INDEPENDENT SHAKESPEARE CO. presents

Letters from Home

Written & Performed by Kalean Ung
Music by Chinary Ung
Directed by Marina McClure

Limited Engagement Opens Saturday, October 27
at Independent Studio in the
Atwater Crossing Arts + Innovation Complex

October 1, 2018…Los Angeles…Independent Shakespeare Co. (ISC), presenters of the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival announce the world premiere of interdisciplinary artist Kalean Ung’s original solo work, LETTERS FROM HOME, directed by Marina McClure, with music by Chinary Ung. LETTERS FROM HOME will play October 26 – November 18 at Independent Studio in the Atwater Crossing Arts + Innovation Complex, 3191 Casitas Ave., #130 in Atwater Village.

Kalean Ung’s multimedia solo show weaves together her Cambodian family’s refugee story; her own story as a bi-racial, first-generation American; and Shakespeare’s iconic female characters into a unique theatrical experience. In 2016, Kalean learned of a drawer in her father’s study, filled with letters from family and friends living in desperate circumstances in refugee camps and detailing their lives during the genocide with the rise of the Khmer Rouge. LETTERS FROM HOME examines her own life through the stories her father (acclaimed composer Chinary Ung) told her of arriving in America in the 1960s as a young music student, and his subsequent quest to rescue his family members.

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Developed in the ISC Studio in 2017, LETTERS FROM HOME has evolved through workshop development into a rich, grounded story of family, music, art, Shakespeare and how these are passed down through generations through memories, stories and letters from home.

Comments Director Marina McClure, “LETTERS FROM HOME is a play about discovered letters, but it is also how a father and daughter can live inside each other’s art to overcome intergenerational trauma. When we created the first workshop at ISC last November, the main audience we had in mind was Chinary – to present him with a birthday gift at a celebration at UC San Diego (where he is Distinguished Professor of Music, and at Chapman University, where he is a Presidential Fellow and Senior Composer in Residence). The workshop performance was for him and an audience of his peers and admirers, and also to be received by the community at ISC who have championed and celebrated Kalean as an artist. What a beautiful set of first audiences to incubate the work! After seeing the workshop, Chinary told Kalean, "Inner Voices has finally found its home and that is inside this play." After abstaining from writing for 10 years while he rescued family members from the Khmer Rouge, Chinary composed Inner Voices, for which he was awarded the prestigious international Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition (1989). Kalean was bathed in this work as an infant, which is how Chinary processed the trauma he endured. Now Kalean understands her legacy, that she as an artist comes from Inner Voices.

Comments ISC Artistic Director Melissa Chalsma, “ISC is committed to the well-being of our artists. One of the ways we express this is through creating pathways for our artists to develop their own unique creative expression. LETTERS FROM HOME has been a singularly rewarding experience for me as artistic director. From the first time Kalean shared with me her idea for the play, to the initial reading in the Studio as part of our iambic lab series, all the way through this fall’s world premiere: no project ISC has produced makes me prouder.

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LETTERS FROM HOME is a complex and richly rewarding theater experience. In it, Kalean negotiates the boundaries between her family’s frequently harrowing lived experiences and her own Southern Californian upbringing. She explores the impact of uncovering the past, and also the price of keeping it hidden. And through it all, she explores the power of art to help us make sense of what we come to know of the world, a kind of sense that is poetic and not rational: one that does not seek to answer questions, but rather create an environment where we can come to exist alongside the unendurable in a sort of trembling peace.”

Special events include a series of post-performance discussions with Kristina Wong (solo performer, writer, actor, educator, cultural jammer), Ellen Wong (Cambodian-Canadian actress on Netflix’s GLOW) and Dr. Leahkena Nou (Sociology Professor at California State University Long Beach, and author of groundbreaking research on survivors of the Khmer Rouge genocide).

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM AND CAST
KALEAN UNG (Writer & Performer) is an award winning actress, singer, and interdisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles. She has worked with critically acclaimed theatre companies such as Critical Mass Performance Group, Independent Shakespeare Co., Four Larks Theatre and CalArts Center for New Performance. Her recent acting LA credits include: “All’s Well That Ends Well” (LaVache the Clown & Diana) “Measure for Measure” (Isabella), ”The Snow Geese” (Viktorya), ”A Midsummer Night's Drea m” (Titania), “The Tempest” (Ariel), “Richard III” (Margaret), “Othello” (Desdemona) with Independent Shakespeare Co., “Paul Sand Presents: Kurt Weill at the Cuddlefish Hotel” at the Actors’ Gang, “Pericles” (Marina) with Independent Shakespeare Co., “The Temptation of St. Antony” (Queen Sheba) with Four Larks Theatre (Ovation Award Winner), “Purple Electric Play” (The Vital Organ) at Machine Project, “Twelfth Night” (Viola) with Independent Shakespeare Co., “Prometheus Bound” (Chorus) directed by Travis Preston with CalArts Center for New Performance/ Getty Villa, and the title role of “Alcestis” directed by Nancy Keystone with Critical Mass Performance Group/Theatre @ Boston Court.

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Other LA favorites include: “Camino Real” (Esmeralda) directed by Jessica Kubzansky at the Theatre @ Boston Court and “Jomama Jones: Radiate!” (Sweet Peach) at The Kirk Douglas Theatre. Opera roles include: “Both Eyes Open” (Catherine) with First Look Sonoma, “Light and Power” (Tesla) with wildUp at the Hammer Museum, “The Mortal Thoughts of Lady Macbeth” (Witch) directed by Yuval Sharon, as well as “Fairy Queen” (Hermia), “The Magic Flute” (Second Lady), “Winter’s Child/ Moth” (Bird), and “Dice Thrown” a chance operations opera by John King at CalArts. She received her Master of Fine Arts in Acting from California Institute of the Arts and her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of California at Santa Cruz.

CHINARY UNG (Music) Chinary Ung’s work through the late 1980’s established him as a major figure in American music. For “Inner Voices” he was given the Grawemeyer Award, the first American recipient of this prestigious prize in music composition. Ung’s extensive orchestral catalog has been commissioned and performed by major orchestras throughout the United States and abroad. Boston Modern Orchestra Project released a recording of Ung’s orchestral music in 2015. Ung’s work has been commissioned by the Meet the Composer/Reader’s Digest Commissioning Program, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Ford, Koussevitsky, Joyce, and Barlow Foundations. In 2014 he was given the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Award by the New York-based Asian Cultural Council.

Ung has worked with numerous institutions and individuals who share his dedication toward preserving Cambodian culture and forging cultural exchanges between Asia and the West, such as The Asian Cultural Council. He was President of the Khmer Studies Institute in the U.S.A. between 1980 - 1985, and was an advisor for The Killing Fields Memorial and Cambodian Heritage Museum of Chicago and a member of the Cambodian-Thai cultural committee.
As an educator, Ung holds appointments at University of California, San Diego, where he is Distinguished Professor of Music, and at Chapman University, where he is a Presidential Fellow and Senior Composer in Residence. He and his wife Susan direct the Nirmita Composers Institute each summer, with the goal of providing compositional direction and opportunity to musicians from Southeast Asia.

MARINA MCCLURE (Director) is an American artist who grew up internationally. She specializes in developing new intercultural work that creates space for exchange between artists and with the audience. Through her multidisciplinary art lab, The New Wild, she creates emotionally charged theater, opera, and spectacles by fusing striking visual design and physical performance. This season she is an artist-in-residence at BRIC Arts Media in Brooklyn, developing Tear a Root from the Earth, a new musical for Afghanistan in collaboration with Qais Essar and Gramophonic. Marina is a resident director at The Flea, where she recently directed the world première of Steph del Rosso’s Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill and an episodic adaptation of Italo Calvino's Cosmicomics. Other recent: CasablancaBox (2017 Drama Desk Nomination for Unique Theatrical Experience, HERE), Leisure, Labor, Lust (The Mount), Wing It! a giant puppet parade and large-scale community performance for the Tony-winning Handspring Puppet Company in celebration of South Africa's National Day of Reconciliation. Marina teaches directing at The National Theater Institute at the O’Neill and frequently directs student work at Dartmouth College, Brown University and NYU-Tisch. MFA: CalArts. www.marinamcclure.com

Video Projection Art is by Hsuan-Kuang Hsieh. Costume Design is by Beryl Brachman. Lighting Design is by Jason Mann. Set Design is by Mark Kanieff. Sound Design is by Chris Porter. Stage Manager is Jenny Park.

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LETTERS FROM HOME will play Friday, October 26 through Sunday, November 18 at Independent Studio, 3191 Casitas Ave., #130, (between Fletcher Drive and Glendale Blvd.) at the Atwater Crossing Arts + Innovation Complex, Los Angeles, CA 90039. Free, ample lot and street parking.

TICKETING PRICES
Generous Admission - $35. Support ISC’s programs.
General Admission - $25. ISC’s affordable ticket price.
Call for special student rates.

For tickets, please call (818) 710-6306 or buy online at www.iscla.org

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For more information, photos, press interviews or for press comps please contact David Elzer/DEMAND PR at 818-508-1754 or at davidelzer@me.com

Calendar Listing:

LETTERS FROM HOME

Written & Performed by Kalean Ung
Music by Chinary Ung
Directed by Marina McClure

OPENS SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27 THROUGH SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18!

Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30pm; Sundays at 3pm
Preview: Friday, October 26
OPENING/PRESS NIGHT: Saturday, October 27 at 7:30pm

Post show discussions:
Saturday, October 27: Kristina Wong
Sunday, October 28: Marina McClure

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Free, ample lot and street parking.

Tickets are $35 Generous Admission; $25 General Admission

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INDEPENDENT SHAKESPEARE CO. (ISC) is marking 2018 with two major milestones. With our Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival this past summer, ISC celebrated the 15th anniversary of presenting free Shakespeare in Los Angeles city parks. The Festival has grown to become a tradition for tens of thousands of Angelenos, bringing together our diverse, vibrant community through accessible, imaginative performances of classical plays. Also in 2018, ISC opened the ISC Studio, an upgrade from our previous indoor space into a larger performance venue and lounge at the Atwater Arts + Innovation Complex. The ISC Studio is active and unpredictable, serving as a multi-purpose and multi-disciplinary laboratory. ISC is the 2015 recipients of the LA Drama Critics Circle’s highest honor, the Margaret Harford Award for sustained excellence in theater, a recipient of an NEA ArtWorks grant and a grantee recipient of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Arts Innovation and Management Program. In partnership with the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Park, we moved free Shakespeare in Barnsdall Park in 2010 to Griffith Park, the second largest city park in California. The growth in attendance is extraordinary: at our first season (at Barnsdall Park in 2004), we played to fewer than 1,000 people; since 2013 we have welcomed over 40,000 people each summer to the Old Zoo and have now performed to over 220,000 people in the summer. Through classical theater we have attracted a community that is young (71% age 35 and under), diverse (48% identify as non-Caucasian and 77% are middle and lower income), and from all corners of Los Angeles. For more information call 818-710-6306 or visit www.iscla.org.

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