

Nightwood Theatre,
in association with Cahoots Theatre Projects,
presents the WORLD PREMIERE of Marjorie Chan's
a nanking winter

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it..." G. Santayana

"If world peace ever happens, it will be built on knowledge."

June Callwood

a nanking winter (title is all lower case)

By Marjorie Chan

Directed by Ruth Madoc-Jones

Starring Leon Aureus, Ella Chan, Brooke Johnson, Grace Lynn Kung and Stephen Russell

Set and Costume Design by Camellia Koo, Lighting Design by Renée Brode,

Composition and Sound Design by Rick Hyslop

February 23 to March 16, 2008 at Factory Theatre, Mainstage

By the playwright of Nightwood Theatre's *China Doll*

Toronto, ON... Nightwood Theatre in association with Cahoots Theatre Projects presents this provocative world premiere by Governor General's Award nominated playwright **Marjorie Chan** (*China Doll*, Nightwood, 2003). A brazen young writer's campaign to ensure the past is not forgotten is challenged as she prepares for her book release - transporting us back to one of the greatest massacres of the twentieth century. The place is Nanking - China's capital in 1937-- 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.

In December 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army marched into China's capital city and proceeded to murder 300,000 out of 600,000 civilians while masses of Chinese women were systemically raped and murdered. The six weeks of carnage would become known as the 'Rape of Nanking' and represent the single worst atrocity during World War II in either the European or Pacific theatres of war.

a nanking winter combines two stories: the horrific 1937 Japanese invasion of Nanking and the harassment and death of the passionate young woman who chronicled that invasion.

In Act 1, Irene Wu (a character inspired by real life writer Iris Chang) is preparing for the launch of her expose on Nanking when her sister Audrey and her Japanese-American husband Kurt surprise her with a celebration in honour of the book. When her publishers arrive and present her with compromise after compromise, Irene sees her support system fall apart and with it her remaining strength.

In Act 2, the audience is thrust into the invasion of Nanking through the eyes of two young women, Little Mei and Big Mei, both fleeing the slaughter and currently taking refuge at the Ginling College for Women. Their struggle to survive amidst the chaos and dire circumstances create an unbreakable bond resulting in a promise that will span the ages of time; a promise that will not be forgotten.

a nanking winter draws upon the book “The Rape of Nanking” by the iconic Iris Chang for inspiration. Chang was the passionate American author who first brought the atrocities of Nanking to public attention in North America through her book even as she endured years of controversy. After suffering a nervous breakdown, Iris Chang took her own life in November 2004.

As playwright Chan explains, “I was primarily inspired by the death of Iris Chang who wrote the book, “The Rape of Nanking.” I was already aware of the massacre through her book, but had never truly investigated my own feelings about it. Her suicide prompted me to read her book again, and as I did so, I more keenly felt her voice through it. Initially, I resisted creating a character inspired by her, feeling it was too personal, but ultimately the character of Irene would not rest and demanded to be heard.”

Nightwood Interim Artistic Director and *Age of Arousal* director **Maja Ardal** goes on to explain what makes this play so enthralling, “Marjorie Chan's theatrical rendering of the painful past is rich with characters. As each person faces their own dilemma; their spirited struggle to hold on to humanity in the face of such horror and suffering is truly compelling.”

Winter 2007 marks the 70th anniversary of the Nanking massacre and the 10th anniversary of the publication of “The Rape of Nanking.”

a nanking winter features an acting company which includes **Leon Aureus** as Kurt, Fukuyama and Soldier; **Ella Chan** as Audrey and Big Mei; **Brooke Johnson** as Julia and Anna; **Grace Lynn Kung** as Irene and Little Mei; and **Stephen Russell** as Frank and Niklas.

Joining director **Madoc-Jones** are a creative team which includes set and costume designer **Camellia Koo**, lighting designer **Renée Brode**, composer and sound designer **Rick Hyslop**, stage manager **Melanie Klodt** and apprentice stage manager **Stephanie Nakamura**.

Selected Bios:

Marjorie Chan, Playwright

Marjorie is a writer and performer and has delighted and commanded audiences across the country. She has voiced numerous radio dramas for CBC Radio including her own script, *Spring Arrival*. Her debut as a playwright was the acclaimed drama *China Doll* (Nightwood Theatre) which was nominated for two Dora Mavor Moore Awards and subsequently nominated for a Governor General's Literary Award. It was also recently performed in Hong Kong as a part of Festival Canada Hong Kong. Marjorie wrote the libretto for the short opera *Mother Everest* for Opera To Go (Tapestry New Opera Works) which was recorded and aired on CBC Radio. For the 60th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Marjorie, along with award-winning playwright Damien Atkins, adapted Hisashi Inoue's celebrated play about Hiroshima *in the garden, two suns* from Roger Pulvers' translation. Marjorie is the recipient of a Dora Mavor Moore Award in performance as well as the prestigious K.M. Hunter Artists Award in Theatre. Marjorie is currently Associate Artistic Director of Cahoots Theatre Projects.

Ruth Madoc-Jones, Director

Ruth is a Toronto based actor, dramaturge and director and co-founder of Les Vaches - *the ecstasies*, *Jekyll*, *Better Safe than Sorry* and *STEM*. She was a co-recipient of the K.M. Hunter Award, the Associate Artistic Director at Nightwood Theatre, Associate Artistic Producer of the SummerWorks Theatre Festival and was on the Toronto Arts Council Theatre Committee from 2003 to 2005. Ruth participated in the inaugural Siminovitch Directing Master Class with Daniel Brooks, was an intern director at the Shaw Festival where she worked with Neil Munro and Martha Henry and attended the recent CAEA Masterclass in directing at the Magnetic North Festival in Ottawa. Ruth is a graduate of the acting program at the National Theatre School of Canada. Directing credits include *The Drawer Boy* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *The Gladstone Variations* -

Requiem for a Hotel (Convergence Theatre), *Antony and Cleopatra* (Shakespeare in the Rough), *Dreary and Izzy* (Native Earth Performing Arts), *Duel and Dawn* (LKTYP), *Pasque Flower* (Shaw Festival), *Blood, Faith and Floodwaters* (SummerWorks Theatre Festival) and *Guilty Play Room* (Rhubarb! Festival/Buddies in Bad Times Theatre). Assistant directing credits include *The Constant Wife* and *Autumn Garden* (Shaw Festival), *As You Like It* (Canadian Stage) and *Finding Regina* and *The Danish Play* (Nightwood Theatre). Upcoming *Stitch – an a cappella opera* (Urban Vessel/Free Fall Festival/Theatre Centre).

High resolution photography for *a nanking winter* is available for download at:
http://www.nightwoodtheatre.net/index.php/media/category/2007_2008/

a nanking winter Details

DATES:	February 23 to March 16, 2008
MEDIA/VIP:	Wednesday, February 27, 2008 at 8:00 p.m.
SHOW TIMES:	Tuesday to Saturday at 8:00 p.m.; Wednesday 12:30 p.m.; Saturday 2:00 p.m.; Sunday 2:00 p.m.; please note: Sunday, February 24 th at 7:00 p.m.; Friday, February 29 th at 12:30 p.m.
TICKETS:	Single Tickets: \$25 - \$36 Sunday: PWYC Previews: \$12
LOCATION:	Factory Theatre, Mainstage, 125 Bathurst Street Tickets are available in advance by calling (416) 504-9971 or online at www.nightwoodtheatre.net

Mark the date!!!!

Upcoming at Nightwood:

I. FemCab

Tuesday March 4, 2008

Lula Lounge, 1585 Dundas Street West

With **Eve Ensler** (*The Vagina Monologues*) leading the pack, our notorious celebration of International Women's Day is going to be a BIG HIT! Performing artists of every discipline hit the stage in a raucous salute to the extraordinary achievements of women.

Book your tickets by calling 416.944.1740 ext.7

II. GA-LA-LICIOUS

Thursday April 17, 2008

Liberty Grand, 25 British Columbia Road, Exhibition Place

Join us for our second annual fundraising gala! Gorge on delectable music, capricious comedy and first-rate guest appearances. Last year we brought you the indomitable Sarah Harmer and you won't be disappointed this year.

Early Bird Tickets: \$75.00 (before March 15, 2008)

Regular Tickets: \$100.00

Book your tickets by calling 416.944.1740 ext.7

III. EXTREME WOMEN

Sunday May 4, 2008

Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen Street West

Join us for our 2nd annual staged readings of three innovative international works at one of the city's most innovative spaces.

Tickets: \$10

Book your tickets by calling 416.944.1740 ext.7

ABOUT NIGHTWOOD THEATRE

Nightwood Theatre – Artistic Director **Kelly Thornton** (on leave until March 2008) – Interim Artistic Director **Maja Ardal** and Producer **Monica Esteves**.

For 28 years, Nightwood Theatre has developed, produced and toured landmark, award-winning plays by and about women. The company's tremendous work in play creation bore fruit to many renowned and acclaimed plays that are now part of the Canadian theatre canon. These include *Good Night Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* by Ann-Marie MacDonald, *The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God* by Djanet Sears, *The Danish Play* by Sonja Mills and over 50 other new Canadian plays by women.

Nightwood plays have won Canada's highest literary and performing arts honours, including Governor General, Chalmers, Dora Mavor Moore and Trillium Awards. Nightwood is a valued member of various communities, at a local, regional and national level. Through our youth initiatives and mentorship programs, our various festivals, productions, events, colourful history, an important mandate and an exciting fundraisers and collaborations with other organizations, Nightwood is a growing, thriving success story with an important mandate and an exciting future.

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Press contact:

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For marketing and promotions inquiries please contact **Rebecca Peirson**, Director of Marketing and Audience Development at 416-944-1740 ext. 8 or rebecca@nightwoodtheatre.net

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