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At the bar with Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew

Posted on May 31, 2016 by Moe



TMT: This is your first time as a Lead Artist in a TMT Lab. What was going through your mind when we approached you about tackling this piece of theater?

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew: First thought: My work is the exact opposite of Eugene O’Neill. Are they sure they are talking to the right person? Second, the ONE thing that puppets do not do well is talking.

Third, wait this is Target Margin I am

talking to? Fourth, what if I just do ALL of the text. Finally, holy shit I am doing the American CANNON!

TMT: You are a jack of all trades theatrical artist with a focus in video, lighting and puppetry. You pretty much can do anything. What can’t you do?

JOY: I can NEVER write like Eugene O’Neill.

Follow up. How many miles of VGA cable to do you have in your truck?

JOY: If there is an award for one single individual owing the large amount of copper in the form of wires, I am sure I am a close contestant for that award. I think Amazon thinks that I am a hoarder since I buy the same thing over and over again in multiples every time I buy them.

TMT: Tragedy strikes in Act IV. In what ways can puppets illuminate tragedy in which humans cannot?

JOY: The idea of using puppetry for this act comes from O’Neill’s repeated reference to “wax figures” and “mechanical” in the stage direction. All the characters, except for Hickey, are like a barely functional form floating in space; what they say is disconnected from their body and mind entirely. Hence I am interested in using puppets (in this case they are not even in human forms) to highlight disembodiment.

TMT: I hear there’s an abundance of popcorn in your piece. Describe your ideal batch of popcorn.

JOY: I actually don’t eat popcorn but I want to see if I can cue the popcorn machine to produce popcorn as needed.

TMT: What’s on tap for you next?

JOY: I am developing a new piece on urban development. The central question the piece asks is “Can we build a city for the future if all we know is now?” The inspiration of this piece comes from the Book of Genesis.

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew is a New York based theater designer in lighting and video. She is also a puppetry artist and has extensive experience with new works and adaptations in a collaborative setting. Some of her recent designs and collaborations include: The Civilian’s Paris Commune and In the Footprint, Aya Ogawa’s Oph3lia, Artifact and Yatra Samudra Samma: Journey to the Ocean (with Adhikaar and produced by The Foundry), Elizabeth Swados and Cecilia Rubino’s From the Fire (winner of the 2011 MTM: UK Musical Theatre Awards for Best Musical, Best New Production and

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Best Music). She was the recipient of the 2009-2011 NEA/TCG Career Development Program and teaches at Stony Brook University.

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