



For Immediate Release: Theatre

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Theatre Rhinoceros Presents

Gumiho: A Free Staged Reading

Rarely-spotlighted Asian lesbians, enbies, and trans characters confront their demons onstage
June 13, 2023

May 29, 2023, San Francisco - If you have been waiting your whole life for the arrival of Asian American lesbian/queer horror theatre, playwright Nina Ki is here with complexly flawed characters and razor-sharp dialogue ablaze. Ki, a self-described “Queerean” (Queer + Korean) playwright who uses xe/she/they pronouns, is one of the most exciting and important new voices in modern playwriting amid a bloom of spotlighted, Asian American-targeted content for the stage. While new Broadway works like *HERE LIES LOVE* and the short-lived but triumphant *KPOP* are vehicles for glamor, stardom, and spectacle, Asian Americans, especially further marginalized LGBTQ+ Asian Americans, and then even further marginalized AFAB (assigned female at birth) Asian American queers, are ever in need of stories that humanize, humble, and interrogate the culturally informed patterns, traumas, joys, connection, and loneliness of existing day-to-day as an Asian queer person trying to find community.

GUMIHO: A Free Staged Reading tells the story of Kam Grey, a Korean adoptee and former reality TV star in her late twenties who has just been broken up with by her longtime girlfriend. She quickly re-immerses herself in the alcohol- and lust-fueled world of the Los Angeles queer scene, where she uses and is used by women. Through a series of hookups, Kam is forced to face some monstrous realizations about herself, her past, and the deep-seated fears that keep her from connection and happiness. *GUMIHO*'s ensemble of Asian queer women and nonbinary & trans characters reveal a queer community in desperate need of interpersonal connection, but consistently sabotaged by the characters' own struggles with cultural trauma, defensiveness, loneliness, and fear of rejection - monsters of the human psyche that manifest in elegantly terrifying ways onstage. For queer Asian American audiences, this intersectional isolation may ring as painfully familiar - which makes *GUMIHO* all the more important as a real-world connection point for its intended in-person audiences.

GUMIHO: A Free Staged Reading is directed by Ely Sonny Orquiza, assistant directed by Crystal Liu, facilitated by Theatre Rhinoceros' Theatre Bay Area Arts Leadership Resident Tanika Baptiste, and performed by a cast of Bay Area actors at Theatre Rhinoceros, the longest-running LGBTQ+ theatre in the world.

Calendar Editors

What: **Gumiho: A Free Staged Reading**

When: Tuesday, June 13 at 7pm

Where: Theatre Rhinoceros, 4229 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94114
Castro Street MUNI Station; F Market, 33 Stanyan, 24 Divisadero
Streetcar and Bus Lines

Tickets: Free

Info / Res: <https://therhino.org/> or <https://fb.me/e/5vashwXUs>

In **Nina Ki**'s queer horror play "Gumiho," Korean adoptee and former reality TV star Kam Grey has just been broken up with by her longtime girlfriend. She quickly re-immerses herself in the alcohol- and lust-fueled world of the Los Angeles queer scene, where she uses and is used by women. Through a series of hookups, Kam is forced to face some monstrous realizations about herself, her past, and the deep-seated fears that keep her from connection and happiness. *Gumiho: A Free Staged Reading* is directed by artist, director, and educator **Ely Sonny Orquiza**, assistant directed by **Crystal Liu**, facilitated by Theatre Rhinoceros' Theatre Bay Area Arts Leadership Resident **Tanika Baptiste**, and performed by **Sarah Catherine Chan**, **Zolboo Namkhaidorj**, **Raye Narra**, **Helene Park**, **Dom Refuerzo**, and **Amethyst Zhang**.

Hi-res Digital Images Available for Download at: <http://therhino.org/press-room/>

The Artists

Nina Ki (xe/she/they) is a Queerean (Queer + Korean) American playwright who was born and raised in Los Angeles, but currently lives in Brooklyn. Xe graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2008 with a BFA in Dramatic Writing, and xer plays have been read, recorded, and presented nationwide, including with MCC Theater, Queens Theatre, Yale Summer Cabaret, and The Parsnip Ship. Xer play "Moon Bear" was given special consideration for the Relentless Award, and xer play "Ravage" was a finalist for the Playwrights Realm's Fellowship. Xe was also an inaugural member of The Parsnip Ship's Radio Roots Writer's Group, and is currently a member of Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writer's Group and Ma-Yi's Writers Lab.

Ely Sonny Orquiza is a multidisciplinary Queer Filipino artistic director, stage director, and teaching artist based in San Francisco Bay Area. Through theater and the performing arts Orquiza explores the role of the Asian diaspora, Asian American experience, ancestral ghosts, and the politics of Queer/ness for the American stage. He is a Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director of The Chikahan Company, a new Filipinx theater company based in San Francisco.

Crystal Liu has performed with, worked backstage for, taught at, and held various management positions in theater companies all over the Bay Area. She holds BAs in Theater and Anthropology from Yale University and was recently seen onstage in productions with Pear Theatre and Awesome Theatre, and in the SF Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band's annual "Dance-Along Nutcracker". She is particularly

interested in making theatre that prioritizes trauma-informed practices, youth, and marginalized communities. She serves as Development Director & Company Manager at Theatre Rhinoceros.

Tanika Baptiste is a proud auntie, sister and daughter with roots from New Orleans and Trinidad and is a critically acclaimed director, actor, vocalist and costume designer who works full time in the Bay Area. In 2022, Tanika was awarded Theatre Bay Area's Arts Leadership Cohort Grant in partnership with Theatre Rhinoceros. She is a proud member of Actors Equity.

Sarah Catherine Chan (*Janette*) a Bay Area native, loved music, singing, track and field, friends and giving speeches in class where she felt her heart lived somewhere in the presentation growing up. She attended UC Davis, where she majored in Economics, minored in Psychology, majored in becoming an All-American Triple Jumper, and minored in learning that mistakes are OK. Sarah is looking forward to playing Mary in "The Language Archive" at Masquers Playhouse, as well as Huck in "The Fantasticks" at the Chanticleers Theatre in the Fall.

Zolboo Namkhaidorj (*Bonnie/Nancy/Victoria*) is a queer Mongolian-American performance artist who is passionate about acting, singing and environmental justice. She also loves loud music, the quiet and most things outdoors.

Raye Narra (*Tay/Nameless Woman*) is a nonbinary acearo Korean-American born and raised in San Francisco. Raye's favorite Korean legendary spirit creature is the dokkebi, and Raye's favorite folktale is the story of Hungboo and Nolboo. Once upon a time, Raye performed in Korean traditional folk dance/theater and is overjoyed to be part of this reading of Nina Ki's contemporary Queerean-American vision of the legendary nine-tailed fox.

Helene Park (*Kam Grey*) is a Korean-American performing artist who graduated from UC Berkeley with a BA in Practice of Art in 2005. She started taking acting and clown classes in 2020 from a variety of institutions such as A.C.T., The Elysian Theater, and The Clown School of SF and has since performed at the APature Festival, The Circus Center and Awesome Theatre. Additionally, Helene has performed in variety shows and alternative comedy venues around the Bay Area and Los Angeles. She enjoys dance, art, and the occasional commercial acting gig.

Dom Refuerzo (*Hyun-Joo*) (they/he/she) is a forever work-in-progress and loose adaptation of the word "artist." They have premiered their music compositions in Austria and across the so-called United States. He has also sung with New Voices Bay Area TIGQ Chorus, and most recently, he was at the Pear Theatre in their staged reading of "ARISTOS: the Musical". They are elated to make their debut at The Rhino and continue being queer off and on the stage. She is grateful to their family, friends, and partner for supporting her artistic journey in all of its chaos.

Amethyst Zhang (*Mona/Robin*) is a Chinese American actress always on the lookout for different roles to challenge herself. She also loves to sing and dance, and loves to try different types of arts and food.

Theatre Rhinoceros was founded in 1977, and is the longest running LGBTQ+ theatre in the nation. We develop and produce works of theatre that enlighten, enrich, and explore both the ordinary and the extraordinary aspects of our queer community. Our emphasis is on new works, works about under-represented members of the larger queer community, and revivals of lesser known queer classics. Over the years Theatre Rhinoceros has received many awards of recognition including: Theatre

Rhinoceros Day in the City Proclamation from Mayor Gavin Newsom, State Assembly Certificate of Recognition from Senator Mark Leno, recognitions from Congressperson Nancy Pelosi and Assembly Persons Tom Ammiano and Carole Migden, numerous Cable Car, BATCC and TBA Awards and Nominations, and the GLAAD Media Award for Best LGBT Theatre.