



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OAKLAND BALLET PRESENTS THE
DANCING MOONS FESTIVAL

Featuring world premieres by Phil Chan, Megan & Shannon Kurashige,
Michael Lowe and Caili Quan

Plus the West Coast premiere of Phil Chan's *Ballet des Porcelaines*
or The Teapot Prince

March 24 – 26: Asian Cultural Center, Oakland
April 1 – 2: Bankhead Theater, Livermore



Paunika Jones, left, and Lawrence Chen. Photo credit: John Hefti.

oaklandballet.org

OAKLAND, CA, February 10, 2022 – Oakland Ballet Company’s 2021-22 Season continues next month with its first-ever celebration of Asian American Pacific Islander choreographers, the **DANCING MOONS FESTIVAL**. The company will premiere new works by **Phil Chan, Megan** and **Shannon Kurashige, Michael Lowe** and **Caili Quan**. The festival’s program will also include the West Coast premiere of Chan’s *Ballet des Porcelaines or The Teapot Prince*, recently commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The *Dancing Moons Festival* will take place over two weekends, March 24 – April 2. The first weekend, March 24 – 26 is presented in collaboration with the **Oakland Asian Cultural Center**. Concerts take place Thursday to Saturday at 7:30 p.m. with an additional matinee on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. On the second weekend, April 1 – 2, Oakland Ballet moves to the **Bankhead Theater** in Livermore with concerts on Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$20 to \$68 and may be purchased via direct links at oaklandballet.org/performances-events/spring.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with the Oakland Asian Cultural Center in sharing five new ballets with our community," said **Graham Lustig**, artistic director of Oakland Ballet Company. "In the wake of continued bigotry and violence targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, we are proud to give a platform to such talented choreographers."

Chan, co-founder of "Final Bow for Yellowface," a call to action to diversify ballet companies while working to divest the field of offensive stereotypes, is currently in residence at New York University and the Manhattan School of Music, and a "Next 50" arts leader at The Kennedy Center. Last year, the Metropolitan Museum of Art commissioned him to create a work inspired by an 18th-century ballet that has been lost, reimagining its story from a new perspective. Titled *Ballet des Porcelaines or The Teapot Prince*, the original story centers on a prince in search of his lover who is trapped by an evil sorcerer with the power to transform people into porcelain. Chan’s version of the ballet premiered in December; next month’s presentation will mark its West Coast premiere.

"It is an honor to be the first dance company to present Phil Chan’s *Ballet des Porcelaines*, and to participate in the important work at stake in evolving the ballet field," added Lustig. In addition to the *Ballet des Porcelaines*, Chan has created a new pas de deux set to original music by **Huang Rao** and performed live by the internationally celebrated concert pianist **Min Kwon**. The music is a selection from a wide-ranging project commissioned by Kwon comprising reinterpretations of "America the Beautiful" from 75 diverse composers.

Michael Lowe served as a principal dancer with Oakland Ballet for three decades, and a choreographer for the company in his retirement, culminating in an Izzie Award for Outstanding Choreography for his ballet *Bamboo*. For next month’s Festival, Oakland Ballet will present a new quintet by Lowe.

Caili Quan, based in New York, first earned national recognition as a dancer with BalletX, Philadelphia’s leading contemporary ballet company. As a choreographer, she has created works for BalletX, The Juilliard School and Nashville Ballet, among others. She is currently a creative associate at The Juilliard School. For next month’s Festival, Oakland Ballet will present a new trio by Quan.

Finally, sisters Megan and Shannon Kurashige are the founders and directors of Sharp & Fine, a San Francisco-based contemporary dance company known for its narrative performance works

incorporating original text, music and choreography. For next month's Festival, Oakland Ballet will present a new quartet by the Kurashiges.

On opening night of the Festival, March 24, all of the guest choreographers will participate in a 30-minute conversation. For more information, visit oaklandballet.org/performances-events/spring.

GUEST CHOREOGRAPHER BIOS

Phil Chan is currently a '21/'22 Visiting Scholar at the A/P/A Institute at New York University, and the Manhattan School of Music's '21/'22 Citizen Artist. He is a graduate of Carleton College and an alumnus of the Ailey School. As a writer, he served as the Executive Editor for *FLATT Magazine* and contributed to *Dance Europe Magazine*, *Dance Magazine*, *Dance Business Weekly* and the *Huffington Post*. He was the founding General Manager of the Buck Hill Skytop Music Festival, and was the General Manager for Armitage Gone! Dance. He served multiple years on the National Endowment for the Arts dance panel and the Jadin Wong Award panel presented by the Asian American Arts Alliance. He serves on the International Council for the Parsons Dance Company, the Advisory Board of Dance Magazine and he was a 2020 New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division Research Fellow. He was just named a Next 50 arts leader by the Kennedy Center.

Sisters **Megan** and **Shannon Kurashige** co-direct Sharp & Fine, a San Francisco-based contemporary dance company. Together, they create physically exuberant choreography and experiments in theatrical storytelling. As dancers, they have worked with Liss Fain Dance, Christian Burns, Alex Ketley, Amy Seiwert, Ballet Pacifica and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal. They both studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance under the direction of Summer Lee Rhatigan and the Academy of Ballet under the direction of Richard Gibson. Shannon attended the North Carolina School of the Arts and graduated from the University of California, Irvine with a BFA in Dance Performance and a minor in biology. Megan is also a writer, and her short fiction has appeared in various magazines and anthologies with a fantastical bent.

Michael Lowe, born in Oakland's Chinatown and raised in Alameda, joined Oakland Ballet in 1974 where he served as a principal dancer for three decades, and a choreographer for the company in his retirement, culminating in an Izzie Award for Outstanding Choreography for his ballet *Bamboo*. Among the choreographers Lowe has worked with are Agnes de Mille, John Butler, Eugene Loring, Leonide Massine, Frederic Franklin, Anna Sokolow, Betsy Erickson, Willam Christensen and Alonzo King. He participated in all of the company's historical Americana- and Diaghilev-era reconstructions, and in 1989 he recreated the role of Beau Gosse for Oakland Ballet's premiere of Bronislava Nijinska's *Le Train Bleu*. Lowe is the founding artistic director of Menlowe Ballet, and he serves as an integral member of the teaching staff at Menlo Park Academy of Dance.

Caili Quan is a New York-based choreographer who danced with BalletX in Philadelphia from 2013 to 2020. She has created works for BalletX, The Juilliard School, Nashville Ballet, Owen/Cox Dance Group, Columbia Ballet Collaborative and Ballet Academy East. She served as an Artistic Partnership Initiative Fellow and a Toulmin Creator at The Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University. With BalletX she performed in world premieres by Matthew Neenan, Nicolo Fonte, Gabrielle Lamb, Penny Saunders and Trey McIntyre at venues from Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival to the Kennedy Center. *Mahålang*, a short documentary that wove familial conversations of her Chamorro Filipino upbringing on Guam with

scenes from BalletX's *Love Letter*, was shown at the Hawai'i International Film Festival, CAAMFest and Dance on Camera Festival. Quan is currently a creative associate at The Juilliard School.

GUEST MUSICIAN BIO

Korean-born American pianist **Min Kwon** excels in a versatile career that encompasses concerti, solo recitals and chamber music appearances while in high demand around the world as pedagogue, arts advocate and administrator. She has held professional engagements in over 60 countries, on seven continents and all 50 U.S. states. Kwon is a professor of piano at Rutgers University since 2002, and the founder and director of the Center for Musical Excellence, a nonprofit dedicated to mentoring and supporting young artists since 2000. A graduate of The Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School, where she received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree and the International Gina Bachauer Piano Award, Kwon later served as a member of the Juilliard Council, becoming the first alumnus to be invited to do so.

ABOUT OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY

For 57 years, Oakland Ballet Company has inspired the East Bay community and beyond by keeping the art of ballet exciting, relevant and accessible, primarily through the presentation of works of the Diaghilev repertoire and modern masterpieces. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Graham Lustig, the Company has renewed its commitment to artistic excellence with imaginative programs that engage contemporary audiences through close relationships with living choreographers, the commissioning of new works, innovative collaborations with diverse artists and communities, and compelling educational programs that cultivate the next generation of dance lovers.

A cornerstone of Oakland Ballet Company's legacy has been engagement with the community. Oakland Ballet's *Discover Dance* outreach program features educational programs at East Bay schools, educational in-theater performances, free performances throughout the community, ticket donations to season performances and scholarships to company training programs.

FACT SHEET

WHAT:

Oakland Ballet Company presents the ***DANCING MOONS FESTIVAL***, a celebration of Asian American Pacific islander choreographers featuring world premieres by **Phil Chan, Megan** and **Shannon Kurashige, Michael Lowe**, and **Caili Quan**. The program also features the West Coast premiere of Phil Chan's ***Ballet de Porcelaines or The Teapot Prince***, recently commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

WHEN:

March 24 – 26 at the **Asian Cultural Center, Oakland**

Thursday at **7:30 p.m.**

Friday at **7:30 p.m.**

Saturday at **2:30 p.m.** and **7:30 p.m.**

April 1 – 2 at the **Bankhead Theater, Livermore**

Friday and Saturday at **8 p.m.**

WHERE:

Oakland Asian Cultural Center

388 Ninth Street

Suite 290

Oakland, CA 94607

Bankhead Theater

2400 First Street

Livermore, CA 94550

TICKETS:

For the Oakland dates: \$40 - \$45

Discounts available for seniors, young children and groups of 10 or more.

To purchase tickets: [eventbrite.com/e/dancing-moons-festival-tickets-244713503677](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dancing-moons-festival-tickets-244713503677).

For the Livermore dates: \$20 - \$68

Discounts available for active and veteran military personnel.

To purchase tickets: livermorearts.org/event/oakland-ballet-dancing-moons-festival/2022-04-01.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

oaklandballet.org/performances-events

For all press inquiries please contact John Hill at johnhillpr@gmail.com.