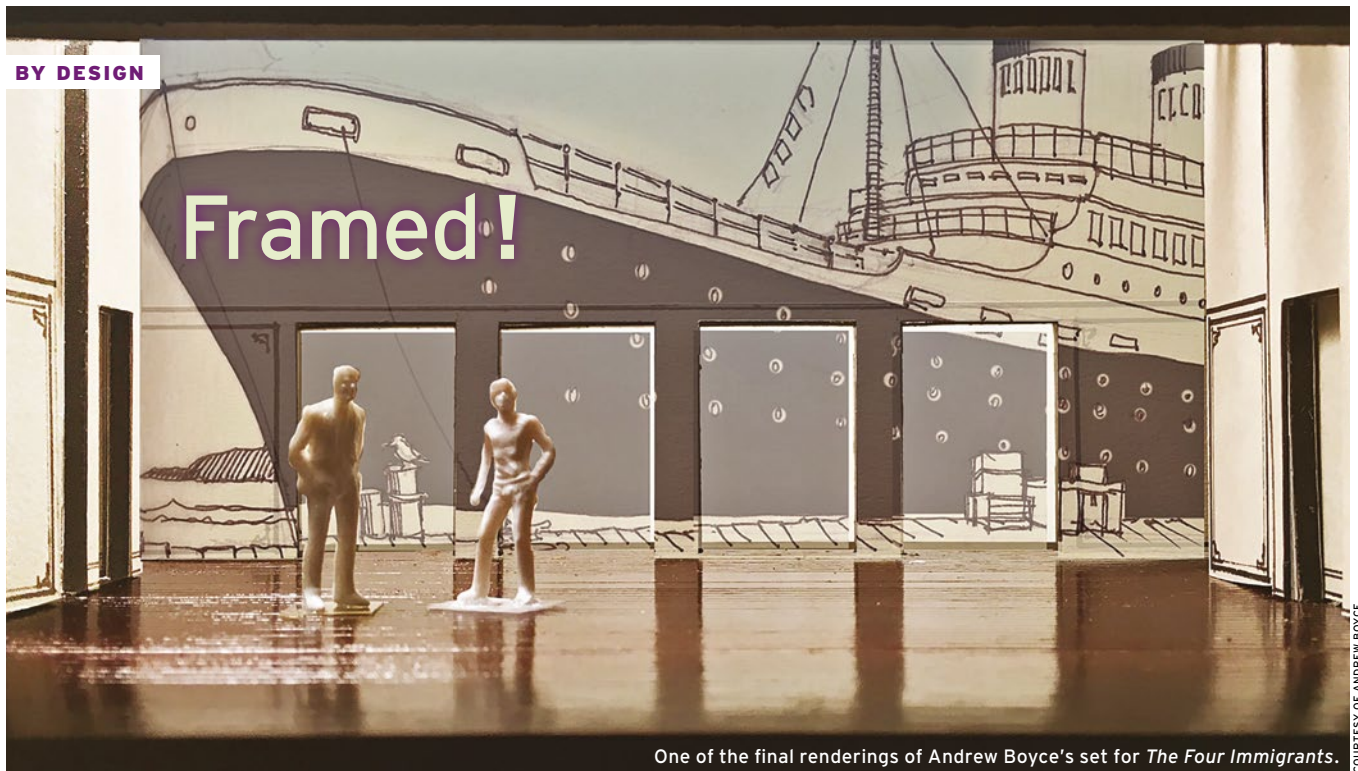


BY DESIGN

One of the final renderings of Andrew Boyce's set for *The Four Immigrants*.

COURTESY OF ANDREW BOYCE

THIS MONTH, THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY KICKS

off its 2017-18 season with the world premiere of *The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga*, created and composed by Min Kahng (July 12-Aug. 6). The musical, about four Japanese immigrants in turn-of-the-century San Francisco, is based on the graphic novel by Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama (translated by Frederik L. Schodt as *The Four Immigrants Manga*). For scenic designer Andrew Boyce, the biggest challenge was how to take a two-dimensional medium, manga, and make it live in three dimensions onstage. One key, Boyce says, is the “slapstick, vaudevillian sensibility” of Kahng’s music.

But the show’s main visual inspiration comes directly from the manga frames themselves. “There’s a lot of language about one character, or a couple of characters, literally jumping from frame to frame,” Boyce says of Kahng’s script. “What we came up with was this idea of an abstraction of frames, where we’re using sliding panels that have a thickness to them. And we also have a dark vertical line that moves

up and down, to carve out these different arrangements of space in the larger frame of the proscenium.

“That idea is also supported and reinforced by a fleet of individually rolling frames, which the actors will reposition and use to comic effect in different ways, and align with the larger machinery in the set, to create different spatial arrangements. It’s all kind of hand-crafted and spontaneous, and fluid.”

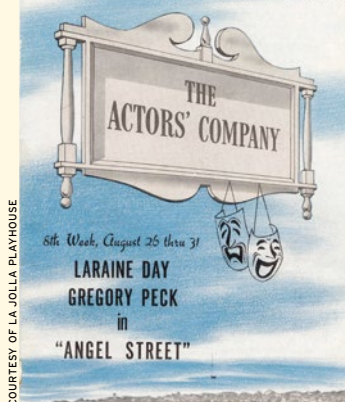
There will also be projections, says Boyce, including photographs and, hopefully, Kiyama’s drawings (“That’s the piece of the visual language that’s still most up in the air,” he says, speaking two months before the first preview). But the big idea, says Boyce, is to support “the visual language set out by the original artist, that allows the musical to kind of piggyback on that work, and telling the immigrant experience in an accessible and clever and subversively powerful way. And the design wants to lean into that aesthetic and capture that feeling of those comic strips as closely as we can.”

JULY/AUGUST

ALMANAC

BY THE OSCAR G. BROCKETT CENTER FOR THEATRE HISTORY AND CRITICISM

FIRST + SEASON + 1947



COURTESY OF LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE

195 YEARS AGO (1822)

In New York City, James Bellmont, a white man who by some accounts is a circus performer, attacks a young black man, Ira Aldridge—who will be one of the most prolific actors of the 19th century—five days before the victim’s 15th birthday. In August, George Bellmont, likely James’s brother, leads a riot at the African Theatre’s newly built theatre.

95 YEARS AGO (1922)

Goodman Theatre is established through a donation from William and Erna Goodman, in honor of

their late son, to the Art Institute of Chicago. Construction on a space will begin four months later. The new theatre will officially open in 1925 with a drama school and a professional acting company. The Goodman will go on to be the Windy City’s longest-running and largest professional nonprofit theatre company.

75 YEARS AGO (1942)

Paul Robeson performs in *Othello* in Cambridge, Mass., becoming the first African-American actor to play the title role opposite a white Desdemona in a professional U.S.

staging. The production, directed by Margaret Webster and featuring Uta Hagen as Desdemona and José Ferrer as Iago, will open in NYC the following year, where it will become the most successful Shakespeare production in Broadway history, running 296 performances.

70 YEARS AGO (1947)

La Jolla Playhouse opens its first season, which will run through the end of August, with *Night Must Fall* by Emyln Williams. The San Diego theatre founded by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire, and Mel Ferrer will stage eight