

PEN CANADA

for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION

For Immediate Release March 19th, 2008

Toronto, ON – PEN Canada is proud to participate in Nightwood Theatre and Cahoots Theatre Projects' World Premier of *a nanking winter* by Governor General's Award nominated writer **Marjorie Chan**.

a nanking winter follows a brazen young writer's campaign to ensure the past is not forgotten and is challenged as she prepares for her book release - transporting us back to one of the greatest massacres of the twentieth century. Nanking, China's capital in 1937, is in the first weeks of invasion. In the midst of the rampage, a small group of unlikely heroes – including a nun and a German diplomat with ties to the Nazi party -- band together to create a refuge from the unspeakable horror. *a nanking winter* is a gripping account of survival in the darkest of times.

Following the performance of the play on Saturday, March 1st **Sheng Xue**, a member of PEN Canada's Writers in Exile Program, will participate in a reading and talk-back with the audience.

A poet and journalist who grew up in Beijing and moved to Canada soon after the June 4th Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, Sheng Xue is one of Canada's leading Chinese writers and an outspoken advocate for human rights and free expression in China. Her poetry and prose have been published internationally and her work has been recognized with several awards including the Canadian Journalists Award for Investigative Journalism. Sheng Xue is also a member of the Editorial Board of *June 4 Poetry*, a collection of poems commemorating the June 4th Movement.

"This is an important play not only as a chronicle of the 1937 massacre in China but also as an exploration of how history is told or sometimes ignored," said PEN Canada Executive Director Isobel Harry. "PEN is honoured to support this theatrical work that sheds light on a shameful chapter of recent world history."

PEN Canada is a literary and human rights organization supporting the universal right to freedom of expression. PEN works on behalf of writers, at home and abroad, who have been forced into silence for writing the truth as they see it.

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24 Ryerson Avenue, Suite 301
Toronto, Canada M5T 2P3
T 416.703.8448 F 416.703.3870
E Info@pencanada
www.pencanada.ca

Sheng Xue Biography

Sheng Xue grew up in Beijing. She moved to Canada soon after the June 4th Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. In 2000, she won the Canadian Association of Journalists Award for Investigative Journalism and the National Magazine Award, for an investigative report on the lives of Chinese boat refugees published in *Maclean's* magazine. In 2001, Sheng Xue investigated China's most prominent smuggling case and published a book (in Chinese), *Unveiling the Yuan Hua Case* (2001, Mirror Books, New York). China's Propaganda Ministry immediately banned the book. Sheng Xue has been writing poetry and prose for many years, over a hundred of which have been published. Sheng Xue's article, "The Unbearable Heaviness of Being", was collected in *The Exiles Who Did Not Die* (2005, INK Publishing Limited, Taiwan). The book collected thirty-nine articles of Chinese authors in exile. Her prose stories "The Bloody Morning" and "Light up a Candle Please" were collected in *Poetry and Tank* (2007, Chen Zhong Publishing House, Hong Kong). Sheng Xue is a member of the Editorial Board of *June 4 Poetry*, a collection of poems commemorating the June 4th Movement.

EVENT DETAILS

PERFORMANCE DATE: Saturday, March 1st, 2:00pm
Talk-back starts at 4:00pm

LOCATION: Factory Theatre Mainstage, 125 Bathurst St

TICKETS: \$25.00
Available in advance by calling 416-504-9971
or online at www.nightwoodtheatre.net

PEN Canada Media Contact: Josh Bloch
jbloch@pencanada.ca 416-703-8448 x23