



# KOKORO

( True Heart )

written by Velina Hasu Houston  
directed by Tamara Ruppert

April 24th - 27th  
Scene Dock Theatre

USC School  
of Dramatic Arts



# USC School of Dramatic Arts Spring 2014 SCHEDULE

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## **MFA ACTING SPRING REPERTORY**

Scene Dock Theatre | February 8-March 9

### **Our Town**

By Thornton Wilder | Directed by Cameron Watson

### **Trojan Women**

By David Bridel & the MFA Acting Class of 2014

Directed by David Bridel

### **Tartuffe**

By Molière | Translation by Richard Wilbur

Directed by Andrew J. Robinson

## **The Art of Success**

By Nick Dear | Directed by Stephanie Shroyer

McClintock Theatre | February 27-March 2

## **Pericles**

By William Shakespeare | Directed by Rob Clare

Bing Theatre | March 6-9

A spring production that showcases our second-year Master of Fine Arts Acting students.

## **La Ronde**

By Arthur Schnitzler | Directed by Jack Rowe

Scene Dock Theatre | April 3-6

## **Grand Hotel, The Musical**

Book by Luther Davis

Music and Lyrics by George Forrest and Robert Wright

Based on Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel* | By arrangement with Turner

Broadcasting Co., Owner of the motion picture *Grand Hotel*

Additional music and lyrics by Maury Yeston

Directed by John Rubinstein

Bing Theatre | April 3-13

## **Fortinbras**

By Lee Blessing | Directed by Jennifer Chang

McClintock Theatre | April 10-13

## **NEW WORKS FESTIVAL: YEAR TWO**

Massman Theatre | April 11-27

## **The Dining Room**

By A.R. Gurney | Directed by Louie Piday

McClintock Theatre | April 24-27

## **Kokoro**

By Velina Hasu Houston | Directed by Tamara Ruppert

Scene Dock Theatre | April 24-27

## **NEW WORKS FESTIVAL: YEAR THREE**

McClintock Theatre | May 27-31

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## **SHOWTIMES**

Thu. & Fri. at 7pm • Sat. at 2:30 & 8pm • Sun. at 2:30pm

## **TICKET PRICES**

PLAYS: General Admission \$10 • Seniors or USC Faculty/Staff with ID \$8  
USC Students with ID \$5

For tickets and information:

[www.usc.edu/spectrum](http://www.usc.edu/spectrum) • [arts@usc.edu](mailto:arts@usc.edu) • 213-740-2167

# KOKORO ( True Heart )

By Velina Hasu Houston

*with*

Alexis Agolsove • Austin Hammer • Lauren Harris  
Haley Kloess • Rayna Koishikawa • Kyungseo Min  
Natalie Nagar • Sophia Nagar • Katie Peabody  
Maya Ten • Brandon Wong

**SCENIC DESIGN**  
Hazel Ko

**COSTUME DESIGN**  
Chloe Oh

**LIGHTING DESIGN**  
Jeff Flowers

**SOUND DESIGN**  
Jane McKeever

**STAGE MANAGER**  
Haley Miller

**DIRECTED BY**  
Tamara Ruppert

**April 24-27, 2014**  
**Scene Dock Theatre**

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
*(In Order of Appearance)*

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Yasako.....	Kyungseo Min
Fuyo.....	Haley Kloess
Hiro.....	Brandon Wong
Evelyn.....	Katie Peabody
Shizuko.....	Natalie Nagar
Angela.....	Alexis Agolsove
Mermaids.....	Rayna Koishikawa Lauren Harris
Voice of Kuniko.....	Maya Ten
Judicial Voice.....	James Greene
Reporters.....	Sophia Nagar Austin Hammer

**TIME**

1984

**PLACE**

San Diego

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

**WARNING**

Please be advised that this production contains smoking of herbal cigarettes.

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## PRODUCTION STAFF

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Vocal & Dialect Coach..... Anne Burk

Movement Choreography..... Anastasia Coon

Scenic Artist..... Vika Teplinskaya

Scenic Production Assistant..... Grace Wang

Crew..... Brynn Anson  
Amanda Berke  
Irvin Jerez  
Sophia Nagar  
Melisa Osborne  
Christopher Brady Thomas  
Grace Wang

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## DIRECTOR'S BIO

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Tamara Ruppert has worked as a director, producer and actor. On a scholarship, Ruppert attended The New School for Drama where she graduated with a MFA in Directing. She studied Digital Filmmaking at NYFA and received a BA in Theater from Davidson College. Stage: *Komachi*, *A Thousand Cranes*, *The Fantasticks*, *Kokoro (True Heart)* and *Extinction* (world premiere). Film: *An American Poet's State of the Union* featuring Peter Kane Dufault and Chris Noth, *The Day the Ponies Come Back* and *18 Shades of Dust* featuring Danny Aiello. Ruppert is producing and directing *Path of Dreams*, a short film, with Velina Hasu-Houston and co-producing *Moishe, All-American*, a feature film currently in pre-production.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

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Our beliefs about the world are not absolute truths, though when they are challenged we can feel like our very identity is at stake. The truth however, is not bound by any one person's belief, or by the belief of a single culture, even the culture of a country as great as the United States. My hope is that *Kokoro (True Heart)* will serve as a vehicle to help you transcend some of your beliefs about the nature of life, motherhood and spirituality, and in so doing help you discover new truths about the nature of all three.

Living in Japan on September 11, 2001, I felt my identity as a New Yorker more profoundly than ever. It was at this, the most emotional of moments, that I experienced a stark cultural division from Japanese society. My Japanese colleagues' disapproval of the angry emotional reaction to the terrorist attacks was indicative of a different cultural perspective, a perspective that was not only foreign, but also equally valid.

Both perspectives are in fact necessary to reach that universal truth that unites the collective consciousness of humanity. It is my sincerest hope that *Kokoro (True Heart)* allows you to transcend your own beliefs about tradition, culture, marriage, motherhood and the law, and embrace the strength of the human spirit that unifies us all.

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

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*Oyako-shinju* has been on the decline since the 1950s. A mother feels responsible for her pre-pubescent child and, therefore, must take the child with her in the event of suicide. In the U.S., *oyako-shinju* continues to occur, primarily at the hands of Asian immigrant mothers (but sometimes non-Asian women) that often are victims of abuse who seek to redeem lost honor. U.S. society frequently finds it difficult to comprehend the cultural foundations, thus placing the mothers that survive (when their children do not) in even more miserable and precarious positions than into which their failures thrust them.

The amalgam of heart and mind brings a different dimension to that ethereal entity that we call love. It is one of discernment that transcends the veneer of language. When culture – in the sense of behaviors and beliefs inherent to ethnicity, transmitted to succeeding generations – is involved, ethnic idiosyncrasies are judged in another's sociopolitical arena (in the case of many of my plays, a Japanese feminine culture in a patriarchal European American context). This play seeks to explore why one particular woman commits *oyako-shinju* and how the U.S. society in which she lives grapples with her decision. Yasako's love for her child is a bond that brings her face-to-face with what, for her, is the most difficult hurdle of all: life. Ultimately, Yasako's actions are not "Japanese," but individual choice (as are the interpretations we make of it). The *Los Angeles Times* calls *Kokoro* a story of "ethnic displacement and female subjugation... in an atmosphere of magical realism," where the "line between the quick and the dead is a fine one." Yes. Welcome to a world that exists in your world, too, even if you do not know it. Thank you for coming to the theatre.

## SPECIAL THANKS

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Brynne Kraynak, Josh Peklo, Els Collins, Jack Rowe, Sophia Nagar

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Babette Markus, Laurel Meade, Lauren Murphy, Maiya Murphy, Ntare Mwine, Shawn Nelson, Patrick Pankhurst, Leah Piehl,

John Rubinstein, Mady Schutzman, Colin Sieburgh, Ella Turenne, Laura Vena, Julie Welch

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