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Victory Gardens announces new Artistic Director Chay Yew

May 3, 2011

[Victory Gardens Theater](#), home to the bold voices of world premiere theater, today announces the appointment of its new Artistic Director, Chay Yew. Chay Yew is an accomplished, award-winning director and playwright, who has worked with some of the country's most prestigious companies and specializes in developing new work. Yew will begin full-time with Victory Gardens in July, 2011.

Chay Yew's appointment comes as Dennis Zacek, VG's Artistic Director of 34 years, retires from the post.

"We are extremely pleased and excited that Chay Yew has joined our company to continue the VG legacy that Dennis has developed over the past three decades," comments Board President Jeffrey Rappin. "He brings vast experience in new work development and, in partnership with Executive Director Jan Kallish, he will lead VG in bringing the best new work and artists to our stages. We are confident that our company is in good hands and that the mission of VG will be continued with Chay as artistic leader."



Chay Yew comments, "I'm excited and deeply honored to continue Dennis Zacek's vision in providing an artistic home for emerging and established theater artists in Chicago and around the country. I plan to refine and amplify Victory Gardens' mission of championing new plays and diversity as the mission remains close to my heart and everything I've done in American Theatre."

As a director, Chay Yew has directed world premieres by playwrights Jose Rivera, Naomi Iizuka, Kia Corthron, Julia Cho, David Adjmi and Jessica Goldberg, and performance artists Rha Goddess, Universes, Alec Mapa, Sandra Tsing Loh and Brian Freeman. He has also directed and developed new plays at the Sundance Institute, O'Neill Playwrights Conference, Ojai Playwrights Festival, Public Theatre's New Work Now, New Dramatists, Denver Theatre Center's New Play Summit, Playwrights Horizons, Yale Rep's Musical Theatre Institute, Goodman's Latino Festival, South Coast Repertory Theatre's Pacific Playwrights Festival, Lark Theatre Company, New York Theatre Workshop's Dartmouth and Vassar Retreats, New World Theatre, Playwrights Center, Mark Taper Forum's New Works Festival, A.S.K. Theatre Projects, among others.

He is a recipient of the OBIE and DramaLogue Awards for Direction. His productions have been cited by the Los Angeles Times and New York Times as one of the "Ten Best Productions of the Year;" Seattle Times and Strangers' Best Achievement in Theatre; and was named Best Director by Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director of The Public Theater comments, "Congratulations to Victory Gardens on selecting one of our most thrilling and boundary-defying artists to be their next leader! Chay Yew is one of the smartest people in the American Theater landscape. He has vision, skill and talent to burn. Passionate and cool-headed simultaneously, he is going to be a wonderful artistic director."

Ben Cameron, Program Director for the Arts at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and former Executive Director of Theatre Communications Group, the national service organization of regional theatres says, "Chay Yew represents an exciting choice for Victory Gardens. An accomplished playwright and director, Chay is an extraordinary artist to be sure. But I also know him to be a deep listener, a community builder, a generous partner, and a genuine advocate for the value of the theatre and the arts. He has shown keen insight into organizational issues and promises to be a strong organizational leader. I hope this is a great new chapter for Chay, for Victory Gardens and the entire Chicago community."

Teresa Eyring, Executive Director of Theatre Communications Group comments, "Chay Yew is an extraordinarily accomplished and respected theatre artist, whose abilities as both playwright and director combine to make him an excellent match for Victory Gardens. In appointing Chay, the VG board should be applauded for standing squarely behind its mission, to support playwrights and their works as well as building an ethnically and culturally diverse community of artists. I'm sure that Chay will be a major asset to Chicago's already formidable theatre community, and that his leadership will resonate across the national theatre landscape."

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David Henry Hwang, award-winning playwright comments, "Chay Yew is a great facilitator of talent. He has an eye for talent, and knows how to nurture new voices. Victory Gardens is not just any theater. It's a writer's theater. That's why it feels like a good fit for Chay. He is not only a distinguished playwright himself, but knows how to guide other writers' projects to artistic fruition. Victory Gardens has made a bold choice to embrace the changing face of the Midwest, and of America. There is no other mainstream regional theatre in the U.S. with an Asian American Artistic Director. This decision recognizes our nation's evolving cultural paradigms, and moves us into the 21st century."

As a playwright, Chay Yew's plays include Porcelain and A Language Of Their Own, Red, Wonderland, Question 27 Question 28, A Distant Shore 17 and Visible Cities. His other work includes adaptations, A Winter People (based on Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard) and Lorca's The House of Bernarda Alba; a musical Long Season; and multimedia works, Vivien and the Shadows, Home: Places Between Asia and America and A Beautiful Country. His produced short plays include White, A Corner of the World, Blow, Faces of Ants, Gestures, Here and Now, Imelda and Cher at The Top of The World, Scissors, and Second Skin.

His work has been produced at the Public Theater, Mark Taper Forum, Manhattan Theatre Club, Long Wharf Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Intiman Theatre, Wilma Theatre, Portland Center Stage, East West Players, Dallas Theatre Center, Cornerstone Theatre Company, Group Theatre. Studio Theatre, Perseverance Theatre, Dad's Garage, Crowded Fire, Smithsonian Institute, North Carolina Performing Arts, amongst many others. Overseas, his work has been produced by the Royal Court Theatre (London, UK), Fattore K and Napoli Teatro Festival (Naples, Italy), La Mama (Melbourne, Australia), Four Arts (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia), Singapore Repertory Theatre, Toy Factory, Checkpoint Theatre, and TheatreWorks Singapore.

He is the recipient of the London Fringe Award for Best Playwright and Best Play, George and Elisabeth Marton Playwriting Award, GLAAD Media Award, Asian Pacific Gays and Friends' Community Visibility Award, Made in America Award, AEA/SAG/AFTRA 2004 Diversity Honor, and Robert Chesley Award; he has received grants from the McKnight Foundation, Rockefeller MAP Fund and the TCG/Pew National Residency Program.

His plays are published in two titles, The Hyphenated American Plays and Porcelain and A Language of Their Own, by Grove Press; the latter was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award. His other plays are anthologized in Staging Gay Lives, Take Out, But Still, Like Air, I'll Rise Humana Festival 2002 and 2006: The Complete Plays and American Political Plays After 9/11. He is presently editing a new anthology Version 3.0: Contemporary Asian American Plays for TCG Publications.

His directing credits include Durango (Public Theater and Long Wharf); The Architecture of Loss (New York Theatre Workshop); Cool Dip in the Barren Sahara Crick (Playwrights Horizon); Low (Public Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Cincinnati Playhouse, Pillsbury Theatre); Citizen 13559: The Diary of Ben Uchida (Kennedy Center); Universes' Ameriville (Public Theater, Roundhouse Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Southern Repertory Theatre and Curious Theatre); Universes' Eyewitness Blues (Goodman Theatre and Gala Hispanic Theatre); Our Town (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); Brainpeople (American Conservatory Theatre); Boleros for the Disenchanted (Huntington Theatre); Antebellum (Woolly Mammoth Theatre); 36 Views (Portland Center Stage, Geva Theatre Center and Laguna Playhouse); Frozen, The Laramie Project and Strange Attractors (Empty Space); M. Butterfly, Golden Child, Sisters Matsumoto, Big Hunk O' Burnin' Love and Pointless (East West Players); Sex Parasite, Question 27 Question 28, Rice Boy, Sandra Tsing Loh's Depth Becomes Her, Alec Mapa's I Remember Mapa and Drama! (Mark Taper Forum); The House of Bernarda Alba (National Asian American Theatre Company); A Winter People (Theatre at Boston Court); Red (Singapore Repertory Theatre and East West Players); Last of the Suns (Ma Yi Theatre Company); A Beautiful Country (Cornerstone Theatre Company), Home: Places Between Asia and America and James Sie's TALKING WITH MY HANDS (Northwest Asian American Theatre); Brian Freeman's Civil Sex (Walk and Squawk); Denise Uyehara's Maps of Body and City (Highways Performance Space); and David Schmader's Straight (Theatre Rhinoceros, Highways and NWAAT). His opera credits include the world premieres of Osvaldo Golijov and David Henry Hwang's Ainadamar (co-production with Tanglewood Music Center, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and Los Angeles Philharmonic) and Rob Zuidam's Rage D'Amors (Tanglewood).

Founding Director of the Asian Theatre Workshop at the Mark Taper Forum and Associate Artist, he produced and presented several seasons at the Mark Taper Forum's Taper Too. Some productions include Luis Alfaro's Black Butterfly Jaguar Girl Pinata Woman and Other Superhero Girls Like Me, Jessica Goldberg's Good Thing, Sunil Kuruvilla's Rice Boy, Lynn Manning's Weights, Ron Conboy's Drive My Coche, a sixteen-playwright collaboration The Square, and John Walch's The Circumference of a Squirrel.

While at the Taper's Asian Theatre Workshop, he produced Alice Tuan's Ikebana (with East West Players), Alec Mapa's I Remember Mapa (With EWP, Asian American Theatre Company, Northwest Asian American Theatre), Sandra Tsing Loh's Depth Becomes Her, HYMN TO HER: A Festival of Asian Female Performance, WORD UP! A Festival of Asian American Performance, Denise Uyehara's Maps of Body and City (with Highways), Question 27 Question 28 (with EWP and Japanese American National Museum), A Beautiful Country (with Cornerstone Theatre Company and EWP) and annual play reading festivals of new Asian American work.

An alumnus of New Dramatists, he has held residencies at Mu Lan Theatre Company, Northwest Asian American Theatre Company and East West Players.

He serves on the National Advisory Board at the Playwrights Center and the Artistic Advisory Board of Partial Comfort Theatre. He is a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect and Vineyard Theatre Community of Artists. He has also served on the Board of Directors of Theatre Communications Group and is presently on the Executive Board of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

Upcoming productions include the world premiere of Dael Orlandersmith's Black and Blue Boys at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the Goodman Theatre.

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