

牡丹小姐

# Miss Peony

1 July – 29 July



Written by **Michelle Law**

编剧 **Michelle Law 羅敏儀**

Directed by **Courtney Stewart**

导演 **Courtney Stewart**



**BELVOIR ST  
THEATRE**

赞助商 联合制作者



**ASIATOPA**



We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we share our stories. We also pay our respect to the Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Front cover image  
by Dan Boud  
Rehearsal photography  
by Sherry Zheng

# Miss Peony

## 牡丹小姐

1 July – 29 July

**RUN TIME** 演出时间  
2 hours and 20 minutes  
(incl. 20 min interval)  
2小时20分钟  
(包括中场休息20分钟)

**WARNINGS** 警告  
*Miss Peony* includes some strong language, smoking of herbal and electronic cigarettes, the use of haze and strobe lighting.

《牡丹小姐》情节涉及不雅用语，抽吸药草和电子烟以及烟雾和闪光灯效果的使用。

**CAST** 演员  
**Gabrielle Chan** 陳金燕 Adeline  
**Jing-Xuan Chan** 陳敬璿 Marcy  
**Stephanie Jack** 盧恩典 Lily  
**Deborah Faye Lee** 李淑菲  
Marcy (Alternate)  
**Mabel Li** 李美宝 Sabrina  
**Shirong Wu** 吴士容 Joy  
**Charles Wu** 吳震华 Zhen Hua

**CREATIVES** 创意团队  
Writer **Michelle Law** 羅敏儀  
Director **Courtney Stewart**  
Set & Costume Designer  
**Jonathan Hindmarsh**  
Assistant Set & Costume  
Designer **Keerthi Subramanyam**  
Belvoir Costume Supervisor  
**Belinda Crawford**  
Lighting Designer  
**Trent Suidgeest**  
Composer  
**Dr Nicholas Ng** 黄建文  
Sound Designer **Julian Starr**  
Associate Sound Designer  
**Zac Saric**  
Choreographer  
**Kristina Chan** 陈小宝  
Singing Teacher **Sheena Crouch**  
Vocal Coach **Laura Farrell**  
Vocal Coach **Amy Hume**  
Fight and Intimacy Director  
**Nigel Poulton**

Additional Dramaturg  
**Polly Rowe**  
Production Dramaturg  
**Carissa Licciardello**  
Assistant Director  
**Nicole Pingon** 许天奕  
Translator (2023)  
**Samantha Kwan** 關晴怡  
Subtitling & Mandarin Translator  
(2021) **Dr Jing Han** 韩静博士  
Cantonese Translator (2021)  
**Sylvia Xu** 徐穎  
Community Engagement  
Coordinator **Ailsa Liu**  
Community Engagement  
Coordinator **Jessica Kejun Xu**  
Stage Manager **Gayda De Mesa**  
Assistant Stage Manager  
**Wun Zee** 徐曉媛

Supported by  
**Nelson Meers Foundation**  
In Association with **Arts Centre  
Melbourne, Asia TOPA**  
and **QPAC**



Shirong Wu, Jing-Xuan Chan, Charles Wu, Mabel Li & Michelle Law



## WRITER'S NOTE

MICHELLE LAW

*Miss Peony* was written over the course of several years, but the concept for it was seeded more than two decades ago.

I was 11 years old and visiting family in Hong Kong. My Kow Foo, Kum Moh, Biu Goh and I were watching the Miss Hong Kong pageant on TV, my jaw on the floor the entire time. Because I was born in, and had grown up in Australia, I'd never seen so many Asian women on screen before. It was incredible witnessing so many women who looked like me being celebrated for their appearance and connection to culture when I'd learnt to dislike these things about myself and assimilate in order to survive living in a western country.

One contestant stood out to me: a woman struggling to answer interview questions in Cantonese before ultimately giving up and speaking in English. She had an Australian accent. I remember sitting straighter on the couch as I watched her. She sounded like an ABC (Australian Born Chinese) and a banana, just like me - yellow on the outside, white on the inside. She gave me hope that maybe there

was finally a place in the world where I belonged. And then she was eliminated from the pageant.

*Miss Peony* is a story about the unique sense of displacement experienced by diasporic peoples and third culture kids. It's about the trauma of experiencing exclusion from all sides, and the ways in which we cope with the unspoken judgement and elitism from our own peoples when racial divides demand very narrowed definitions of cultural authenticity. It's also an exploration of intercultural racism and lateral violence among Chinese nationalities. We may be the world's largest ethnic group, but we are not a monolith. The same can be said for our languages.

Translating and surtitling this show has been one of the most exciting, political and challenging experiences of my creative practice to date. I could not be more grateful for our astounding translators Professor Jing Han, Sylvia Xu, and Samantha Kwan, who have spent countless hours massaging and troubleshooting this gargantuan task. I hope this script provides encouragement for more productions to

decentralise English and the spoken word while making theatre more inclusive and accessible to historically excluded audiences.

A big thank you to the entire team at Belvoir for embracing *Miss Peony* and new Australian work; to our joyous and generous cast and crew; to Tracey Yu and Reiko Bui for their insights into the pageant universe; to the Asian Australian artists who took part in development workshops for *Miss Peony*; to Louise Gough, Polly Rowe

and Carissa Licciardello for their dramaturgically brilliant brains; and finally to director Courtney Stewart. Court, thank you for being there from the very beginning of everything, for being an enduring role model, and for continuing to be the most wonderful friend and collaborator. Thank 'your', sis.

This play is dedicated to my Ma Ma, Law Wong Ching Lan.





# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

COURTNEY STEWART

My deep and undying love for new Australian work began right around the time I met Michelle and went into the very first development for *Single Asian Female* - her first play, which had a season at Belvoir in 2018. It's so rewarding to continue this lovefest on *Miss Peony* together.

We are experiencing an incredible era in the history of our industry where the hunger audiences have for new and diverse voices is being met with a wave of artists who are spearheading their own stories. Sometimes it takes a crisis to enact big and rapid change. The pandemic has forced us all to challenge what constitutes 'business as usual' - and *Miss Peony* is what it looks like.

*Miss Peony* is a tale that transports us to a world where the afterworld intertwines with reality, where past ideals dance with the present, and where the power of resilience and self-discovery shines brightly. This larger-than-life story, penned by the trail-blazing Michelle Law, celebrates the rich tapestry of Chinese culture, while exploring themes that resonate universally—love, family, and the pursuit of one's truest self. Ultimately this story is a love letter to Chinese women all over the world. We are enough. Just as we are. As Adeline says to Lily, "you were always enough. I believe you can win just as you are." We are ALL worth something.

My hope is that this work makes space for you to laugh, that it inspires conversations, provokes reflection, and reminds us all of the power of unity and understanding. May it remind us to embrace our differences, celebrate our shared humanity, and strive for a world where the vibrant stories of all cultures and communities can find a home on our stages.

I couldn't be more grateful for my collaborators. Thank you to Nicole (Assistant Director) and Gayda (Stage Manager), for your incredible insight and leadership. Kristina (Choreographer), Jonathan (Set/Costume Designer), Julian (Sound Designer), Nick (Composer) and Trent (Lighting Designer) for your passion, sharp dramaturgical eyes and

glorious designer instincts. To Keerthi, Zac, and Ayah thank you for being legends and helping us realise this show. To Wun (Assistant Stage Manager) for binding us all together. Sam, Jing, and Sylvia for leading the translation task - your generosity and love for the work is beyond appreciated. Michelle, Gabby, Jing-Xuan, Mabel, Charles and Shirong - the virtuosic cast - your talents are unparalleled. To Polly, Carissa, Laura,

Amy, Sheena thank you for all the additional support and guidance. To the entire Belvoir team for supporting the show every step of the way. And last but not least, again to my dear Michelle. Sis, thank you for this gift of a show. I don't think I've been in a happier room. The industry is lucky to have you. Thank you for fighting for us and our stories. It is an absolute privilege making work with you xxx.





Gabrielle Chan



Mabel Li & Shirong Wu



Charles Wu, Shirong Wu, Jing-Xuan Chan, Mabel Li, Gabrielle Chan & Michelle Law





Michelle Law & Gabrielle Chan



Mabel Li & Shirong Wu



Shirong Wu, Charles Wu, Mabel Li, Michelle Law & Jing-Xuan Chan





Gayda De Mesa



Nicole Pingon & Courtney Stewart

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