



Kris Bona



Red Concepción



Akira Fukui



Michael Hisamoto



Ahmad Kamal



Earl T. Kim



Hank Lin



Haowen Luo 罗浩闻



David Shih



Scott Keiji Takeda



Paco Tolson



Viet Vo

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**MA-YI THEATER COMPANY
AND THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCE
COMPLETE CASTING FOR
NEW YORK PREMIERE OF
SUMO 相撲**

By Lisa Sanaye Dring
A Co-Production of Ma-Yi Theater Company and La Jolla Playhouse
Directed by Ralph B. Peña

Cast Includes Kris Bona, Red Concepción, Akira Fukui, Michael Hisamoto, Ahmad Kamal, Earl T. Kim, Hank Lin, Haowen Luo 罗浩闻, David Shih, Scott Keiji Takeda, Paco Tolson, and Viet Vo

November 14, 2024 – Ma-Yi Theater Company (Ralph B. Peña, Producing Artistic Director) and The Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director and Patrick Willingham, Executive Director) announced today complete casting for the New York premiere of **SUMO 相撲**, a thrilling new play written by Ma-Yi Theater Company Tow Foundation Resident Playwright **Lisa Sanaye Dring** and directed by Obie Award winner **Ralph B. Peña**. Following its Fall 2023 world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse, **SUMO** begins performances with a Joseph Papp Free Performance on Thursday, February 20 and officially opens on Wednesday, March 5. The production runs in the Anspacher Theater through Sunday, March 23.

Entrenched in an elite sumo training facility in Tokyo, six men practice, eat, love, play, and ultimately fight. Step into the sacred world of sumo wrestling, with the New York premiere of **Lisa Sanaye Dring's** mesmerizing new drama, **SUMO**. Akio arrives as an angry, ambitious 18-year-old with a lot to learn. Expecting validation, dominance, and fame, and desperate to move up the ranks, he slams headlong into his fellow wrestlers. With sponsorship money at stake, their bodies on the line, and their futures at risk, the wrestlers struggle to carve themselves—and one another—into the men they dream of being. **SUMO** is a thrilling new play set in an elite and rarely explored world. Obie Award winner **Ralph B. Peña** directs this powerhouse drama.

“Lisa Sanaye Dring’s **SUMO** takes us into the hypermasculine yet deeply spiritual world of sumo wrestling to reveal new facets of this revered sport,” said **SUMO** director and Ma-Yi Theater Company Producing Artistic Director **Ralph B. Peña**. “I’m excited to be part of bringing this unique story to life—one that explores strength, identity, and tradition in a way we’ve never seen on stage before.”

Playwright **Lisa Sanaye Dring** added, “This is a dream come true. I am so grateful to Ma-Yi, The Public, and La Jolla Playhouse for bringing this idea to life, and for the opportunity to share my artistic voice with the New York theater community. Thank you for having me.”

The complete cast of **SUMO** will include **Kris Bona** (*Kannushi 2*), **Red Concepción** (*Fumio*), **Akira Fukui** (*Understudy So/Kannushi 1*), **Michael Hisamoto** (*So*), **Ahmad Kamal** (*Ren*), **Earl T. Kim** (*Shinta*), **Hank Lin** (*Understudy Mitsuo/Ren/Shinta/Kannushi 2*), **Haowen Luo 罗浩闻** (*Understudy Akio/Fumio/Kannushi 3*), **David Shih** (*Mitsuo*), **Scott Keiji Takeda** (*Akio*), **Paco Tolson** (*Kannushi 1*), and **Viet Vo** (*Kannushi 3*).

SUMO will feature scenic design by **Wilson Chin**, costume design by **Mariko Ohigashi**, lighting design by **Paul Whitaker**, sound design and music composition by **Fabian Obispo**, hair and wig design by **Alberto “Albee” Alvarado**, projection design by **Hana S. Kim**, prop design by **Thomas Jenkeleit**, and taiko drum composition by **Shih-Wei Carrasco Wu**. **James Yaegashi** will be sumo consultant and co-fight director, and **Chelsea Pace** will be co-fight and intimacy director. **Amrita Ramanan** will be the dramaturg. **Alyssa K. Howard** will serve as production stage manager and **Taeuk Kang** as stage manager.

This production marks the third collaborative production between Ma-Yi Theater Company and The Public Theater, following successful runs of *Teenage Dick* by Mike Lew in 2018 and *The Chinese Lady* by Lloyd Suh in 2022. The Public is proud to continue working with Ma-Yi and to honor and celebrate their important mission of providing a home for Asian American artists, while producing theater that breaks boundaries.

The Public kicks off 2025 with **SUMO** by **Lisa Sanaye Dring** with Ma-Yi Theater Company and La Jolla Playhouse. The Astor Place season continues with **GLASS. KILL. WHAT IF ONLY. IMP.**, a quartet of inventive plays written by groundbreaking playwright **Caryl Churchill** and directed by **James Macdonald**. Finally, the season will conclude with the New York Premiere of **GODDESS**, a new musical and a rousing tale of romance, the supernatural, and the quest towards one’s truest self. The production is conceived

and directed by Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director **Saheem Ali**, features music and lyrics by **Michael Thurber**, a book by Tony Award nominee **Jocelyn Bioh**, and choreography by **Darrell Grand Moultrie**. The Public will also produce a world premiere audio play of **LET'S KEEP DANCING: A Death Row Story** by **John Purugganan** about two souls fighting to survive death row.

Following a significant revitalization, The Delacorte Theater, home of Free Shakespeare in the Park, will reopen in Summer 2025 with a production of Shakespeare's classic comedy **TWELFTH NIGHT**, also directed by The Public's Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director, Tony Award nominee **Saheem Ali**, and featuring an all-star cast of Public Theater alumni, including **Peter Dinklage**, **Jesse Tyler Ferguson**, **Lupita Nyong'o**, **Sandra Oh**, and more to be announced soon.

The Library serves food and drink beginning at 6:00 p.m. and closing at midnight. The Library is closed on Mondays. For more information, visit publictheater.org.

BIOS:

LISA SANAYE DRING (*Playwright*) is a writer and director from Hilo, Hawaii, and Reno, Nevada. She is the current Tow Foundation Writer in Residence with Ma-Yi Theater Company. *SUMO* received its world premiere with La Jolla Playhouse and Ma-Yi Theater Company in 2023. Dring's play *Kairos* is currently receiving a Rolling World Premiere with the National New Play Network. Dring has won an Edgerton Award, a Broadway World Award for Best New Play, and the PLAY LA Stage Raw/Humanitas Prize. They have been a finalist for the Relentless Award, the O'Neill Playwrights' Conference (2 times), the Seven Devils Playwrights Conference, and a 2-time finalist (one honorable mention) for the Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Her work has also been developed/produced by The Geffen, The New Group, Actors Theatre of Louisville, East West Players, Circle X, Antaeus Theater Company, Rogue Artists Ensemble, and the Contemporary American Theater Festival. They have worked with Meow Wolf and have been awarded fellowships at MacDowell, Blue Mountain Center, and Yaddo. She was awarded the 2021 Dorothy and Granville Hicks Residency at Yaddo, which honors one promising young writer a year. She received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Interactive Programming for a piece she co-wrote and co-directed with Matt Hill called "Welcome to the Blumhouse Live."

RALPH B. PEÑA (*Director*) is an Obie Award-winning theatermaker based in New York City. Recent directing credits include *The Far Country* (Yale Repertory), the world premiere of Lisa Sanaye Dring's *SUMO* (La Jolla Playhouse/Ma-Yi), Lloyd Suh's *The Chinese Lady* (Ma-Yi/The Public Theater, Indiana Rep, Long Wharf Theater, Barrington Stage; Drama Desk, Lortel, New York Outer Critics Circle, Berkshire Theater Critics, CT Critics Circle nominations), Michael Lew's *Tiger Style!* (South Coast Repertory), and Daniel K. Isaac's *ONCE UPON A (korean) TIME* for Ma-Yi Theater Company, where Peña is currently Producing Artistic Director. For Ma-Yi he has also directed the world premieres of Hansol Jung's *Among The Dead*, Michael Lew's *microcrisis*, and Lloyd Suh's *The Wong Kids* (Off-Broadway Alliance Best Children's Play) and *Children of Vonderly*. He wrote and directed the short film *Vancouver* (Cannes World Film Festival, L.A. Indie Festival, NY International Film Award for Best Short and Best Director, 2023 UNIMA Citation of Excellence), and the documentary "20 Years of Asian American Playwriting" for PBS / ALL ARTS. He is a Sundance Theater Directing Fellow and a member of Ensemble Studio Theater.

KRIS BONA he/they (*Kannushi 2*). Off-Broadway debut! National Tour credits include *Spamilton* (First National). Regional credits include *54 Below*, *Bat Out of Hell* (Las Vegas), *SUMO* (La Jolla Playhouse), Disney's *Mulan* (Tuacahn), *Miss Saigon*, *Fun Home*, *Grease*, and *Mamma Mia*. International credits include Disney Cruise Line. BFA, AMDA. Endless love and thanks to FSE, DA/BM, Mama, Papa, and Brett! @krisbonafide

RED CONCEPCIÓN (*Fumio*). Broadway credits include *Chicago* (Amos Hart). Touring/Regional credits include *Miss Saigon* (The Engineer; US National and UK/Ireland Tours), and *Les Misérables* (Thenardiér, The Munny). TV credits include "Law & Order." Before moving westward, Concepción's body of work spanned over 15 years in his home country, the Philippines, including *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert* (Adam/Felicia; Manila and Singapore), *Equus* (Alan Strang) *Annie* (Rooster), and more. @red_concepcion

AKIRA FUKUI (*Understudy So/Kannushi 1*). Public debut. Select NYC credits include *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (St. Ann's Warehouse), *As You Like It* (Oliver), *Queen Anne* (SheNYC), *It's All About Lorrie* (ATA), *Chase: What Matters Most* (Dixon Place). A very deep bow to everyone who made this dream a reality.

MICHAEL HISAMOTO he/him (So). Public debut. Regional credits include *Hold These Truths*, *Yellow Face*, *Allegiance*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Stage Kiss*, *Orlando*, *Fast Company*, *SUMO*, and *Charlotte's Web*. Hisamoto is also a producer, director, and playwright. He serves on the board of the Seven Devils Playwright's Conference and as faculty at Boston University. BFA: Boston University. MFA: Brown/Trinity Rep. michaelhisamoto.com

AHMAD KAMAL (*Ren*). Regional credits include *Babbitt*, *Everybody*, *Richard III* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); *Gloria*, *Kiss* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company); *Holiday* (Arena Stage); *4,380 Nights* (Signature Theatre); *The Return* (Mosaic Theatre Company); *Selling Kabul* (Northlight Theatre); and *Baba* and *The Handless King* (Amphibian Stage). Kamal received a Helen Hayes Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor in *Gloria*. BFA, University of Virginia; MA, Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. @king_o_egypt.

EARL T. KIM (*Shinta*) is an international actor, storyteller, and performance artist making his NYC theater debut with *SUMO* at The Public. In addition to theater, he is known for his roles in video games like Norio in *Ghost of Tsushima* and Takamori Saigo in *Rise of the Ronin*. Training: MFA (East 15), BFA (Naropa University). twitch.tv/earlofsammit

HANK LIN (*Understudy Mitsuo/Ren/Shinta/Kannushi 2*). Film/TV credits include *Late Night*, "Law & Order: SVU," "Fantasmas," "The Crowded Room," "Let the Right One In," "Pose," and "Bull." Lin graduated from Brandeis University. Instagram: dastardly_chits

HAOWEN LUO 罗浩闻 (*Understudy Akio/Fumio/Kannushi 3*), an actor and producer from Qingdao, China, is thrilled to make his debut at The Public in *SUMO* as an understudy. A recent Occidental College graduate, Luo appeared in *Antigone*, *The Receptionist*, *A Dream Play*, and *Scenes from Metamorphoses*. Guided by his love for theater, he aims to bridge cultures through storytelling.

DAVID SHIH (*Mitsuo*) has performed at The Public in *Awake and Sing!*, *The Tempest*, and *365 Days/365 Plays*. Broadway: *Life of Pi*. Off-Broadway credits include *ONCE UPON A (korean) TIME*, *Gnit*, *Henry VI*, *KPOP*, and *Somebody's Daughter*. Regional credits include *The Far Country*, *Kim's Convenience*, and *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*. Shih has appeared in *Eighth Grade*, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, *Saving Face*, "Billions," "Iron Fist," and "The Path."

SCOTT KEIJI TAKEDA (*Akio*). The Public and NYC debut. Regional credits include *SUMO* (World Premiere, La Jolla Playhouse), *Pacific Overtures*, *Next to Normal*, *Valley of the Heart*, and *The Great Leap*. Takeda has appeared in *No No Girl*, *Carrie Pilby*, *MDMA*, *Evergreen*, "Huge in France," "Grey's Anatomy," and "Made for Love." Takeda thanks his family and friends for their endless love, support, and encouragement.

PACO TOLSON he/him (*Kannushi 1*) has developed work with Ma-Yi Theater for over 17 years including *The Children of Vonderly*, *Rescue Me*, and *Soul Samurai*. Tolson received Lortel nominations for Lead Performance (Fiasco's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*) and Featured Actor (*Vietgone* at Manhattan Theatre Club). Film/TV credits include "Billions," "Search Party," "Law & Order: Organized Crime," "Prodigal Son," and "The Good Fight."

VIET VO (*Kannushi 3*). Public Debut! Originally from Hawaii. Of-Broadway credits include *Romeo and Bernadette*, and *Fishing for Wives*. Regional credits include three productions of *Vietgone* and *Gold Mountain the Musical*. TV/Film credits include *Cupids* (Tribeca Film Festival), "Law & Order: SVU," "The Blacklist," "Tales of the City," "Manifest," and "Lost." Huge Mahalo nui loa cast and crew. To my Parents and family, love you. 사랑해요, Binsu

MA-YI THEATER COMPANY is a professional Off-Broadway not-for-profit organization whose primary mission is to develop and produce new and innovative plays by Asian American writers. It is the country's leading incubator of AAPI works, with numerous award-winning productions that include Lloyd Suh's *The Chinese Lady*, Daniel K. Issac's *ONCE UPON A (korean) TIME*, Hansol Jung's *Wolf Play* and *Among The Dead*, Mike Lew's *Teenage Dick* and *Bike America*, Qui Nguyen's *The Inexplicable Redemption of Agent G* and *Soul Samurai* (with *Vampire Cowboys*), *Rescue Me* by Michi Barall, and Lonnie Carter's *The Romance of Magno Rubio*. Ma-Yi Theater is home to the renowned Ma-Yi Writers Lab, the largest collective of AAPI writers in the country. ma-yitheatre.org and ma-yistudios.com

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside its theatre walls. Led by Tony winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz, the Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 120 world premieres, commissioning 70 new works, and sending 36 productions to Broadway, garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, plus the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. LaJollaPlayhouse.org

THE PUBLIC continues the work of its visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on-stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Conceived over 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theaters, The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public's wide breadth of programming includes an annual season of new work at its landmark home at Astor Place, Free Shakespeare in the Park at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the Mobile Unit touring throughout New York City's five boroughs, Public Lab, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative, and Joe's Pub. Since premiering *HAIR* in 1967, The Public continues to create the canon of American Theater and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musicals *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Suffs* by Shaina Taub, and *Hell's Kitchen* by Alicia Keys and Kristoffer Diaz. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 64 Tony Awards, 194 Obie Awards, 62 Drama Desk Awards, 61 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 65 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

The Public Theater stands in honor of the first inhabitants and our ancestors. We acknowledge the land on which The Public and its theaters stand—the original homeland of the Lenape people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We honor the generations of stewards and we pay our respects to the many diverse indigenous peoples still connected to this land.

The LuEsther T. Mertz Legacy Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities.

TICKET INFORMATION

SUMO begins performances in The Public's Anspacher Theater with a Joseph Papp Free Performance on Thursday, February 20. The production officially opens on Wednesday, March 5 and runs through Sunday, March 23.

Tickets are available now for Public Theater Partners and Supporters and can be accessed by visiting publictheater.org, calling **212.967.7555**, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street. Full-price single tickets will be available on Wednesday, November 20.

The Public's Joseph Papp Free Performance initiative will offer free tickets to the performance on Thursday, February 20 through TodayTix. The Lottery will open for entries on Thursday, February 13 and will close at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 19. Winners will be notified by email and push notification anytime from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and if selected, winners will have one hour to claim their tickets.

The performance schedule is Tuesday through Sunday at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 1:00 p.m. (*There will be no 1:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, February 22 or Sunday, February 23. The performance on Thursday, February 27 will be at 7:30 p.m. The performances on Wednesday, March 12 and Thursday, March 13 will be at 1:00 p.m.*)

The community performance on Friday, March 7 at 7:00 p.m. will be an **AAPI Theater Night**. After the performance, there will be an on-stage panel conversation followed by a reception held on The Public's mezzanine. Panelists will be announced at a later date.

The **Open Captioned** performance will be on Saturday, March 15 at 1:00 p.m. The **Audio Described** performance will be on Sunday, March 16 at 1:00 p.m. The **American Sign Language Interpreted** performance will be on Thursday, March 20 at 7:00 p.m. The performance on Sunday, March 23 at 1:00 p.m. will **require patrons to wear masks**. Additionally, on Sunday, March 9 at 1:00 p.m., the performance will include **Spanish Open Captions**. On Saturday, March 22 at 1:00 p.m., the performance will include **Traditional Chinese Open Captions**.

The full performance calendar can be found at publictheater.org.

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