

— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—

ARTS CLUB THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR **FORGIVENESS**

By Mark Sakamoto

Stage adaptation by Hiro Kanagawa

A joint production with Theatre Calgary (Calgary)

January 12–February 12, 2023 (Media opening: January 18)

IN BRIEF The Arts Club Theatre Company's co-production of [Forgiveness](#) plays **January 12–February 12** at the [Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage](#), 2750 Granville Street, Vancouver. Tickets from \$35. More info at artsclub.com

VANCOUVER, B.C. (December 13, 2022)—Experience the power of love and compassion this winter with the World Premiere of *Forgiveness*, playing January 12–February 12 at the Arts Club Theatre Company's Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage.

An adaptation by Vancouver-based **Hiro Kanagawa** of **Mark Sakamoto's** memoir, *Forgiveness* is the true story of Sakamoto's grandparents during World War II. Ralph, his maternal grandfather, was a Canadian soldier of European descent who spent years in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. Mitsue, his paternal grandmother, was one of thousands of Japanese Canadians interned by the Canadian government during the war. Despite their unspeakable experiences, Mitsue and Ralph would persevere and find forgiveness in their hearts so that their children's inheritance was not hate but love. Spanning over 30 years and two continents, *Forgiveness* explores the enduring love of family and celebrates the resiliency of the human spirit.

Sakamoto's memoir was a national bestseller, winning the CBC Canada Reads competition in 2018. The stage adaptation by Kanagawa was co-commissioned with Theatre Calgary in 2019 as part of the Arts Club's [Silver Commissions](#) program, and its development was supported by the National Arts Centre's National Creation Fund.

The Arts Club will partner with the Museum of Vancouver, the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, and the UBC Library to produce the [Finding Forgiveness](#) panel, an illuminating discussion on WWII Japanese Canadian Internment, sponsored by UBC Community Engagement. 2022 marks the 80th year since the historical injustice. The panel will feature a conversation with Hiro Kanagawa, as well as **Carolyn Nakagawa**, **Vivian Rygnestad**, and **Grace Eiko Thomson**, surrounding the question "What can stories from the stage teach us about the ongoing legacies of this history?"

Playwright Hiro Kanagawa said, "My stage adaptation of Mark Sakamoto's beloved and best-selling family memoir, *Forgiveness*, is not a note-for-note rendition of the book's favourite scenes and greatest hits, but it does hope to capture the emotional core of what made Mark's book so powerful in the first place: the love of home and family, the faith in human goodness, the courage to fight for what is right, and the grace to forgive. *Forgiveness* is a beautiful Canadian story, a vital piece of our history, and it is all the more inspirational and relevant today given the social and political divisiveness we currently face."

On co-producing *Forgiveness*, Arts Club's Artistic Director **Ashlie Corcoran** said, "Dramaturg **Stephen Drover** and I both read the memoir over a weekend, and we were both hooked immediately. We knew that this true story—with all its



sensitivity, curiosity, grit, and heart—needed to be on our stage. We wanted this piece to be large in both scope and scale, and so partnering with our friends at Theatre Calgary on this world premiere made all the sense in the world.”

Drover, who oversees New Works & Professional Engagement at the Arts Club, echoed this and added, “The story of this play reminds us of the enduring love of family, celebrates the human spirit’s remarkable and blessed ability to forgive, and pulls our attention towards a deep need for unity in times of division. It has been an inspiration to foster the development of this project, to see organizations and individuals come together in deep, meaningful partnerships, and to help elevate this remarkable story.”

Forgiveness Director and Theatre Calgary’s Artistic Director **Stafford Arima** said, “Since my father and his family were interned in Slocan, B.C., I am honoured to be directing this powerful theatre adaptation, by Hiro Kanagawa, of Mark Sakamoto’s epic memoir. This story of forgiveness is an invigorating tonic of storytelling, memories, and humanity, that heals through its narrative.”

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Hiro Kanagawa is an award-winning actor and writer based in Vancouver. His full-length plays *The Patron Saint of Stanley Park* (a 2006 Arts Club Silver Commission) and *The Tiger of Malaya* have been performed across Canada, as have many of his shorter works. He received the 2017 Governor General’s Literary Award for Drama for his play *Indian Arm*. Also a script doctor and consultant, Kanagawa was story editor on several critically acclaimed Canadian television series: *Da Vinci’s Inquest*, *Da Vinci’s City Hall*, *Intelligence*, and *Blackstone*. His next play, *Urashima*, co-commissioned by the Banff Centre and the Stratford Festival, is inspired by the astonishing true accounts of 19th-century Japanese castaways in the Pacific Northwest.

CAST

Yoshie Bancroft (Mitsue Sakamoto), **Jerod Blake** (Mortimer/Father/Recruiter/Mr. Archibald), **Griffin Cork** (Ralph MacLean), **Daniel Fong** (Stan/Pat), **June Fukumura** (Miyoko/Mrs. Yamamoto), **Manami Hara** (Tomi), **Alana Hawley Purvis** (Phyllis/Darlene/Mother/Mrs. Rutt), **Fionn Laird** (Cooper/Hastings Guard), **Jacob Leonard** (Deighton/Adams/Wedding Officer), **Isaac Li** (Ron/Ichiro), **Allison Lynch** (Diane/Socialite/Nurse/Woman on Train), **Jovanni Sy** (Yosuke/Kato/Launderer), **Kevin Takahide Lee** (Hideo Sakamoto)

CREATIVE TEAM

Stafford Arima (Director), **Stephen Drover** (Dramaturg), **Pam Johnson** (Set Designer), **Joanna Yu** (Costume Designer), **John Webber** (Lighting Designer), **Josh Reid** (Sound Designer), **Reza Jacobs** (Original Compositions & Sound Design), **Cindy Mochizuki** (Video Designer & Animation), **Chimerik Collective 似不像 Collective** (Video Systems Designer & Projection Consultant), **Mike Kovac** (Fight Director & Stunt Coordinator), **Jessica Anne Nelson** (Intimacy Coordinator), **Julie Tamiko Manning** (Cultural Consultant & Dialect Coach: Japanese Canadian), **Yayoi Hirano** (Japanese Language Consultant), **Jane MacFarlane** (Dialect Coach: East Coast Canadian), **Peter Colenutt** (Military Consultant), **Howard Dai** (Assistant Director), **Ryan Cormack** (Assistant Set Designer), **Melicia Zaini** (Assistant Costume Designer), **Erika Morey** (Stage Manager), **Peter Jotkus** (Assistant Stage Manager), **Evan Ren** (Apprentice Stage Manager)

SHOWTIMES + SPECIAL PERFORMANCES

Tue–Thu at 7:30 PM, Fri & Sat at 8 PM, Wed at 1:30 PM, and Sat & Sun at 2 PM

Sunday Salon: Sun, Jan 22, at 2 PM

Talkback Tuesday: Tue, Jan 31, at 7:30 PM

VocalEye Performances: Sun, Feb 5, at 2 PM, and Fri, Feb 10, at 8 PM

SPONSORS

Season Sponsors: **BMO**, **CMHC Granville Island**, **CTV**, **IA Financial Group**, **Sandman Hotels, Inns & Suites**, **Vancouver Sun**

ABOUT THE ARTS CLUB THEATRE COMPANY

The Arts Club, one of the largest not-for-profit theatre companies in the country, is the principal gathering place for the theatrical arts in British Columbia. Comprising three unique venues across Vancouver, the Arts Club welcomes more than a quarter million guests annually, tours provincially and nationally, and engages students and artists alike through educational and professional programs.

Above all, the Arts Club is dedicated to the advancement of local artists telling stories from around the globe and, in particular, those of our region. From this, we believe that culture expands, an understanding of differences is nurtured, and art bursts forth. The Arts Club was founded in 1964 and is currently led by Artistic Director Ashlie Corcoran and Executive Director Peter Cathie White.

The Arts Club Theatre Company is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, in particular the [xʷməθkʷəy̓əm](#) (Musqueam), [Skwxwú7mesh](#) (Squamish), and [Selilwítulh](#) (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. We are honoured to live, work, and create on this land together.

MEDIA CONTACT

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