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## THEATER MU AND MINNESOTA OPERA PRESENT A PANEL DISCUSSION AND COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ABOUT ASIAN REPRESENTATION

**MINNEAPOLIS** (March 6, 2020) – Theater Mu and Minnesota Opera present *Real Talk: A Conversation on Asian Representation in Theater and Opera*, a community conversation and panel discussion regarding the historical, current and future representations of Asian peoples and their stories within theater and opera. The event takes place on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at 7 p.m. at the Minnesota Opera Center (620 N. First St., Minneapolis, MN).

*Parasite, Mulan, To all the Boys: P.S. I Still Love You.* What do these three films have in common? Asian representation. With Asian talent acting, writing and directing, it may seem like Asian and Asian American communities across the United States finally have the opportunity to be seen and heard in Hollywood. Yet, according to UCLA's 2020 "[Hollywood Diversity Report](#)" only 4.8% of film roles in 2018 featured Asian talent. To be precise, there were exactly 57 Asian roles in Hollywood films in 2019 and only 1.5 out of 10 directors are people of color.

What is representation? What does it look like within different artistic fields and communities? How can we challenge ourselves as audiences, artists, arts administrators and scholars to move beyond conversations of representation to the actions that we must take in order to create opportunities for intersectional diversity, equity and inclusion in the storytelling of Asian and Asian American stories?

Led by Artistic Director Lily Tung Crystal, Theater Mu is one of the nation's leading arts organizations in the presentation of Asian and Asian American theater. Mu has agreed to partner with Minnesota Opera on this event. The evening will feature light refreshments, a panel discussion and a question and answer session with the audience.

"Representation is about seeking equity, agency and self-worth. Asians in America have always oscillated between being the 'bad minority' and the 'good minority,' and that's due largely in part to how they're portrayed in the arts and media," said Theater Mu Artistic Director Lily Tung Crystal. "I applaud MN Opera for its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter and hope that, through this forum, we can determine concrete steps the organization and other opera and theater makers can take to push forward positive representation on America's stages."

Minnesota Opera is one of the nation's largest and most distinguished opera companies known for its world-class artistry and innovative productions. They are also one of the few opera companies in the world with an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter, which details the organization's "commitment to diversifying our organization and audience" in the areas of racial and ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity and age diversity. Recently, Minnesota Opera commissioned a



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new opera for youth, *The Song Poet*, based on the book by Hmong American, St. Paul-based writer Kao Kalia Yang.

“Throughout opera’s history, there are works with stories and characters with offensive stereotypes and outdated gender roles, and it raises questions as to their inclusion in today’s opera house,” said Minnesota Opera Chief Learning Officer Jamie Andrews. When asked about the importance of this event, Andrews explained, “It is vital to have candid and open conversation discussing these issues with opera and theater audiences in the Twin Cities and beyond. Partnering with Theater Mu to host this event is an important step in moving the conversation forward.”

The panel conversation features an impressive lineup of professionals within the fields of theater and opera, including: Rick Shiomi, the co-artistic director of Full Circle Theater and stage director of Minnesota Opera’s world premiere of *The Song Poet*; Andrew Stenson, a nationally acclaimed tenor who performed with the Minnesota Opera as Fadinard in *The Italian Straw Hat* in 2018; Dr. Josephine Lee, professor of English and Asian American studies at the University of Minnesota; Lily Tung Crystal, artistic director of Theater Mu; and Priti Gandhi, Minnesota Opera’s chief artistic officer. This panel will be moderated by beloved Twin Cities actor, playwright and teaching artist, Eric Sharp. The event is supported through the work of Minnesota Opera community organizer Gaosong Heu, an artist, arts administrator and educator who is currently a graduate student studying arts administration at Columbia University in New York City.

This project is supported through a Civic Practice Grant from OPERA America’s Opera Fund endowment.

Who: Theater Mu and Minnesota Opera

What: *Real Talk: A Conversation on Asian Representation in Theater and Opera*  
A panel discussion hosted by Theater Mu and Minnesota Opera regarding the historical, current and future representations of Asian peoples and their stories within theater and Opera.

Light refreshments provided.

Where: Jones Rehearsal Room, Minnesota Opera Center  
620 N. First St.  
Minneapolis, MN

When: Tuesday, March 24, 2020  
6:30 p.m. – Doors Open  
7 p.m. – Event Begins  
8:30 p.m. – Event Concludes

Tickets: The event is free, but reservations are required. Reserve your tickets at [mnopera.org/asian-representation](http://mnopera.org/asian-representation).

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Minnesota Opera changes lives by bringing together artists, audiences and community, advancing the art of opera for today and for future generations.