archives at [impacttheatre.com/press](http://impacttheatre.com/press)

**BOX OFFICE:** [impacttheatre.com](http://impacttheatre.com) · [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com)

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