

By Michelle Law

ASIA

PRELIMINARY

EDUCATION NOTES

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La Boite presents

SINGLE A

ASIAN

FEMALE

By Michelle Law

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LA BOITE
THEATRE COMPANY

Production Partner

PHILIP BACON
GALLERIES



This work was developed with the assistance of the Lotus Playwriting Project, an initiative of Playwriting Australia and Contemporary Asian Australian Performance (formerly Performance 4a)



Queensland
Government

La Boite Theatre Company is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland



Australian Government

La Boite Theatre Company is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its funding and advisory body

Australia
Council
for the Arts

Image by Tammy Law

SINGLE

ABOUT

An incisive new comedy skewering race and gender in contemporary Australia from Brisbane-based award winning writer Michelle Law. Step into the after-hours of a suburban Chinese restaurant and meet a family of whip smart women who are definitely talking about you in their native tongue.

Set on the Sunshine Coast this hilarious play answers what it means to be an Asian woman living in Australia. For Pearl, a Chinese migrant operating a restaurant, it means sacrifice and struggling to connect with her very westernised children. For Zoe, the eldest child, it means approaching a crossroads in her life where she's forced to choose between a career and a family. For Mei, the youngest child, it means being bullied at school and grappling with the desire to assimilate versus cultivating a unique identity.

Two sisters at odds with each other and a mother harbouring a secret that threatens to tear her family apart, this is Australian domesticity like you've never seen it before.

CAST & CREATIVES

Director: Claire Christian

Set & Costume Designer: Moe Assaad

Composer/Sound Designer: Wil Hughes

Lighting Designer: Keith Clark

Performers: Emily Burton as Katie, Alex Lee as Zoe, Patrick Jhanur as Paul, Courtney Stewart as Mei, Hsiao-Ling Tang as Pearl and Emily Vascotto as Lana.

ESTIMATED RUNNING TIME

(Please note this will be confirmed closer to the production): 2 hours 10 minutes with a 20 minute interval

CURRICULUM LINKS

- Contemporary Realism
- Comedy
- New Australian Writing

WARNINGS

(Please note these will be confirmed closer to the production):

- Occasional Coarse language
- Minor abortion story line
- Very short, implied, under the doona sex scene. There is no nudity – actors will briefly be in their underwear.

**If you would like to read the scene please get in contact with Youth & Participation Producer Claire, on clairechristian@laboite.com.au or 07 3007 8600.

THINGS TO PONDER

WRITER, MICHELLE LAW, DESCRIBES THE PLAY:

"Single Asian Female is a comedy that skewers race and gender issues in ways that will challenge how you think about our country and the people who live in it. It's a play that speaks to the daily realities of my own life and the lives of many Australians who often feel voiceless and targeted."

Inspired by a blog I kept of the same name about my experiences of being single, Asian and a woman living in Australia, the play was born of my desire to tear into labels and the ways in which they can stifle us when we're not given the chance to subvert them.

In Single Asian Female, you'll witness three women grappling with specifically female issues, from the pressure of choosing between your fertility and your career, to navigating high school and girl gang politics, to trying to survive and be strong for yourself and others when you're trapped in an abusive relationship. You're going to see women grappling with distinctly female relationships, too: sisters at odds with each other, frenemies undermining each other, and a mother trying to overcome generational and cultural gaps to connect with her daughters. I also wanted to examine the narratives of women at three key stages of their lives: high school, one's reproductive prime, and menopause.

So what can you expect from Single Asian Female?

Expect to see the Sunshine Coast and Australian domesticity like you've never seen it before, from the back rooms of a Chinese restaurant and from the perspective of outsiders, of migrants, who confirm all your fears that you're being spoken about in another language. Expect to see women (and specifically women of colour) ... and to hear their voices, which are at once strong, irreverent, and hilarious. Expect to see a family in turmoil. Expect to see audiences who don't normally go to the theatre, who don't normally see themselves reflected on stage. Expect to see laughter, tears and kitschy karaoke in equal measure and be prepared to sing along."

- This quote by Michelle about the play could also be used as a great Responding Task quote to discuss contemporary political theatre, or the role of theatre in contemporary Australia.

"Theatre reflects us, it reflects our society, and the kinds of worlds, stories and faces that have dominated Australian stages for so long are ones that aren't familiar and often exclusionary to othered Australians, including myself."

– Michelle Law.

• Culture

What does it mean to be Australian, a migrant, first or second generation, a refugee, an Asian Australian, a daughter, a sister, a friend? What is your cultural identity? What is Australia's cultural identity?

• Identity

All of the plays characters are trying to navigate their personal identity. Who they are and what they stand for. For the three central characters part of this is navigating their cultural identity too. What are the things that make us who we are? Beliefs, experiences, morals, likes, dislikes, politics etc.

Students to create in-depth character profiles for fictional characters. You could use a series of faces to act as prompts. Swap profiles with other students and write monologues for these new characters. Swap monologues with other students and have them perform them. Discuss identity and what it means, you may like to replicate this activity for the students in your class and use it as a getting to know each other exercise. Here's a great list of questions to build comprehensive character profiles.

<http://www.writerswrite.com/journal/jun98/how-to-create-a-character-profile-6986>

• Family

Single Asian Female explores issues of divorce, the unique role you play in your family unit, growing up, parents and siblings, sister relationships.

Discuss unique family relationships. Get into pairs and create scenes that highlight the following relationships: parent and child, siblings, grandparent and grandchild, cousins, step-parent and step-child, Aunt or Uncle and Niece and Nephew.

Discuss how they are different, what factors contribute to the type of relationship these characters have with one another e.g. age, personality, closeness, opposing views etc.

• Belonging

What does it mean to belong? The play looks at the theme of belonging in a family, at school, in society and in Australia.

Create scenes from the following prompts:

- The black sheep of the family
- Feeling ostracised or left out – at school, in society, in Australia.
- Go back to where you came from

• Gender

The three central characters are strong women, it explores contemporary Australian women, stereotypes about gender and feminism.

Issues the play explores specifically relating to gender that you could discuss are create scenes are:

- Being a single mum
- Abortion
- Having a career and a family
- Domestic Violence
- The cool girl
- Appearance and looking a certain way
- Fitting in
- Cultural stereotypes
- Gender stereotypes
- Dating and Tinder Guys

• How you see me – ASIAN

"People always ask me: 'where are you from?'... and I want to say Minnesota, but I know that's not what they mean" #HowYouSeeMe

<https://www.facebook.com/soulpancake/videos/10154396234236117/>