

TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA

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**What to do, about our beautiful chaos? That will come to us, like it comes to Lyndee Mah. “Performance,” she says, “is my reassurance.”**

# How America is Lyndee Mah's story and our history

**T**here's a big difference between an artist and say, a doctor. Between an artist and an engineer, a structural engineer or a social one. And that's lucky for us as individuals, as a society, as a species.

It's lucky because, artists try and try to tell us something these other specialists cannot. An artist's work is producing us something simple, simple like joy or like longing. Artists are likewise tasked with getting us to the core of ugliness, like hating and like warring — essentially human stuff that doctors and engineers are not so good at handling.

An artist's product is not concrete, not like an M.D.'s prescription or an engineer's solution. Art — as World Affairs Council of Oregon's program director and Portland's late-night jazz drummer Tim DuRoche insists — “is the How” of you or me getting a grip on our human situation, right here on our wobbly little planet. Art is the how, art is not “the What.”

So when local performing artist Lyndee Mah takes her turn on stage beginning April 10, her audience will see and hear her very best shot at diagnosing one of those central socioeconomic disabilities of our shared 237-year American experience. That most unexplainable and unwashable one — our American race-thing.

Ms. Mah is an established musical voice

in the River City art scene, co-founding and lead-singing for Pink Martini, touring with Quarterflash, jazzing with Ron Steen and Janice Scroggins, teaching local vocal artists. These are credentials like an internist's medical association certificate or a civil engineer's license, each hung high on an office wall.

However, Lyndee Mah's April performances at the Sanctuary Theater owe their actual authority to Ms. Mah's ethno-cultural complexity. Her authenticity flows from her Chinese and her Welsh elders and ancestors; from her son's and his family's blackness. And of course, from each of those robust ethnic stream's intersections with America's mainstream.

**It's all in the mix**

*E`Bon E`Bon* (Mandarin for one-half one-half) is an original work funded by the Regional Arts & Culture Council and fuelled by Lyndee Mah's essentially American experience. Ms. Mah is center stage for the entire performance, a mélange of music, monologue, and dramatic images, all buoyed by Grammy-nominated gospel, blues, and ragtime jazz pianist Janice Scroggins.

Ms. Mah's mother's family sailed to the U.S. during a surge of one of the 1700's mass migrations from the impoverished U.K. Steamers packed with optimistic

*Performances of E`Bon E`Bon featuring Lyndee Mah (pictured) take place April 10 through 13 at The Sanctuary at Sandy Plaza, located at 1785 N.E. Sandy Boulevard in Portland. To learn more, visit <www.lyndee mah.org>. To buy tickets, call 1-800-838-3006, ext. 1 or visit <www.brownpapertickets.com/event/575088>.*

émigrés, each with a one-way ticket. It is a twisted trail that ultimately sets up Lyndee's own story in Idaho Falls. There, Hazel Delores Welch and Phillip Lip Gee Mah, Lyndee's Welsh-American mom and her Chinese laborer dad, settle. Then, the U.S. Supreme Court had not yet declared state anti-miscegenation laws (no marrying-outside-your-race statutes) unconstitutional. And even after it had, Idahoans would take a while getting used to it. Getting used to Mr. and Mrs. Mah, and of course, getting used to kids like Lyndee.

Like all laboring migrants — the kind alternately welcomed and expelled by our country — Lyndee's dad came with all kinds of difficult discontinuities, including his suddenly motherless kids. Lyndee's mom was what we would now call a social worker, with the Salvation Army, last century's stand-up supporter of urban family welfare. She was moved to help him. And from there forward, as Ms. Mah would have it, it's all music. And history.

**Sorrow and joy, our story**

*E`Bon E`Bon* is all this, the sorrow and the joy, the braiding of an ambitious immigrant nation's many-many narratives. Ms. Mah's performance is indeed — jazz drummer Tim DuRoche's simple proposition that art provides “the How part” — how we find meaning and momentum in America's shocking violence and in our awe-inspiring creativity. It is not a doctor's hastily scribbled prescription, it's never an urban planner's tidy policy proposal — “the What part.”

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*E`Bon E`Bon* runs for four days, April 10 through 13. That's five performances, including Saturday and Sunday matinees, about one mixed-blood woman's search, and by implication one energetic society's search, for identity, for legitimacy, and for legacy. Ms. Mah will tell it via visual and video imagery, interwoven with musical stylings and improvised performance art. Some of the latter, she characterizes as “borderline stand-up comedy.” There's a lot of irony and word gags at play here.

Most ironic, so ironic that Lyndee Mah needs a long moment to lay it out for you, is how *E`Bon E`Bon* plays at The Sanctuary, the cathedral-like historic site of Portland's Salvation Army right there on vigorous inner N.E. Sandy Boulevard. It's How things work. It's How we are.

**Stigma hinders efforts to combat leprosy in India**

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this is the son of a leper.’ Then the children say they don't want to go to school and we have to push them,” he said.

Gopal, who has worked with leprosy patients for more than 40 years, said the stigma persists “because it's very difficult to change people's attitude over a short period of time.”

“As things are, the fear of leprosy is so great that people refuse to come forward for treatment. This has had an adverse effect on the success of the leprosy program,” he said.

Venugopal has been working with nongovernmental agencies to lobby the government to expand the disability allowances that some leprosy survivors received. “They pay us a monthly allowance of 1,800 rupees (\$29), which is a pittance,” he said.

The money does not even pay for the bandages that leprosy patients use every day on their sores, said Uttam Kumar, another resident.

Like many others in Kasturba Gram, Kumar was thrown out of his home because neighbors objected to having a leprosy patient in their midst. Kumar, whose bandaged feet are the only sign of his ailment, spent months on the road before finding a refuge in the warren of one-room tenements in Kasturba Gram.

“Here we are all anonymous yet we are all fellow sufferers,” Kumar said. “Everyone has their own sorrows, but our pain is the same.”

**How can a jet disappear? In the ocean, it's not hard**

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for the U.S. Navy to pick up signals from the flight data and cockpit recorders, and seven months for the boxes to be recovered. The fuselage remains on the ocean floor, and Adam Air is now defunct.

The Malaysia Airlines jet had been headed from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Many of the 239 people aboard were from China.

*Gelineau reported from Sydney. Mayerowitz reported from New York. Chris Brummitt in Kuala Lumpur and Niniek Karmini in Jakarta also contributed to this report.*

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**Chinese film stunt man on missing Malaysia flight**

HONG KONG (AP) — A stunt man whose credits include the acclaimed martial arts epic *The Grandmaster* and other films was among the passengers on the missing Malaysia Airlines flight.

Ju Kun also worked on *The Forbidden Kingdom*. He was scheduled to work on a joint Weinstein Co. and Netflix production, the pilot of a new series called “Marco Polo,” at a studio in Malaysia before he boarded the Malaysia Airline flight to return home to Beijing.

A joint statement from the production partners said Ju Kun was on the flight that disappeared. They said he was a tremendous talent.

The last update on Ju's Sina Weibo account was a February 24 photo from Malaysia, in which he says: “New hairstyle. New mood.” Commenters on that post wished for a safe return.

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