

AGAIN

book & additional lyrics by **KATIE KA VANG**

music & lyrics by **MELISSA LI**



directed by **NANA DAKIN**

THEATER MU | MAR 29 - APR 16, 2023

THEATER MU'S 30TH

ANNIVERSARY SEASON



**AAPI GENERATIONS
CONFERENCE**

May 19-21 | Park Square Theatre

A national theater reunion ft. breakout sessions, play readings, and guests David Henry Hwang, Amy Hill, and Mu co-founder Rick Shiomi.

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SHOW INFORMATION

SONG ORDER:

"One Day at a Time"	Mai See
"Quest"	Quest
"She Holds the Key"	Mai See
"Are You Fucking Kidding Me?"	Mai See
"Sometimes You Gotta Say No"	Mai See, Quest
"Santorini"	Shia
"Be the Boss of Your Life"	Quest, Mai See
"Constipation"	Mai See, Company
"Lifeboat"	Shia
"Not Okay"	Company
"The Messenger"	Broc, Mai See
"We Hold the Key (Reprise)"	Shia, Mai See
"Is This the End?/One Day at a Time (Reprise)"	Mai See, Quest

RUN TIME: One hour and 45 minutes, no intermission

CONTENT WARNING: Chronic and life-threatening disease, strong language.

FIND OUR QUIET SPACE: If you should need to exit the production at any point, there is a designated space upstairs (accessible by elevators or stairs) for you to rest and find resources. This space is intended for patrons who need to take a break from sensory or emotional stimuli.

COVID-19 POLICIES: Masks, preferably KN95s or N95s, are required at all Sunday performances (Apr 2, 9, 16). For the safety of our performers and audiences, Mu recommends guests wear masks while attending any show. For Theater Mu's full COVID protocols, visit theatermu.org/covid.

SPECIAL THANKS

American Hi Tech Rentals, Audioquip, David Pisa, Jeremy Stoller, Jennifer Weir, Jungle Theater, KNOCK, inc., Magers & Quinn Booksellers, Meghan Gaffney, Midway Used & Rare Books, Monkey Wrench Productions, Old Log Theatre, Playwrights' Center, Rebecca Noon, Rooted to Last, Stages Theatre Company, Stephen DiMenna, Wanderlust Productions

PERFORMANCE VENUE

Mixed Blood Theatre is a social justice organization that has used theater to disrupt injustice since 1976. The theater company is committed to catalyzing action and change through art, and its work is guided by deep community engagement and rooted in radical hospitality.

**PLAYWRIGHTS'
CENTER**

Again was developed
with the support of
Playwrights' Center.



**JEROME
FOUNDATION**

Again was developed
with the support of the
Jerome Foundation.

AGAIN

book & additional lyrics by **KATIE KA VANG**

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directed by **NANA DAKIN**

CAST

in order of appearance

Mai See	DEXIENG YANG*
Shia	PAGNIA XIONG*
Broc/Doc	AARON KOMO*
Quest	MELODY HER
Mai See/Quest (understudy), voiceover	HAVY NGUYEN
Broc/Doc (understudy)	MATT SWANSON
Shia (understudy)	MICHELLE VANG

Musicians: **BOB KELLY** (piano/conductor), **KYLE SIMONS BAKER** (guitar Mar 29-Apr 12), **ERI ISOMURA** (drums), **TEIANA NAKANO** (cello), **CHRIS STREED** (guitar Apr 13-16), **SHAWN WANG** (bass)

CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

Orchestrator	BRONWEN CHAN
Music Director	DENISE PROSEK
Stage Manager	HALEY WALSH*
Production Manager	JAY CLAIRE
Scenic Designer	ALICE ENDO
Costume Designer	KHAMPHIAN VANG
Lighting Designer	ERIK PAULSON
Sound Designer	C ANDREW MAYER
Properties Designer	KENJI SHOEMAKER
Choreographer	SANDY AGUSTIN
Assistant Director	SUNNY THAO
Assistant Music Director	BOB KELLY
Assistant Stage Manager	CHRISTIAN ERBEN
Asst. Stage Manager Swing/Sub	MILES LATHAM
Developmental Dramaturg	BEN KRYWOSZ
Script Assistant	CODY KOUR
Music Assistant & Copyist	ELISA MONEY
Technical Director	GAEA DILL-D'ASCOLI
Sound Engineer	RICHARD GRAHAM
Head Electrician	RAY STEVESON
COVID Safety Coordinator	KENNEDY JONES
Run Crew	OLIVIA NYMAN
Wardrobe	OLIVIA SANDS
House Manager	ABIGAIL CHAGOLLA

Accessibility Providers: ASL interpreters **JENAE FARNHAM** and **ALYSSA HILL**, supertitle operator **JOHANNA LANDAVERDE**, audio describer **LAURIE PAPE HADLEY**

Fabricators & Technicians: Carpenters **BONNIE GRITTNER**, **JACOB "LANCE" KROHN**, **WHITNEY LEMING-SALISBURY**, **EMMA MURPHY**; electricians **SHANNON ELLIOT**, **JACK HINZ**, **KURT JUNG**, **ELLIE SIMONETT**; stitcher **BECCA MICHELLE CLAYTON**

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ERIC HAGEN, JUCOBY JOHNSON, DANA LEE THOMPSON

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APR 16

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A NOTE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Thank you for joining us for Theater Mu's 30th season—our Pearl Anniversary!

To mark the occasion, we are featuring stories by longtime and beloved Mu artists, including the musical you're experiencing today: *Again*, with book and additional lyrics by Katie Ka Vang and music and lyrics by Melissa Li.

Again embodies the breadth and depth of Asian American work that is creating the new American canon. Yet Katie's script tells the most personal and vulnerable of stories—one that gives voice to a community that's the largest Asian American population in Minnesota, yet is often the most underrepresented. What's beautiful about *Again* is that it allows its Hmong American women to live in the fullness of who they are.

At Mu, we believe universality can only be found through specificity. Katie uplifts this too, and she has sculpted a Hmong American story that honors the depth and complicated nature of her characters and speaks to the universality of their experience. Whether we've battled cancer ourselves or cared for a loved one, no matter what family we call our own, most of us can connect with *Again's* humor and heartbreak.

One of our associate artists, Katie has been part of Mu for nearly half of its lifetime. She started as an actor in 2009, and then in 2011, we produced the world premiere of her first play, *WTF*. In the 12 years since, the world and Katie herself have gone through immense change, struggle, and transformation, and from that, *Again* came into being. We are honored and grateful to commission, develop, and produce Katie's first musical, with two other artists we greatly admire, Melissa and director Nana Dakin, who are both making their Mu debuts.

As we look toward the next 30 years, it is this confluence of longtime Mu artists and those new to our space that defines our future. We're proud that this production features three Hmong American women playing the three Hmong American roles, including two who are making their Mu debuts. Alice Endo came up through our production fellowship and assistantship program and is now our scenic designer, and early-career playwright Sunny Thao is joining us as assistant director. Finally, choreography is by Sandy Agustin, who has been part of Mu since its first New Eyes Festival and mainstage production in 1993.

It's the multiple generations of artists who make Mu who we are. As we move through our Pearl Anniversary Season, our AAPI Generations Conference in May will be both a theater reunion of sorts and a view of the future. We will honor the elders who paved the way before us and made everything we do possible, and usher in the early-career artists who are carving the path ahead.

We invite you to join us. Ultimately, it is you we celebrate, our audiences and supporters. Without you, Theater Mu would not exist, and we look forward to creating and sharing 30 more years of theater together, starting with *Again*. Enjoy!



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is fluid and cursive, appearing to read 'Lily Tung Crystal'.

**LILY TUNG CRYSTAL
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

What do we need to transform ourselves? How is change and transformation actually seeded on a personal and societal level?

Again gives us the opportunity to pay attention to one of the smallest, most everyday of change-makers: a conversation. And this seed of change is held in the smallest container it needs to grow, which is a relationship. In this story, the greatest change and overcoming of obstacles isn't born from a heroic journey of actions, but from the words these characters say to one another. An accumulation of meaningful conversations leads to an accumulation of growth rooted in relationship. "Small is all," writes adrienne maree brown. "How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale." What moves me about *Again* is that it shows us how great transformation comes from conversations.

This large, universal message is also held in the specific experience of Hmong American women. Through the cultural specificity of these characters, we see the universality of struggling with sibling relationships, of being impacted by our heritage, and having the desire to tell our own stories. On a grimmer note, the specificity of Mai See's and Quest's cancer journeys also shows us the universal nature of being thrown off course by cancer, whether we are battling the disease ourselves or caring for loved ones in that process.

We need to value the power of our conversations, our relationships, and underrepresented voices. This is how we will grow, change, and transform. Katie Ka Vang, Melissa Li, and the entire team of *Again* are here to show us how to laugh—and cry—and sing—our way there.



Nana Dakin (bottom center), Katie Ka Vang (bottom left), Melissa Li (right), and the *Again* cast on the first day of rehearsal.

NANA DAKIN
DIRECTOR

CAST



MELODY HER (QUEST)

Melody (she/her) is a Hmong/Laotian American artist and social justice activist, born and raised in Minnesota. She studies at St. Catherine University, majoring in political science and

economics with a minor in criminal justice. When Melody's not in school, she loves to spend time with her family and friends, travel, and appreciate the outdoors. Music and theater have always been a part of Melody's life (credited to her musically gifted parents), and she hopes to use her

love of art to strive toward social justice in her community. *Again* is Melody's first experience within the Twin Cities' theater community, and she's beyond grateful that she gets to share it with the incredible company of Theater Mu.



AARON KOMO* (BROC/DOC)

Aaron (he/him) is happy to return to the stage with his Theater Mu debut after a seven-year hiatus. Thank you Mu family, Nana, Katie, Melissa, Lily, and this company for the warm welcome. Off-Broadway: *Tamar of the River*. Regional: *Disney's Mulan* (Tuacahn), *Romeo & Juliet* (MN Opera), *The King and I* (Olney Theatre). BM musical the-

ater: NYU. Offstage, Aaron is associate director of client success at the Social Lights and one half of thekomos.com. | @aaronkomo



PAGNIA XIONG* (SHIA)
Pagnia (she/her) is an internationally recognized Hmong American music artist and creative producer. Using her voice, experiences, and personality, she has championed women's empowerment, mental health, and dreaming big for nearly two decades. At 16, Pagnia made her acting debut at a local children's theater in her hometown of Eau Claire, WI. Four years later, her passion for performing led to a record deal. Since 2006, she has performed globally for over 200,000 people and recorded three full-length albums. Her creative work has garnered over 40,000 followers and reached more than 1.4 million video views. Two decades later, she is excited to revive her passion for performance through the marriage of music and acting in her first Theater Mu production, *Again*.



DEXIENG "DAE" YANG* (MAI SEE)
Dexieng (she/her) is a Hmong American playwright, actor, and teaching artist located in the Twin Cities, MN, area. Dexieng (pronounced Day-Sing) graduated from Augsburg University ('21), majoring in theater with concentrations in playwrighting, dramaturgy, and directing. She has worked with Theater Mu in *The Korean Drama Addict's Guide To Losing Your Virginity*, *The Last Firefly*, and *Man Of God*. Her other works include *Good Kids* at the MN Fringe Festival, *Neighbors* at History Theatre, *Shul* at Six Points Theater, *Mercutio Loves Romeo Loves Juliet Loves* at the William Inge Festival, *Sounds Inside* at Red Eye Theater, and *The Humans* at Park Square Theatre. She is currently a company member of *Breaking Ice* with Pillsbury House Theatre.



HAVY NGUYEN (MAI SEE/QUEST UNDERSTUDY)
Havy (she/her) is so excited to be working with Theater Mu. She has just moved to the Twin Cities from Richmond, VA, where she got her BFA from the Virginia Commonwealth University. Her recent credits include Ali in *Mamma Mia!*, Adonia in *Atlantis: A New Musical*, and Gabrielle in *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella*, all at Virginia Repertory Theatre. Other credits include #25

in *The Wolves* (Cadence Theatre Company), Phantom in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Richmond Triangle Players), and Little Red Riding Hood in *Into the Woods*. She'd like to thank her family and Jordan for always loving and supporting her.



MATT SWANSON (BROC/DOC UNDERSTUDY)
Matt (he/him) is thrilled to be making his debut with Theater Mu. He has previously appeared locally in *Mamma Mia!*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Man of La Mancha*. Offstage, he enjoys golf, darts, and is an unapologetic karaoke addict.



MICHELLE VANG (SHIA UNDERSTUDY)
Michelle (she/her) is a Hmong American actress, singer, content creator, and writer. She graduated from the University of Minnesota Duluth with a BA in theatre.

She has worked on *Time's Up*, an adaptation of Hrotsvitha's *Paphnutius* (ensemble), and toured Kalamazoo, MI, for the Mostly Medieval Theatre Festival. She has written and directed *Ob Lub Suab, Ib Haiu Neeg* (Different Voice, Same People), a jukebox musical for Hmong Living In Unity and Balance (HLUB). Aside from theatre, she enjoys creating musical content for TikTok and Instagram. She is very excited to be a part of *Again* at Theater Mu.

CREATIVE & PRODUCTION



KATIE KA VANG (BOOK & ADD'L LYRICS)
Katie (she/her) is a Hmong American playwright and theater artist. Her plays include *WTF*, *Hmong Bollywood*, *Fast FWD Motions*, *Final Round*, *Spirit Trust*, and

Fertile Grounds. Her work has been developed and presented at Pangea World Theater, Pillsbury House Theatre, Theater Mu, Leviathan Lab, Bushwick Starr, Brown University, the Royal Court Theatre, the Walker Art Center, Out North Art House, and more. She has received fellowships and grants from the Playwrights' Center, Jerome Foundation, NET, MAP, Knight Foundation, NPN, MRAC, MSAB, and more. She was a member of East West Players 2021/22 playwrights group. She is currently the 22/23 McKnight Fellow at the Playwrights' Center and

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a 2023/24 Constellation fellow. She holds an MFA in playwriting from Brown University.



**MELISSA LI
(MUSIC & LYRICS)**

Melissa Li (she/her) is a composer, lyricist, performer, and writer based in NYC and Montreal. She is a recipient of the 2023 ASCAP Harold Ad-

amson Lyric Award, 2021 Kleban Prize, 2007 Jonathan Larson Award, and was previously a Dramatists Guild Foundation fellow, a Lincoln Center Theater writer-in-residence, and a MacDowell fellow. Works include *Interstate* (NAMT, NYMF Outstanding Lyrics), *MISS STEP, Cancelled* (Keen Company), *Surviving the Nian* (the Theater Offensive, 2007 IRNE winner, best new play). Her works have been presented by 5th Avenue Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, MCC, Musical Theater Factory, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Signature Theatre, San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and more. In addition to working in theater, Melissa is currently writing and developing projects for film and television.



NANA DAKIN (DIRECTOR)

Nana (she/her) is a queer Thai American director of new work, classics, and devised performance based in NYC. Her work pursues social equity by examining the way culture is constructed

and unsettling dormant biases. Recent credits include: *Eurydice* (American Shakespeare Center), *Mammelephant* (Superhero Clubhouse/122CC), *Sorry/Not Sorry* (Ars Nova ANT Fest), *Love Letter to a Seed* (Clubbed Thumb Winterworks), *White Pearl* (Royal Court Theatre), *Richard III* (Lenfest Center for the Arts). In NYC, Nana has developed new work with Atlantic Theater Company, the Civilians, New York Theatre Workshop, the Playwrights Realm, and more. Nana is in the 2022/23 writer director lab at Soho Rep and is the board president of the Thai Theatre Foundation. MFA theatre directing: Columbia University. | nanadakin.com



**SANDY AGUSTIN
(CHOREOGRAPHER)**

Sandy (she/her) has a long relationship with Mu, beginning with *Mask Dance*, the first show Mu produced 30 years ago, and being part of its artistic core. She is proud

and honored to be part of Katie Ka Vang's work and to be collaborating with the *Again* team. Sandy has her own business called Cre8tive

Navigators and uses her 35-plus years in arts and nonprofits to guide people as they find "true North," whether team building, navigating nonprofit board governance, or helping individuals through terminal illness and death. She is an advocate of all animals as well as a board member of Maji Ya Chai Land Sanctuary, a BIPOC-centered retreat space near Two Harbors, and Speaking Out Collective. Her most recent loves: her Australian cattle dog, Raydar, and the Argentine tango.



**KYLE SIMONS BAKER
(GUITAR)**

Kyle (he/him) is thrilled to make his Theater Mu debut with this production of *Again*. Kyle is a freelance guitarist and educator in and

around the Twin Cities. He has played in productions at Old Log Theatre, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, Jungle Theater, History Theatre, Lyric Arts, and Park Square Theatre. Additionally, he maintains a private teaching studio. Kyle studied guitar performance at Denison University and holds a master's degree from McNally Smith College of Music.



**BRONWEN CHAN
(ORCHESTRATOR)**

Bronwen (she/her) is buzzed to be back with the Twin Cities theater community! She was last here for *Interstate* at Mixed Blood (music assistant/key 2) and is gladly

making her orchestration debut with Mu. Her vocal arrangements for "Who Am I" by Kit Yan and Melissa Li can be heard on *Songs of the Phoenix*, recorded by the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus. She is also a music assistant for theater and film. Credits include *MISS STEP* (Playwrights Horizon), *Annie Live!* (NBC), *Spirited* (Apple TV), and upcoming releases of *Snow White* (Disney) and *Wicked* (NBCUniversal).



**JAY CLAIRE
(PRODUCTION MANAGER)**

Jay (they/them) is a Twin Cities-based carpenter, electrician, and crew person. They are thrilled to be working with Theater Mu this season! Prior to their

time with Theater Mu, they worked as production manager for Mixed Blood Theatre, where their production credits included *Animate, imagine a u.s. without racism*, and a three-stop national tour of *The Most Beautiful Home... Maybe*. Jay has made theater in zoos, ware-

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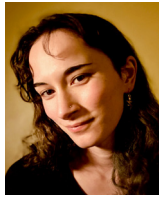


houses, community gardens, concert halls, and public parks, including two summer tours with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. When they are not working with Theater Mu, Jay can be found in the scene shop at the University of Minnesota. They live in Saint Paul with three good pals and their wonderful partner.



**GAEA DILL-D'ASCOLI
(TECHNICAL DIRECTOR)**

Gaea (she/her) is a free-lance theater and teaching artist in the Twin Cities. She has been a technical director, stage manager, production manager, carpenter, puppeteer, and run crew all around the cities. This is her first show with Theater Mu. In addition to theatrical arts, Gaea has hung several photography shows and has published creative nonfiction and fiction writing pieces. She holds a master's degree in arts and cultural management from St. Mary's University and is working on a second master's degree in science writing from Johns Hopkins University. | gaeadd.com



**ALICE ENDO
(SCENIC DESIGNER)**

Alice (she/her) is an emerging theater artist of many disciplines. She has designed for groups such as Threads Dance Project, Exposed Brick Theatre, and Blue Water Theater Company. This is her fourth collaboration with Theater Mu, and her first as a lead designer. She is grateful to the support of Theater Mu's staff and the wonderful production team, and hopes you enjoy *Again*.



**CHRISTIAN ERBEN
(ASST. STAGE MANAGER)**

Christian (she/her) is a contract stage manager based in the Twin Cities. Originally from Austin, TX, she moved to Minnesota last fall and is so excited to be working with Theater Mu! She recently worked on *Beauty & the Beast* through the Broadway @ the Ordway series at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in Saint Paul, where she served as a company management assistant and the COVID safety manager. She recently returned to Austin, TX, to be the stage manager for *The Last Five Years* at TexARTS Association, where she has also worked on productions of *The Full Monty* (stage manager) and *Annie* (assistant stage manager). Love to Lydia, and enjoy the show!



**RICHARD GRAHAM
(SOUND ENGINEER)**

Richard (he/him) is a free-lance sound designer and engineer and the sound supervisor at Park Square Theatre. He is excited to rejoin the Mu crew after

Man of God, *peerless*, and *Hot Asian Doctor Husband*. Recent: MN Opera: *Cold Air Rises* (mix engineer); Walking Shadow: *Feast* (sound designer); Ethnic Dance Theatre: *Reflections on the Danube* (mix engineer); Park Square: *The Snowy Day*, *Fire in the New World*, *The Humans* (all as supervisor), *Rocky Horror* (assistant lighting designer); Artistry: *Shrek* (mix engineer); Off-Leash Area: *Mulier Dierum* (sound supervisor); Mixed Blood: *Interstate (A2)*. Richard is a member of the Theatrical Sound Designers and Composers Association. | richardgraham.net



ERI ISOMURA (DRUMS)

Eri (she/her) is a free-lance percussionist and a co-founder of 10th Wave Chamber Music Collective, a Twin Cities-based, Asian American-led ensemble performing engaging classical music by today's local or underrepresented composers. She is also a member of Heartland Marimba Ensemble. She has recorded for the Minnesota Opera, Jeremy Messersmith, Aby Wolf, and Asuka Kakitani. She has released a self-produced album, *Musical Moments for Cello and Marimba*. She is percussion faculty at St. Olaf College and Yinghua Academy and is president of the Percussive Arts Society Minnesota Chapter. She holds performance degrees from St. Olaf College (BM) and the Boston Conservatory (MM). She is a Koide cymbals artist. | eriisomura.com, 10thwave.org



**BOB KELLY
(ASST. MUSIC DIRECTOR,
PIANO/CONDUCTOR)**

Bob is a Minneapolis-based pianist, music director, and composer. Bob is thrilled to be back at Theater Mu, having recently music directed the Lunar New Year Cabaret. Other music directing credits include *West Side Story* (assistant music director, Sioux City Symphony Orchestra); *Finding Home*, *the songs of Ricky Ian Gordon* (music director/orchestrator, NYU Steinhardt); Broadway's *Amazing Grace* (keys sub/music assistant); Acting Manitou Theater Camp (music director/teaching artist); and Celebrity Cruises (orchestra keys player/solo pia-

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nist). Bob is a member of the Theatre Now New York Musical Writers Lab, and his solo EP *Open Road* was released in 2021. He is a graduate of St. Olaf College and the NYU Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. | bobkelly-music.com



CODY KOUR (SCRIPT ASST.)

Cody (he/him) is a Khmer American writer, teacher, and theatre artist whose main interests lie in lyric poetry, late night drives, and keeping plants alive. He

has always enjoyed theatre and the performing arts, and is grateful to have worked on *Cambodian Rock Band* with Theater Mu/Jungle Theater and *Vietgone* at the Guthrie Theater as a dramaturgy fellow and rap consultant assistant, respectively. He has also been known to jump onto the improv stage once every blue moon. In the future, Cody hopes to continue to collaborate on projects as a dramaturg, performer, or assistant because he loves being able to work with so many talented artists and is always learning from them.



BEN KRYWOSZ (DEV. DRAMATURG)

Ben (he/him) is the co-founder of Nautilus Music-Theater, where he directs fully staged productions, hosts Rough Cuts (a monthly works-in-progress series), leads the

Wesley Balk Opera/Music-Theater Institute, and facilitates Composer-Librettist Studios around the country. His productions include local and world premieres of *Twisted Apples*, *Ordinary Days*, *The View from Here*, *Joan of Arc*, *John and Jen*, *Sister Stories*, *Orpheus and Euridice*, and *I Am Anne Frank*, as well as innovative stagings of *Carousel*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Into the Woods*, and *The Fantasticks*. Ben also serves as a lecturer, group facilitator, community organizer, and administrative consultant, and teaches classes in collaboration. His most recent production, *Moonlit Walk Home*, premiered at Nautilus last spring.



MILES LATHAM (ASM SWING/SUB)

Miles (he/him) is a junior at Macalester College double majoring in theater and creative writing. He's also a stage manager, designer, and occasional camp coun-

selor. Miles has previously worked in theater at Macalester and in New York and Iowa. *Again* is his first show with Theater Mu! Many thanks to

the cast, crew, and production team! Upcoming productions include costume design for *North* as part of Macalester's Spring Dance Concert.



C ANDREW MAYER (SOUND DESIGNER)

C Andrew (he/him) has worked with many fine theatre companies in the Twin Cities area, most recently including the Jungle, Latté Da, History Theatre, Pillsbury

House, Illusion, and Six Points, and nationally including Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Colorado Opera in Denver, Everyman in Baltimore, and ACT in San Francisco. Previously at Mu, he designed *Today Is My Birthday*, *Asiamnesia*, *Circle Around the Island*, and *Happy Valley*. He was a McKnight theatre artist fellow and won an Audelco Award for his design for Carlyle Brown's *Pure Confidence* at 59E59, NYC. In summer, he serves as the producing director of the Acadia Repertory Theatre on Mount Desert Island in Maine.



ELISA MONEY (MUSIC ASST. & COPYIST)

Elisa (they/she/he) is a musical Swiss army knife from Vancouver, Canada.

They have contributed their talents to productions at the 5th Avenue Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Village Theatre, the Arsht Center, Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT (Seattle), 54 Below, and others across the US and Canada. They have produced several productions with Michael Brannon Wiles and are published alongside Albert Evans, David Armstrong, and Jason DeBord. Recently, they had the honor of music directing *MISS STEP* (Village Theatre) and music directed, arranged, orchestrated, and performed in *Revenge Song* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). Their recorded music is available on all streaming platforms: *Roaring*, *The Seed EP*, and *Canada, PA*. Up next: *Lydia & the Troll* at Seattle Repertory Theatre. | elisamoney.com, [@elisamoneymusic](https://www.instagram.com/elisamoneymusic)



TEIANA NAKANO (CELLO)

Teiana (she/her) is incredibly excited to be a part of Theater Mu's production of *Again*. She has been playing the cello for over 20 years and has been a member of the Portland Youth Philharmonic and the St. Olaf Orchestra. Teiana works as an admin person at a nonprofit, and is also the vocalist in a local band called the Umamies.



**ERIK PAULSON
(LIGHTING DESIGNER)**

Erik (he/him) is happy to join Theater Mu for the first time to create this brand new musical. As resident scenic and lighting designer at Old Log Theatre, Erik has en-

joyed inventing the visual worlds of plays over the past decade. Erik has designed regionally and locally including Palm Beach Opera, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Great River Shakespeare Festival, Madison Opera, History Theatre, Park Square Theatre, and Nautilus Music-Theater. He is proud to be a founding member of the Great River Shakespeare Festival in Winona. Erik shares his home in Minneapolis with his lovely wife and son. See his work from the last 25 years at erikepaulson.com.



**DENISE PROSEK
(MUSIC DIRECTOR)**

Denise (she/her) has worked extensively as a music director, pianist, composer, orchestrator, and arranger for the past 30 years.

As resident music director and co-founder of Theater Latté Da, she has music directed over 50 mainstage productions, including *Chicago*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Ragtime*, *Twelve Angry Men*, and *Five Points*. She was music director for Theater Mu's *Into The Woods* and *Little Shop Of Horrors*, and additionally has directed/conducted for Guthrie, Children's Theatre Company, Park Square, and Ordway, among others. Denise holds a bachelor of music from St. Olaf College. She was named outstanding musical director (2006, 2008) by the Star Tribune, theater artist of the year (2012) from Lavender, and was honored to be a 2013/14 Playwrights' Center/McKnight theater artist fellow.



**KENJI SHOEMAKER
(PROPERTIES DESIGNER)**

Kenji (he/they) is a Minneapolis-based props person and stage manager. This is Kenji's fourth production with Mu, having previously worked on *Man of God*,

peerless, and *Fast Company*. Other recent collaborations include: *Bina's Six Apples* (Children's Theatre Company), *The Moors* (American Players Theatre), *Thunder Knocking on the Door* (Ten Thousand Things), *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* (Pillsbury House Theatre), *Tuck Everlasting* (Stages Theatre Company), and *The Unplugging* (New Native Theatre).



**SUNNY THAO
(ASST. DIRECTOR)**

Sunny (she/her) is excited to return to Theater Mu as *Again's* assistant director. Her previous theater experiences are with Mu (*Man of God* as assistant stage manager, 2022

Emerging Playwrights' Circle cohort member) and SEA Echoes Through River (lead artist). She has also written and performed for Pangea World Theater's Lake Story Circles and East Side Freedom Library. As an artist, she is drawn to works exploring cultural identities and familial history, and elevating Southeast Asian stories. In her free time, she co-hosts a podcast, *Beyond Friends*, and she wants to thank her family and friends for their support. Enjoy the show!



**KHAMPHIAN VANG
(COSTUME DESIGNER)**

Khamphian (she/her) is a Twin Cities-based freelance designer-artist with a background in fashion and costume design. *Again* is her fourth show with Theater

Mu. Previous credits with Theater Mu include *peerless*, *Man of God*, and *Cambodian Rock Band*. She has worked with several theater companies within the Twin Cities area, and most recently with Minnesota Opera on *The Song Poet*. Khamphian is grateful to have worked on *Again* with this creative and production team to give voice to the stories that reflect the Minnesota community.



**HALEY WALSH*
(STAGE MANAGER)**

Haley (she/her) is a freelance AEA stage manager based in the Twin Cities. She has worked with Illusion Theater, MN Dance Theatre, Collide Theatrical Dance Company, History Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre, Theater Mu, Pillsbury House Theatre, and Minnesota Jewish Theatre (now Six Points), among others. When she's not stage managing, you can find her working as an event coordinator. This is her second show with Theater Mu.



SHAWN WANG (BASS)

Shawn (he/him) is an aspiring jazz bassist from Reno, NV, where he graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno. A recent transplant to the Twin Cities, Shawn has ingrained himself into the

incredible music scene of the Twin Cities, getting the opportunity to play with many jazz mainstays in the area. Shawn is very excited to be working with Theater Mu on *Again* and grateful for Theater Mu's mission of promoting Asian American stories through the arts.

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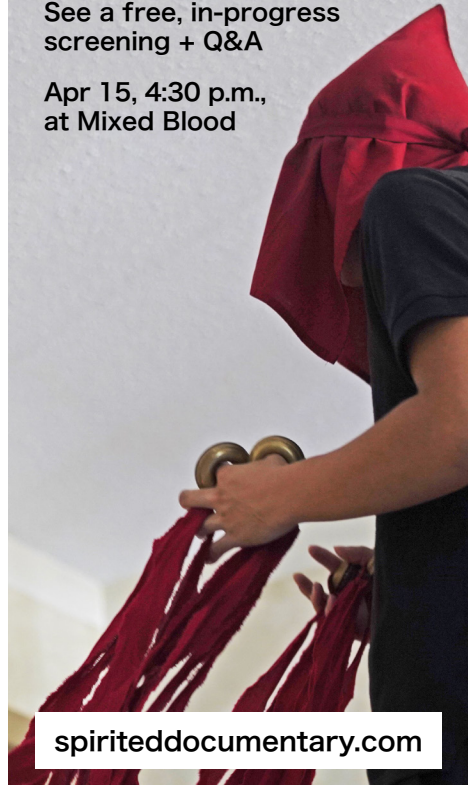


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Melissa Li (left) and Katie Ka Vang at the 2022 New Eyes Festival

KATIE KA VANG & MELISSA LI

The first public reading of *Again* was to a packed house that helped constitute one of Mu’s most attended New Eyes play reading festivals ever. Katie Ka Vang and Melissa Li had worked with director Nana Dakin and the workshop cast for a week, and on Apr 9, 2022, the audience fell under the spell woven by four actors, a piano, and a rich, candid story that so many people saw aspects of themselves in—despite the fact that the musical was still in development.

One audience member said, “This was the first time I’ve ever attended a performance where I could personally relate to the characters and work, both personally and culturally. I felt validated and affirmed in my experience as a Hmong woman.” Another wrote, “*Again* is a piece I feel like I’m gonna say, ‘I was in the room when...’ Those artists are crafting a gift for the world, and we are so lucky to see its first tender offering.”

Now, almost a year later, we chatted with Vang and Li about what inspired *Again*, how the story came together, and which songs were the most fun to write.

From the beginning, *Again* was a Mu commission (with help from the Jerome Fellowship). Why Mu?

KKV: I think you should ask Mu, “Why me (us)?” haha. Mu has always been one of my artistic homes, so it feels natural for me to work with Mu.

ML: Although it’s my first time working with Theater Mu, they have been really supportive every step of the process. For me, I was excited to work with a talented playwright such as Katie and debut this show in a vibrant theater city here in Minneapolis/Saint Paul.

Mai See is a memoirist, Quest is a filmmaker, and then, of course, *Again* is a musical. Was it purposeful to layer so many storytelling mediums?

KKV: Definitely not purposeful at first, but once we found them (or they found us) we leaned into it. Characters start to tell you who and what they want to be, same with the story. Having said that, writing for me often stems from characters first—like the

first images I'll have are of people—and then I'll put them together, and then I'll watch the conversations they have. It's part spirit, part corporeal, lots of drama-turgy, and it sort of teeters between those throughout the process.

Katie, you've mentioned that it was important to tell a cancer story from a Hmong American perspective. Could you tell me more about this, and how it played into the book and music?

KKV: That was the only thing I knew about this piece—that one of the characters had to be Hmong and touched by a cancer experience because I'm Hmong and representation matters. I just felt like why not? Why not Hmong and cancer? I don't personally think it's a show about cancer; I think it's about breaking barriers to realize and find the things one needs in life to feel whole.

Could you both talk about what it was like telling a story (at least partially) based in Katie's personal experiences?

KKV: For me it was cathartic, and sometimes very hard, but the music element made it much easier and funner and less serious. I think I really fell into the trope of a tortured writer, and working with Melissa and this musical gave me a new perspective on theater making and a new kind of magical tool I never gave myself permission to access until now.

ML: What I love about *Again* is the fact that it's not depressing, even though it's about cancer. It's very much in Katie's voice, and she's a funny, joyful, irreverent, edgy person. Her characters are the same way, so I really tried to reflect her vibe in the music and lyrics.

***Again* weaves together reality, memory, and dreams. Could you tell me more about this style and how it came to be? Or did it just happen organically?**

KKV: Definitely more organic. I almost never know what the structure will be until much later in the process. And the dream realm was actually something our director Nana Dakin lifted up, and when she mentioned it, it just opened a whole other door and that was exciting.

What has been the most fun song to write together? The most challenging? Why?

ML: The best songs are the ones where we work closely together, like "Be the Boss of Your Life" and "Lifeboat." Typically, Katie will present to me a clear idea of a scene that we'd both agreed should be a song. A lot of times, Katie will have even written a full scene with dialogue and really specific concepts. From there, I'll write the music and initial lyrics, and we'll tweak the lyrics together.

"Constipation" and "Santorini" are especially fun because they're sort of these humorous stand-alone songs that inject moments of levity into the show, but they also tie in to the larger themes of what the characters struggle with.

As *Again* has evolved, has there been anything that has surprised you about its story or the process of creating it?

ML: Everything has surprised me because the show has changed SO much since we first started working on it in 2020 (it was originally a two-hander)! So the story revealed itself over time only once we started writing—I'd never worked like that before, and it was scary, exhilarating, and at the end of the day, magical.

KKV: I'm always surprised, mostly because I almost NEVER know where I'm going as I write—which in the beginning is a good thing. I'm very much an intuitive writer, which is great in many ways, and also makes it more challenging to narrow down what's at the heart of the writing. So Melissa has been very patient with me.

If you were to describe this whole creative partnership in three words, what would they be?

KKV: Arduous mystic lake.

ML: Discovery, challenge, joy.

EXPLORE MORE

Check out the lobby for our paj ntaub (Hmong textiles) display, shop with Hmong artists and makers, and visit our resource table, which includes information about local cultural and wellness organizations as well as a copy of Mu's audience resource guide to *Again* (also available online).

Stop by bookstore Magers & Quinn to get *Staring Down the Tiger: Stories of Hmong American Women*, an anthology of true stories by women including locals Kao Kalia Yang and Gaosong V. Heu.

Take home *Again* with new Mu Merch created by Connie Xiong at KNOCK, inc., or by entering our \$5 raffle in the lobby for an autographed music or script page.

Come back on Apr 15 for a free screening and Q&A for the in-progress documentary *Spirited*, which follows filmmaker Joua Lee Grande's journey as she navigates news that she may become a spiritual healer.



Again merch designs by Connie Xiong at KNOCK, inc.

For more information, go to bit.ly/MuAgain and scroll down to the Explore More section.

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