

# **Rokuro – The Wheel**

Produced by **Suzanne Liska**

Choreography by **Suzanne Liska & Takako Segawa**

Music & Sound by **Heidi Chan**

Pottery by **John Ikeda**

Set Design by **Jennie Simm**

Lighting Design by **Gabriel Cropley**

Associate Lighting Design by **Adam Jules**

Costume Design by **Emiko Nagato**

Video by **Yves Soglo**

Japanese Tea courtesy of **Momo Tea**

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Dramaturgical Support and Consultancy: **Maxine Heppner & Tedd Robinson** Stage

Management: **Mayumi Lashbrook**

Promotion & Marketing: **Mélissa Cuvilliez**

Front of House: **Angela Xu (Raging Asian Womxn)**

Photography: **Jae Yang**

Promo/Archival Video: **Eray Guler**

This production is made possible through the generous financial support of Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, and Canada Council for the Arts.

The performers would also like to thank Raging Asian Womxn and Studio RAW (theatre residency) and REASON d'être Productions (loan of lounge chairs).

## **About The Show**

*Rokuro – The Wheel* is a performative collaboration that explores the embodiment and enactment of Asian Canadian identity and place, and the intersection of cultural artifacts, movement, music and personal cultural and artistic histories.

Circular gestures and recurring musical motifs evoke the movement of a potter's wheel. Bodies, musical instruments, and pottery objects all become sites for the inquiry of form, as we give shape to rituals rooted in nature and ancestry.

The music for this work will be performed live using bamboo flutes, Japanese *taiko* drums and

percussion, as well as electronics (synthesized and sampled sounds, live looping) to generate multi-layered soundscapes that interact and inquire alongside the physical movements of the performance piece.

About the set design: “In Rokuro, I wanted to re-imagine the traditional Japanese rock garden with textile materials that reflect this idea of our woven cultures and histories as Japanese Canadians. The garden is entirely handcrafted and fiber-based including hand tufted moss rugs, recycled kimono leaves and felted wool rocks. The artistic concept of Rokuro is a representation of us as Japanese Canadians, honouring our Japanese roots but growing into our own woven identity as Canadians.” (Jennie Vallis)

About the pre-show music: “Although my main connection to Japanese arts and culture as a professional musician has been through my training in Japanese *taiko* drumming and folk music, my very first exposure to Japanese music was in fact through the Cantopop (Cantonese pop music from Hong Kong) I listened to growing up. Many Cantopop hits from the 1970s, 80s, and 90s were in fact cover versions of J-pop (Japanese pop) from the same era. This hybrid genre kept me connected to my language and cultural roots as a young Chinese-Canadian growing up in Toronto. The music performed during the pre-show is a collection of popular Cantonese & Mandarin covers of J-pop from the 1970s-1990s.” (Heidi Chan)

### **Bios**



**Suzanne Liska** is a choreographer, dancer, teacher and researcher specializing in somatic practices, contemporary dance/theatre and physical partnering. She has choreographed and danced in works for CanAsian KickStart, DanceWorks CoWorks, Dusk Dances, and Dance Matters, receiving grants and awards through the Canada Council for the Arts, Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, York University and SSHRC (Canadian Graduate Scholarship). Suzanne has a B.A., B.Education, and MFA in Choreography and is a Certified Alexander Technique Teacher. She is contract Faculty in York University’s Dance department, and George Brown College’s Acting and Digital Media department. [www.suzanneliska.com](http://www.suzanneliska.com)

**Takako Segawa** is originally from Kochi, Japan and was nominated as an outstanding female dance performer at Dora Awards in 2015. She has worked with many different choreographers and performed in London, Italy, Slovenia, Greece and throughout Europe. In Canada, she was worked with Tedd Robinson, Suzanne Liska, Corpus, Maxine Heppner, Michael Caldwell, Xing Ban Fu Ballet, Susan Lee, Limitless productions & others and continues a distinguished career in Europe & Japan. She has worked with Maxine Heppner since 2004 as a principal performer, researcher, and rehearsal assistant, taking her to various parts of Canada, Greece, Singapore, Japan and Indonesia.



**Heidi Chan** performs, composes, and designs

music and sound for theatre, dance, and film, and has worked and toured across Canada, the US, Asia, and the UK. Heidi is a member of Japanese folk music ensemble Ten Ten, and makes solo experimental electronic music under the name Bachelard. Dance and theatre credits include productions by Little Pear Garden Collective, Zata Omm, Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio (Hong Kong), Shakespeare's Globe (UK), Blyth Festival, Outside The March, Theatre Gargantua, Company of Fools, Red Beti Theatre, Sagacollectif, Factory Theatre, and Theatre Passe Muraille.

**John Ikeda** was born in 1948 of Japanese descent in Lethbridge, Alberta. His family was forced to work on sugar beet farms, endure deprivation, shame and racial prejudice. This led him to develop personal values based on truth, beauty and simplicity in life and art. He graduated from the University of Lethridge (B.A. Fine Arts) in 1971 and became an early pioneer during the emergence of the studio art pottery practice of the 1970's. John's functional pottery works are hand thrown or hand built using white earthenware clay. He multiple-fires in an oxidation atmosphere within an electric kiln. John also creates sculpture/paintings and ceramic tile compositions, drawing emphasis upon the emotional expressiveness of colour. His inspiration derives ultimately from abstraction and landscape, whether visceral or literal. He lives in St. Bernardin, Ontario. [www.ikedastudios.com](http://www.ikedastudios.com)





**Jennie Simm** (formerly Vallis) is an award-winning production designer, publisher and visual artist with over 12 years in the creative industries of theatre stage design, contemporary art, and fabricating effects and props for film + television. A BFA graduate with distinction from AUArts ('11) and a MFA graduate from Emily Carr University of Art & Design ('21), she specializes in creating visual en with dance and theatre companies. Theatrical Credits include production design for *Know The Rules*, *Win the Game* (Cloudsway Dance Theatre), *Fihi Ma Fihi*, *The Dybbuk* (La Caravan Dance Theatre) and stage installations featured at TEDTalks, Burning Man and Powell Street Festival. TV Credits include *Fargo S.5* (FX), *Heartland* (CBC), *Under the Banner of Heaven* (FX), *Billy The Kid* (MGM). Jennie is also the publisher and editor-in-chief of the arts, music + culture

publication and media company Big Kitty Magazine.

[www.jennievallis.com/](http://www.jennievallis.com/) [www.bigkittymagazine.com](http://www.bigkittymagazine.com)

**Gabriel Cropley** is a Toronto based lighting designer and three-time Dora Mavor Moore award nominee. Recent credits include *Magic of Assembly* for Toronto Dance Theatre, *Disobedience* for UofT Opera, *Sankhya* for Sampradaya Dance Creations, *Nuit Blanche 2022* for the City of Toronto, *Cacao: A Venezuelan Lament* by Victoria Mata Productions with Aluna Theatre, and since then choreographed by Peggy Baker for Ottawa Dance Directive. Gabriel has had the privilege of collaborating with BoucharDanse, pounds per square inch performance, Alias Dance Projects, Ballet Creole, Coal Mine Theatre, Bicycle Opera, CanAsian Dance, dreamwalker dance, Dancemakers, Humber Theatre, Avinoam Silverman Dance, Little Pear Garden Dance Company, Toronto Heritage Dance, Capitol Theatre Port Hope, Festival of the Sound, Newton Moraes Dance Theatre, York Dance Ensemble, TOES for Dance, Danny Grossman, Sook-Yin Lee & Jennifer Goodwin, Theatre Gargantua, Peggy Baker Dance Projects, Hamilton Children's Choir, Tracey Norman, Forcier StageWorks, Ritmo Flamenco, JDdance, Art of Time Ensemble, and the School of Toronto Dance Theatre.

[www.gabrielcropley.ca](http://www.gabrielcropley.ca)





**Momo Yoshida** is the founder and owner of Momo Tea, an online tea store based in Toronto. She is Nihoncha (Japanese Tea) Adviser certified by Japan Tea Industry Central Association. She is also certified Tea Sommelier with George Brown College and Tea Association Canada. She is a member of Tea Guild Canada. She belongs to the Urasenke school of Chanoyu. (Tea Ceremony). Momo actively participates in various tea events, and Momo Tea is one of the primary exhibitors for of the annual Toronto Tea Festival. She attends numerous cultural events, including seasonal festivals at Japanese Canadian Cultural Center, Japan Festival in Mississauga, hosting her tea workshops, and appearing as a guest speaker at tea seminars all over Toronto. [www.momotea.co](http://www.momotea.co)

**Maxine Heppner's** favourite thing is to be in-studio with colleagues figuring things out. Known for massive ensembles intimating chamber works since the 1970's, her multi-heritage & international dance & inter-medial career have led to her dedication to somatic intelligence as the source of expression & positive human interactions, be she creating, performing, teaching, designing, writing. Her company, Across Oceans Arts, facilitates collaborative platforms for artists & public across viewpoints, generations & heritages since 1995. Maxine teaches in T'karonto, online & internationally. A community-builder, she founded dance programs including for Claude Watson High School for the Arts, co-founded the Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists & the International Network for Cultural Diversity (now in Unesco). Yet she remains an independent, continuously challenging norms while embracing fierceness, honesty, delicacy & the need for beauty.

[acrossoceans.org](http://acrossoceans.org)



**Tedd Robinson** is known for his

idiosyncratic solo works.

Born in Ottawa, Tedd graduated with a BFA from York University, and studied at The School of The Toronto Dance Theatre and with British visual theatre artist Lindsay Kemp. As Artistic Director of 10 Gates Dancing, his collaborators have included Margie Gillis, Louise Lecavalier, Ame Henderson and composer/performer Charles Quevillon. His work is also influenced by his six years of study as a monk in the



Hakukaze soto zen monastery in Ottawa. He has lead choreographic labs in Ireland, Scotland, Australia and across Canada. Tedd Robinson is a National Arts Centre Associate Dance Artist and is the recipient of the 2014 Walter Carson Award for “artistic excellence and distinguished career achievement in dance”. His work for Nova Scotia's Mocean Dance, *Canvas 5 X 5*, was awarded the 2016 Lieutenant Governor's Masterworks Arts Award.

<https://www.tengatesdancing.ca/about.htm>

**Mayumi Lashbrook** (she/her) is a Japanese Canadian settler in T'karonto who seeks to expose, challenge, and rectify systems of oppression by creating innovative, introspective and inclusive dance theatre. She sees embodiment as at the crux of world making, providing alternatives to unconscious thought, consumerism and oppression. She strives to increase connection, visibility and diversity in the Canadian arts landscape through on and off stage initiatives. Her primary practices span performance, choreography, education, creative production and Artistic Direction. Mayumi is the Co-Artistic Director of Hamilton based Aeris Körper, mentee of Denise Fujiwara of Fujiwara Dance Inventions, and practitioner of Dreamwalker Dance's Conscious Bodies methodology. Mayumi contributes as a creative voice through both choreography and production of healthy ecologies for dance to be made in. Her different roles are all-encompassing and overlapping. This enables her to approach projects and communities with knowledge, openness, and curiosity.

[www.aeriskorper.com](http://www.aeriskorper.com)

**Emiko Nagato** is an accomplished costume designer with a career that spans over 20 years. She has attained a BFA from the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, Washington, and a MFA from North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She is a freelance costume designer/technician for numerous artists and theatres including the Department of Dance at York University, Nagata Shachu, The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, The North Carolina Shakespeare Festival and The Monomoy Theatre. She interned at the TDF Costume Collection in New York and The Colorado Shakespeare Festival. She is currently employed at Sugar's Mascots as a cutter in their wardrobe department in Toronto, Ontario.

**Yves Soglo** is a videographer who tells untold stories, captures precious moments and features other artists. Yves is an artist, a documentarist and an educator. Yves uses the camera to give a platform to those whose voices would otherwise not be heard. With each frame, a chapter of life unfolds. His camera is the wand he uses to capture the magic your special day. But what sets him apart is that he is very approachable and makes people feel comfortable, allowing the viewers to feel as though they were there. Yves' passion for the art of videography knows no bounds and his deep sense of authenticity and client care permeates all of his projects. He also loves to give back by giving the mic to fellow artists. Yves is a long-time dancer and teacher who now showcases other dancers on film. [www.yvessoglo.com](http://www.yvessoglo.com)

**Jae Yang** is a photographer, graphic designer and illustrator based in Toronto. Specializing in event, dance and theatre photography with a photojournalistic approach, his clients include Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Toronto (CDTPS), Canadian Stage, The Junction BIA, Corpus Dance Projects, Jamii Esplanade, and other arts and non-profit organizations in the city. Born in Korea and raised in Argentina, his personal photo

essays and long-term projects often draw from this diverse cultural background. [jaeyangphotography.com](http://jaeyangphotography.com)

### **Residency/Performance Space**

**Raging Asian Womxn Taiko Drummers (RAW)** is a Toronto-based performing arts ensemble made up of East and Southeast Asian womxn. Formed in 1998, we carry on the diasporic Taiko tradition that grew out of Asian American and Asian Canadian mobilization in the 60s and 70s. RAW plays large taiko drums as creative resistance for social change, carving space for self-expression, education and community building. RAW has performed at a wide variety of events including Pride celebrations in Toronto and Buffalo NY, Dim Sum Chinese Festival as part of Harbourfront Centre's World Routes Summer Festivals, Muhtadi International Drumming Festival in Toronto and Tobago, Mayworks Festival of Working People and the Arts, Toronto's WinterCity Festival, Labour union conventions, International Women's Day events, art festivals, social justice events, and more. To date, RAW has mounted 3 self-produced theatrical productions; *From Rage Comes* (2013), *Crooked Lines* (2016), and *Undaunted* (2019). [www.ragingasianwomxn.ca](http://www.ragingasianwomxn.ca)