

## *Surviving the Nian* • Artist Bios



**MEGUMI HAGGERTY** (*Kaylin Wu*) is thrilled to be joining the Theater Offensive family with her debut in *Nian*. She is currently a junior at Emerson College, where she is receiving her B.A. in Theatre Education and Acting. Previous roles this year include Saturn in Pullman Car *Hiawatha* (Emerson College), and Aladdin's mother in GoDief's production of *Aladdin!* (Winthrop Theatre). Xie xie to Patrick, Melissa, Abe, and Juri for all their work in this production, to her fellow cast members, and to everyone who made this show possible. Love to friends and family who have been supportive over the years. She would like to dedicate this show to her mother.



**MARIKO KANTO** (*Jessie*) Having participated in the stage reading version of *NIAN*, she is happy to be back as Jessie, the role she enjoys playing A LOT. Locally, she appeared on stage with Wheelock Family Theatre, Another Country Productions and Opera Boston. In recent years, she's been doing a TV show (in Japan), commercials, industrial videos, prints, runways and voice overs. She also writes and models for Asian Boston Magazine.



**HYUNSOO MOON** (*Vincent Wu*) "Surviving the Nian" marks Hyunsoo's professional stage debut. He is a recent graduate from Emerson College with a film degree. He is currently working on many projects, including a feature-length film script, a music video, and hopefully a short. He always looks forward to venture into a new project, be it on film or on stage.



**GARY THOMAS NG** (*Uncle Tony*) is pleased to making his Theater Offensive debut working with such talented group of people. He recently finished performing the role of Le Fou in *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* at Wheelock Family Theatre. Gary was also seen in *MISS SAIGON* at Worcester Foothills Theater where he was in the ensemble and understudied the role of The Engineer which he did get to perform. Other favorite shows/roles include *CHILDREN OF EDEN* at NSMT starring Stephanie Mills and Adrian Zmed, *A CHORUS LINE* (Paul), *LA CAGE AUX FOLLES* (Jacob), *THE BOYS NEXT DOOR* (Norman Bulansky) and the Far East tour of Cole Porter's *ALADDIN*.



**ABRIA SMITH** (*Asha*) a Boston native, Abria Smith, is proud to appear for the second time in a Theater Offensive production, once again, as a character named Asha. (What's up with that?) She has performed around Boston as a vocalist, actor, poet and rapper. She thanks her family for their patience and support and is grateful to have the opportunity to work with such a wonderful, talented team. With their help, she hopes to survive the *Nian*.



**JUDY TAN** (*Mrs. Wu*) A native of Taiwan and progeny of Queens, NY, Judy learned the English language as a young child by belting Madonna songs from the '80s. Born to a musical mother and gregarious father, Judy was encouraged to perform since she was barely out of diapers. Her early musical experiences include performing solos in and out of school and winning various local music awards. After studying vocal music at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music, Art, & Performing Arts in NYC, Judy continued her voice training at Mount Holyoke College by taking private lessons, being a part of various music groups, and giving recitals. From there, Judy became involved in projects including playing the role of Mother in two stage readings of *Surviving the Nian*, and more recently, as Kim/Mimi/Yvette in *Missed Sigh Gone*, a parody of the Broadway musical, *Miss Saigon*, presented by the Boston Progress Arts Collective and the Asian American Resource Workshop. Currently, Judy is a first-year doctoral student in social and health psychology at the University of Connecticut.

**MELISSA LI** (*Playwright*) wrote her first pop ballad at the age of 13 during the April Fool's Day Blizzard of 1997. Since then, she has carved out a name for herself in Boston, as an acoustic folk/pop singer-songwriter who has performed in over 50 venues, including clubs, theaters, and universities across New England. In 2003, Melissa created *Surviving the Nian* and the musical underwent 4 years of staged readings and intensive dramaturgy. In 2007, Melissa won the Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Grant for her music composition in *Nian*. She extends her gratitude to her beloved collaborator and mentor Abe Rybeck for his encouragement, trust, and support; to Patrick Wang, one of the most thorough and insightful directors with whom she has ever had the pleasure to work; and to the entire Theater Offensive family for welcoming her into the theater community for the past 5 years. Most of all, she thanks her mother So Yee Ng for devoting her life to the happiness of her three children.

**ABE RYBECK** (*Book*) is the founding Artistic Director of The Theater Offensive. Before *Surviving the Nian*, Abe created two other ensemble musicals, *Pure PolyESTHER: a biblical burlesque* with John Thomas and *Blame it on the Big Banana*, as well as the solo musical, *This is Not a Test* with Dana Moser. His plays include *Bombshell*, *Immaculate Infection* (with Brenda Cotto Escalera and Noelia Ortiz Cortés), and *Dirt*. Previously, Abe was the lead singer for the hard-edged cabaret band Adult Children of Heterosexuals and the cofounder of the gay street theater troupe *United Fruit Company*. Abe sends smoochy kisses of thanks to Patrick, Juri, Jenn, the whole gang who made this monster real, and especially the magnificent Melissa Li.

**PATRICK WANG** (*Director*) returns to Boston where he previously directed *Edward II* (Tremont Theater), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Works Theater), *Fresh Fruit Does Spring Queening* (Tremont Theater), and *Beckett Shorts* (Boston Center for the Arts). Past collaborations with the Theater Offensive include *Pure PolyESTHER* and *Radical Asian Fetish*. As co-founder of Pet Brick Productions, he was proud to present Boston audiences with productions of *The Water Engine* and the world premiere of *7 Affidavits on Authority*, the latter a collaboration with the inestimable Betsy Carpenter. New York: *Hand to Mouth* (Theater for the New City), *White* (Bank Street Theater), *Lone Star* (Abingdon Theater), *CUS* (The Neighborhood Playhouse). Television: *Saturday Night Live*, *One Life to Live*, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. Film: *Surveillances* (winner Panavision Prize, Slate Award and Copper Wing Award nominations), *Little Mary* (playing this month at the British Film Institute). He has appeared as guest artist at NYU, Vassar, and The New School of Music. He serves as vice-chair of the Council for the Arts at MIT.

**JURI PANDA JONES** (*Musical Director*) began her musical career playing classical piano from age 3. She joined her Mother's rock band as a keyboard player at age 4. At age 11, she won her first composition competition in her region in Japan. Born and raised in Japan, Juri came to states for the first time at age 17 as an emissary for Japanese government and greeted by Japanese Crown prince and princess. After returning from U.S. she decided to attend Berklee College of music in Boston, MA. She received world tour scholarship and came back to America at age 21.

She has received multi times achievement scholarship and nominated students Ambassador while at Berklee. She also studied music in Ghana, Africa to strength her sense of rhythm, dancing and singing.

Juri's super active and motivated works include, 3 of her own composed and self-produced full length albums, ("Jury's out #1 Pop, #2 Jam in the Bush, #3 Panda Hug. ([www.cdbaby.com/juri](http://www.cdbaby.com/juri)) playing and recording for other artists, numberless of local club and function gigs, local and national tour including the National tour with Kate Pierson of the B52's. She has been working as a musical director for many shows includes "Grease".

She started non-profit org, "Genuine Voices" to help study music to juvenile offenders.

She started as music program coordinator at Boys and Girls Club in Dorchester, MA with at-risk youth in 2001, then moved on to 3 locked-down facilities in DYS.

With her non profit work, she presented her paper at IASPM World conference in Rome, Italy in 2005 as a panel member for [www.playingforlife.org.au](http://www.playingforlife.org.au) with Australian Drs. Titled: "We can touch lives through Music" Along with her musical career, she maintains her modeling career (professional model and Japanese fashion magazine editor since 17).

Juri is now teaching at Needham Music, performing many places, modeling and settled in Dedham, MA with her husband, dog and her lovely home.

**ERIK DIAZ** (*Scenic Design*) is happy to be working TTO on the World Premier of *Surviving The Nian*. Erik has designed and worked extensively in Theatre, Film, and TV. Recent Credits include: *Never The Sinner* (Actor's Theatre of Washington), *Carousel*, *Disney's High School Musical*, *Pajama Game*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Chicago*, *Will Rogers Follies*, *Hello Dolly*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Forever Plaid*, and *Diva's Do Broadway* (TriArts), *Glass Menagerie*, *MacBeth*, *Bill W and Dr. Bob*, *Ragtime* (New Repertory Theatre), *My Way*, *Always Patsy Cline* (West Virginia Public Theatre), *Misalliance*, *Violet*, *Christmas Carol* (Connecticut Repertory Theatre), *Disney's AIDA* (Wachusett Theatre Co.), *Keely and Du*, *MUD*, *Antigone*, (Faust), *The IT Girl*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Miss Saigon* (Foothills Theatre Co), *Buddy Holly Story*, *Grease* (Seacoast Repertory Theatre), *Tartuffe*, *Rounding Third* (Barnstormers Theatre) Film and TV: *HGTV's Designed to Sell*, *Dial "B" for Disaster*, *Melvin's Kitchen*, *Set for Life*, *Hooray for Funn*, *Sunday with Liz Walker*, and *UPN38 Early Morning Show*, *CBS Boston Marathon*, *Phantom Gourmet*, . [www.DesignbyDiaz.com](http://www.DesignbyDiaz.com)

**AMANDA MUJICA** (*Costume Design*) is excited to be working with Theater Offensive for the first time. She has been designing and constructing costumes for more than ten years and most recently designed Speakeasy Theatre's productions of *Elegies* and *Anna in the Tropics*. She has worked for the American Repertory Theatre, North Shore Music Theatre, MIT, CostumeWorks and PetBrick Productions. Her costumes have been seen at First Night, in independent films and (barely) covering local skaters and dancers. She currently teaches costume design at the Winsor School and is their resident costume designer.

**NATHANIEL PACKARD** (*Lighting Designer*) is happy to be returning to the Theater Offensive, having worked with TTO fringe festival before. Nathaniel's work has also been seen in the greater Boston Area through Petbrick's productions of *Edward II* and *The Water Engine*, as well as at the Publick Theatre, where he was resident designer for three seasons, designing such shows as *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His work has also been featured in the greater Northeast Region where he has designed in Maine, Delaware, New Jersey, New Hampshire, and New York, working off-off Broadway with the Looking Glass Theatre on *Richard III*. Nathaniel received his Master of Fine Arts degree from Brandeis University, and is currently serving as Co-Chair for the Franklin Cultural Council. Nathaniel lives in Franklin with his wife where they spend much of their time chasing after their 16 month old son.

**MICHAEL J. DALBY** (*Sound Designer*) Soundbites, Inc.

Michael is an award winning audio and radio producer. He spent 15 years as a regular contributor of comedy and features to NPR and pioneered the SoundbitesR audio site on America Online. He is a recipient of CPB's Gold

Award for programming, a National Headliner award and his productions are part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Television and Radio.

Michael worked extensively with the Signature Theater in New York, including collaborations with Romulus Linney and Pulitzer Prize winning author Edward Albee. Michael spent four years on the faculty of Emerson College teaching audio production and aesthetics, recording industry business classes and physics for the media. His audio design work was heard in Boston productions of the Pet Brick Theater and Market Theater.

**PAULA KELLY** (*Make-Up and Hair Designer*) has over 25 years experience designing and teaching make-up for the stage and screen. She has worked internationally at The Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, American Repertory Theater, Theatre Festival D'quote Automne in Paris and Teatro Espanol in Madrid. Broadway and national tour credits include *Showboat*, *Moon Over Buffalo*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Titanic*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Ragtime*, *Hair Spray*, and *The Producers*.. Film credits include "The Departed," "My Super-Ex Girlfriend," "Amistad, Jumanj," "True Lies," and "The Perfect Storm." Paula has done make-up for such diverse luminaries as Bill Clinton, Billy Joel, James Woods, Alec Baldwin, Mira Sorvino, Martin Sheen, Kelsey Grammar, and David Letterman.

**VALENCIA HUGHES-IMANI** (*Production Stage Manager*) Valencia Hughes-Imani is currently a teacher in the Boston Public School system. Valencia is a member of Our Place Theatre Project. She first performed in The African American Theatre Festival in 2003. Valencia was also the Stage Manager for Act Roxbury's Production of Sorry Don't Fix It, 2003, Our Place Theatre's African-American Theatre festival 2004, 2005, 2006 and Roxbury Community College's Production of Twelve Angry Jurors 2004. Valencia also performed in Act Roxbury's Dramatic Shout Outs in 2003 and 2004. Additionally she has performed in Our Place Theatre's production of Rhythm of the people at the Opera House in 2004. Valencia has played Big Girl in Clara's Old Man and Mama in A Son Come Home, 2004 African-American theatre festival. Valencia was also an ASM for Speak Easy's Production of Caroline or Change. Valencia has made reasont strides her persuit to understand the world of Production and Production managed for The Theater Offensive's Fall Festival. She is also persuing her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction at Boston College.

**JON HINDERMARSH** (*bassist*), currently living in Boston Massachusetts, has toured throughout North America and Great Britain with various original rock and experimental bands. Noteworthy local area appearances include performing at Foxboro Stadium (home of the New England Patriots), multiple performances with the Boston Pops under the direction of Keith Lockhart, and playing at the Berklee Performance Center as a student before graduating in 2001.

**AI ISSHIKI** (*second keyboardist*) born in Germany 1981, raised in Chiba, Japan, Ai Isshiki started taking piano lessons under her mother at the age of 4. After finishing her piano study at the Tokyo Metropolitan High School of Music & Fine Arts, she came to the United States to enter Berklee College of Music at the age of 19. With many recognized activities as a pianist and composer both inside and outside school, she graduated in 2005 with a dual B.M. in Film Scoring and Composition. Now she lives as a pianist, freelance composer and private piano teacher. Her film music works include "Yoru ni naruto Kodomotachi wa(2006)", directed by Ike. She has produced many concerts in Boston, Cambridge and Japan, including "Sound of Painting (2005)" with a fine artist Yuko Adachi and a pianist Sakiko Mori.(a review can be found at [http://www.meniscusmagazine.com/6\\_issue\\_site/6pages/vibes\\_i6\\_019.htm](http://www.meniscusmagazine.com/6_issue_site/6pages/vibes_i6_019.htm)) She continues to search for a way to move and to communicate with one's soul by her language of music.

**RYAN JONES** (*Drummer*) Ryan has been drumming since he was in the womb drumming on his mother. He is a graduate of Berklee College of Music in Boston. His most notable achievement is his marriage to Juri Panda Jones.

**CHRIS TAKITA** (*Guitarist*) Chris Takita is a Guitarist, Producer and Engineer based in the East Coast area. Chris was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. He first started taking piano lessons at the age of four but his passion for music started to grow when he began playing guitar at the age of 11. While taking lessons with Jinshi Ozaki, Chris attended Hamilton High School Music Academy and joined the Hamilton Jazz Ensembles. Winning the World Scholarship tour Award, Chris decided to attend Berklee College of Music dual majoring in Jazz Composition and Contemporary Writing & Production. There he studied with Wayne Krantz, Joe Rogers and many others. After graduating from Berklee, Chris started working at Eldorado Recording studios in Los Angeles and later came back to Boston to work freelance. Currently he is working with singer/songwriter Takaya Kawasaki and New England-based rock band Go Yuki with their up coming new records.