



BLUE LOTUS

Written & Directed by Elaine Lai

Co-Dir. & Sound Design by Cahron Cross

NOVEMBER 6, 2021

[RSVP HERE](#)

For all the Blue Lotuses,
of the past, present and future,
to you, I pay homage,
and dedicate the merits of this play

तद्यथा गते गते पारगते पारसंगते बोधि स्वाहा

GRATITUDE

Deep gratitude to all the cast and crew and to BCAS (Buddhist Community at Stanford) for all of your inspiration and support. This audio-play would not have been possible without your friendship. This play is in many ways a tribute to the heartfelt conversations we've had throughout this terrible pandemic, and a gesture towards the kind of compassionate Buddhism that we've collectively dreamed of bringing into being, one in which all parts of our complex stories are included, seen, and integrated. Gratitude especially to Julian and Cahron who have been fearless leaders, phenomenal friends, and my dearest vajra brothers, keeping me firmly rooted on this path. And Cahron, thank you to you especially for dreaming *Blue Lotus* alongside with me and dedicating so much time to bringing the seed of this vision to fruition. Thank you also to Destiny for all your help on sound recording!

Thank you to Young Jean Lee and my TAPS playwriting class for doing the first table read of the script and providing valuable feedback. Gratitude to James Gentry for reading over one of the monologues with me, for being a compassionate mentor, and for always encouraging me to follow my heart. Thank you to Lobsang for reading a later draft and to Lu for sharing your friend's story with me. Thank you to the countless women who have courageously shared their journeys towards healing. You have all been my great teachers, especially on how to set boundaries in the relative world, and when to walk away.

Thank you to Tsoknyi Rinpoche for proving to me that there are also male-identifying Buddhist leaders who have devoted their lives to uplifting young women. Thank you Rinpoche for teaching me not to look for freedom outside the relative, but to find it in every unfolding moment of our relative existence.

Thank you finally, to my mom 26號菩薩, my greatest teacher of all, and my number one fan.

DISCLAIMER

This story is NOT meant to represent any one tradition of Buddhism. Rather, I have intended to create a third space, where a blend of past and present, different Buddhist images, practices from Buddhist and martial arts traditions, and intertextuality with Buddhist texts and stories is displayed. For those wondering, there are contemporary Buddhist nuns who train in Kung-fu, specifically at the Druk Amitabha Mountain Nunnery in Nepal, but the martial arts routines in this play are not taken from that monastery specifically.

The names of the nuns are found in *Therīgathā: Songs of the Elders*, as a kind of homage to the first order of Buddhist nuns. However, this play is NOT meant to be a direct adaptation of these poems, but rather an entirely new creation altogether, a work of FICTION. So, for those of you looking for a historical account of the first order of nuns, be forewarned that this play is not that. Hopefully you may still find something of benefit.

CONTENT WARNING

Of things that may be triggering, this play deals with sexual abuse, trauma, and death.

BLUE LOTUS CAST



EMMA MASTER

BLUE LOTUS/ISABELLE

Emma Master graduated from Stanford in 2019 with a BS in Symbolic Systems. A Stage Manager by trade, she is excited and grateful for the opportunity to enter the realm of acting. She enjoys reading about Depth Psychology and animals of any/all levels of fluffiness.



ELAINE LAI

ABBESS

Elaine Lai is voracious book-reader, and animal-lover who somehow found her way into a PhD in Buddhism at Stanford after a long hiatus from the US. The play *Blue Lotus* was born out of a deep desire for healing, integration, and to see more examples of female enlightenment brought to life. In writing and directing this piece, she has reconnected with her first love—storytelling—and hopes that the play will inspire each and every one of you to go to those dark places where inspiration lies, and to do that which scares you the most.



CHENXING HAN

ANOPAMA

Chenxing Han is the author of *Be the Refuge: Raising the Voices of Asian American Buddhists* (North Atlantic Books, 2021). She holds a BA from Stanford University, an MA in Buddhist studies from the Graduate Theological Union, and a certificate in Buddhist chaplaincy from the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California. Like ANOPAMA, Chenxing has a habit of snacking when she probably shouldn't.



AMY SHOEMAKER

VIRA

Amy Shoemaker is happiest in the sunshine (it helps counter the hiccups she gets when she's cold). She holds an MS from Stanford's Institute for Computational and Mathematical Engineering, is currently completing her Clinical Pastoral Education Residency at Stanford hospital, and will begin at Institute of Buddhist Studies this fall, pursuing an MA in Buddhist Studies with a certificate in Buddhist Chaplaincy. Having spent much of this year providing spiritual and emotional support to cancer patients, many of whom are at the end of life, playing Vira was a tremendously meaningful experience for Amy.

BLUE LOTUS CAST



CHANHEE HEO

KISAGOTAMI

Chanhee Heo is a Ph.D. student studying American Religion at Stanford. She grew up in South Korea with a love for reading fiction and challenging herself with spicy food and a gallon of ice cream. She moved to Nashville, TN for graduate school and now lives with her husband and their adopted fur-daughter Sasha in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.



BAY THONGTHEPAIRROT

VIMALA

Bay is a Stanford alum who found her way back to the Buddhist Community at Stanford (BCAS) as her refuge during the Pandemic year. She is a student and a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism. Her first introduction to Tibetan Buddhism many years ago was a class that she learned about through a BCAS email announcement. She has many things to be thankful to BCAS for including having met Elaine, and the opportunity to take part in this play. She loves time in nature with friends and family, international cuisine, and yoga.



CAMILLA WICKMAN

CHANDA

Camilla Wickman is a rising Junior?? (haha #covid) at Stanford studying Music Composition and minoring in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity. They love critters and would do anything for a cheap slice of cheese pizza with garlic sauce. Today they ate the most delicious chocolate-covered McVitie's digestive and hope to eat more very soon. They would like to thank Elaine for letting them participate in this exciting project!



ANNA THOMAS

SUMEDHA

Anna Thomas is a PhD student at Stanford in computer science. She is from San Jose, CA. In her spare time she enjoys biking, jogging, and drinking tea.

BLUE LOTUS CAST



LAN SAMANTHA CHANG

MOTHER

Lan Samantha Chang is the author of novel *The Family Chao*, forthcoming in February 2022. She has been at the Stanford University Creative Writing Program three times: as Stegner Fellow in 1993-95, a Jones Lecturer from 1995-98, and a Stein Visiting Lecturer in 2021. She lives in Iowa City.

Photographer: IfeOluwa Nihinlola



JACK SOCHET

FATHER

Some TV: Gotham, Hunters and The Tonight Show. Film: Vicky's Not Here in which he won two Best Supporting Actor Awards and the The Heyday of The Insensitive Bastard . Some Theatre: Productions with Shakespeare In The Parking Lot, EST NY, The Public Theatre, The Metropolitan Playhouse and others. Thanks as always to Elaine and rest of the crew, family, JHA, UGA and CU.



STEPHEN MURPHY-SHIGEMATSU

OLD MAN

Murphy-Shigematsu lives the part of the Old Man, offering himself as an elder, a seasoned guide still seeking truth, beauty, and compassion. As a teacher, counselor, and writer he uses storytelling and vulnerability to enhance connections to self, other, and spirit. His work is expressed in *From Mindfulness to Heartfulness: Transforming Self and Society with Compassion*



CAHRON CROSS

NARRATOR/THE WHISTLE/CALM TROUBLESHOOTER

Pre-COVID, Cahron was an avid hugger of friends. Now he resorts to zoom-mojis, socially distant hand waves, head nods, and hidden smiles behind polyester masks, but there's love behind it just the same. He has dabbled in numerous creative fields from hip-hop music to speech and debate, and his knack for self-deprecating humor is only eclipsed by his ineffectiveness in writing bios.

BLUE LOTUS CREW



NINA MACINTOSH

Art for Blue Lotus

Nina Macintosh is an artist and filmmaker raised on unceded Lenape land/NYC in the Nyingmapa Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Their solo and collaborative practice focuses on image-making as a vehicle for reflection, healing, and collective liberation. Deeply grateful for the process of making Blue Lotus visual. <3

Music and other credits

Blue Lotus Image - Nina Macintosh

Original Music - Sam Dishy

Heart Sutra English translation - inspired by Plum Village translation

Hymne a l'amour - Edith Piaf

Left hand Points to the Moon 《左手指月》 - performed by 崔江卉

Prayers to Guru Padmasambhava - Ani Choying Drolma

《高山流水》 - musician unknown

Translation of poem written by 蘇軾Sushi (1037-1101) by 黃宏發

Tara Mantra - Drukmo Gyal

Heart Sutra Sanskrit Chanting - Sakya Nuns at Dehradun

Heart Sutra mantra - Ani Choying Drolma

La Vie en Rose - Edith Piaf

《不染》 Unsullied - played by 白无瑕

Je ne regrette rien -Edith Piaf

May the precious bodhicitta
Arise where it has not arisen;
And where it has arisen, may it not diminish,
But increase further and further.