NEW VIC BILL
2017-18 SEASON

PING CHONG + COMPANY

UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: GENERATION NYZ

THE NEW VICTORY® THEATER
A project of The New 42nd Street, a nonprofit organization
Dear Friends

WELCOME to the New Victory holiday show Jason Bishop: Believe In Magic. AND—welcome to our reinvented brand new 21st century public spaces.

When the New Vic opened on December 11, 1995, we had no idea if our notion for a theater dedicated to kids, their schoolmates and families would survive over time. So we renovated and restored the Theater, built in 1900, to become the city’s oldest operating theater devoted to its youngest audiences. It remained to be seen if the New Vic would be both embraced by the public and sustained over time, and whether the high quality programming on stage would distinguish us from the commonly held, limiting notion of “children’s theater.”

Here to stay, the New Vic has indeed become an esteemed part of the city’s cultural fabric. In recent years, we realized that it was high time to reinvent the unremarkable lobbies, offer better services, improve accessibility and further develop and expand public engagement activities in order to underpin and amplify the works on stage. We met with great designers, architects and master builders—the best in town! They went to work as we raised heaps of money from lots of great and trusting folks, as well as foundations and well-informed city agencies.

Now you are amongst the first to experience our new amenities (good food and good tchotchkes, energy-efficient restrooms, lots more places to sit or perch, and a mix of cool furniture too!). We hope you enjoy it all today and every time you return to The New Victory.

THANK YOU to everybody who helped design and reinvent the New Victory lobbies—the architects, graphic designers, expert consultants, contractors and construction managers, New 42nd Street Board, the Donors, the City of New York, and the tireless, fiercely dedicated and talented New 42nd Street staff.

Wishing you all a splendid Happy Holiday, a peaceful New Year and a great time with Jason Bishop!

Cora Cahan, President & CEO
The New 42nd Street

As a project of the nonprofit The New 42nd Street, The New Victory Theater is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as the Board of Directors, the New Vic Council, and our dedicated foundation, corporate and individual donors.

Cover Photos: Chris Hartlove, Adam Nadal, Inside Cover Photo: Alexis Buatti-Ramos
CREATOR’S NOTE

In 1992, I created a visual arts installation at Artists Space in NYC titled A Facility for the Channeling and Containment of Undesirable Elements. Shortly before the opening, the curator asked me to create a performance piece to go with it. I had just come back from teaching a workshop in Amsterdam with young people from all over the world.

We worked, ate and played together for 10 days. In the evenings, we would sit and talk about everything from food to politics to relationships. One night, I suddenly thought, “Here we are, people from different cultures and experiences, engaged in a collective endeavor—the exploration of artistic expression. We are not shouting at each other, nor killing each other. We are learning about each other.” I wondered whether it was possible to make a theater work using multiple languages, testifying to the history of lives lived and the phenomena of identity itself. And that became the inspiration for the first Undesirable Elements.

For that very first piece, I simply asked friends to introduce me to people with one foot in two worlds, and the first cast came together: Cochise, Eva, Trinket, Hiromi, Tania, Anna and Olga. Little did I know, back then, that this would be the beginning of a 25-year journey of creativity and community engagement.

Since then I, along with my artistic collaborators, have created over 50 original works in the series. Undesirable Elements has taken me to places—geographic, psychic and spiritual—that I never imagined and it continues to inspire me. I know that in these difficult and unjust times, we need art and the power of storytelling more than ever. I am thrilled to return to The New Victory for the third time to share this 25th Anniversary production, and to turn the storytelling over to a new generation: Generation NYZ.

Ping Chong, November 2017

ABOUT THE SERIES

Undesirable Elements is an ongoing series of community-specific, interview-based theater works examining the culture and identity of individuals who are outsiders within their mainstream community. It’s not a traditional play or documentary-theater project performed by actors. Instead, Undesirable Elements is presented as a chamber piece of storytelling, a “seated opera for the spoken word” that exists as an open framework and can be tailored to suit the needs and issues facing any community. Each production is made with a local host organization and local participants. The development process includes an extended community residency during which Ping Chong + Company artists conduct intensive interviews with potential participants and get to know the issues and concerns facing that community. These interviews form the basis of a script that weaves cast members’ individual experiences together in a chronological narrative touching on both political and personal experiences. The script is performed by the interviewees, themselves, many of whom have never before spoken publicly. Since 1992, over 50 productions have been made in communities around the country and the world, exploring issues and themes such as the experience of refugees in the U.S., the disability experience, Native American identity and the experiences of survivors of sexual violence. Ping Chong + Company has also created accompanying documentaries, toolkits, training workshops and in-school arts education programs for communities who wish to use the arts to address social justice and community dialogue in their own work.

ABOUT PING CHONG + COMPANY

Ping Chong + Company creates theatrical works addressing the important cultural and civic issues of our times, striving to reach the widest audiences with the greatest level of artistic innovation and social integrity. The New York City-based company was founded in 1975 by leading theatrical innovator Ping Chong with a mission to create works of theater and art that explore the intersections of race, culture, history, art, media and technology in the modern world. Today, Ping Chong + Company produces original works by a close-knit ensemble of affiliated artists, under the artistic leadership of Ping Chong. Productions range from intimate oral history projects to grand-scale, cinematic, multidisciplinary productions featuring puppets, performers, full music and projection scores. Their art reveals beauty, precision and a commitment to social justice. For more information about Ping Chong + Company, visit www.pingchong.org and follow them on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (@pingchongco).


PING CHONG + COMPANY STAFF:

Ping Chong, Artistic Director
Bruce Allardice, Executive Director
Sara Zatz, Associate Director
Ryan Conarro, Artistic Collaborator In Residence/Community Projects Associate
Kristina Varshavskaya, Company Manager
Christina Weakland, Education Director
Amy Zhang, Communications and Program Associate

ABOUT THE SHOW

Undesirable Elements: Generation NYZ is the 25th Anniversary production of Ping Chong + Company’s community-specific series of interview-based theater works. To create this new production, Ping Chong + Company artists reached out to a new generation of New Yorkers, ages 18-22, to tell their own stories of growing up at this turbulent moment in time, as this new century begins to come of age. Co-writers Sara Zatz and Kirya Traber reached out to over 50 community organizations and schools across the five boroughs of New York City, seeking young adults from a range of neighborhoods, identities and experiences who were interested in telling their stories on stage. The Generation NYZ performers illuminate, in their own words, the challenges and joys of growing up in New York City, and all that goes into making our city inclusive, gritty, determined, creative and rich with community.

The NYZ performers are telling their real stories on stage. They are not professional actors, but young New Yorkers. Sharing true stories in public takes a great deal of vulnerability and courage. Why do it? To share and connect with you! You can show your support by listening and trying to connect, too. Thank you and enjoy the show!
MEET GENERATION NYZ

EDWIN AGUILA
Where are you from? East New York, Brooklyn
Where is your favorite place in NYC? The bodega. No matter what neighborhood you’re in, there’s always a bodega.
Do you have any hidden talents? I can do a shoulder freeze, a breakdancing move.
What excites you about working with Ping Chong + Company? I think it’s necessary to explore the stories of different New Yorkers from different boroughs, backgrounds and upbringings.
What does “Love of Theater” mean to you? Adoring all aspects of performance onstage, whether it be acting, sharing stories, rapping, singing. It takes a lot of skill, talent and guts to go up there and be vulnerable. And after it’s done, you leave with something. You have to leave with something.

MONICA VICTORIA TATACOYA CASTAÑEDA
Where are you from? Brooklyn, New York
Where is your favorite place in NYC? My bed, with wifi.
Do you have any hidden talents? I can sing in the shower and I used to be able to burp the alphabet.
What excites you about working with Ping Chong + Company? When I read the description, I realized this was sort of an activist thing and I’ve never had experience with anything like that before. I wanted to go and protest after the election, but protesting in public wasn’t for me. I have more of a subtle approach. Also, there are people out there who don’t have any support. Hopefully my story can help.
What does “Love of Theater” mean to you? That you love theater! I love theater because it gives me an outlet. I’m a very introverted person. My professor once said being on stage is like taking a mask off rather than putting one on because your true self shows. I walk around with a mask on, but when I participate in theater I get to be myself. Unapologetically, without the fear of people telling me that I’m an idiot for doing what I love.

SYL (ANDREA) EGERTON
Where are you from? I grew up in Europe until middle school, but now I live in Long Island City.
Where is your favorite place in NYC? Bryant Park
Do you have any hidden talents? I can rap really fast.
What excites you about working with Ping Chong + Company? I’m excited about meeting other people and knowing more about them. Also, I’m excited about exploring my identity for the first time in a performative space.
What does “Love of Theater” mean to you? To me, love of theater means loving the stage. Loving being seen and portraying things and people. Loving the euphoria of transforming yourself into someone completely different, or being yourself and having people be surprised by that.

MOHAMMED
Where are you from? Flushing, Queens
Where is your favorite place in NYC? The Theater District in Times Square. Because my dream is to be on Broadway. That area always feels very lively because there’s so much energy there.
Do you have any hidden talents? I like to freestyle and make traditional Pakistani dishes as well as some killer pasta.
What excites you about working with Ping Chong + Company? Learning about the diverse cast and about their different stories. I wouldn’t get the same experience if I wasn’t working with these people and really trying to understand their backstories and how NYC has shaped them.
What does “Love of Theater” mean to you? Living. I love theater and it’s synonymous to who I am. It’s an integral part of my identity to the point of, if I didn’t love theater I don’t know who I’d be.

DE-ANDRA PRYCE
Where are you from? Brownsville, New York
Where is your favorite place in NYC? POSH, a Kosher pizza place in Midwood, which is sadly closed. It was the best pizza in NYC.
Do you have any hidden talents? I can pick up things with my toes. I get that from my great-grandmother.
What excites you about working with Ping Chong + Company? I’ve never been in a real show. I did a project with my high school once, but that was just in my class. The cast is really cool and fun to be around, so I think that will bring a lot of personality to the show.
What does “Love of Theater” mean to you? I appreciate theater, but I don’t know if I love it. However, different people have different ways of expressing themselves, and I think theater is a great way for some to communicate.

PORSCHA POLKAHANTSIS RIPPY
Where are you from? South Bronx, New York
Where is your favorite place in NYC? Both the House of Justice on 145th Street and The New Victory Theater, where I’m in the Usher Corps!
Do you have any hidden talents? I’m a brass player and I can read music.
What excites you about working with Ping Chong + Company? I get to perform at my job, in front of my bosses. I’m with people I’ve never met and we’re all coming together to tell our stories. I’ve never heard of something like this, so just being part of the process is exciting.
What does “Love of Theater” mean to you? It means being able to be yourself. Taking chances, taking risks, taking up space. Sometimes, even being a different person. I could be Beyoncé! It’s a different world on stage and you have your own vision of how things will look in this space.

RAFAEL ROSARIO
Where are you from? I was born in Puerto Rico, but now I live in West Harlem.
Where is your favorite place in NYC? Morningside Park at night. There’s less people, it’s quiet and I can walk around, listen to music and think about stuff. In my house I can’t do that.
Do you have any hidden talents? I dance salsa and hip hop, draw and write romantic poetry.
What excites you about working with Ping Chong + Company? First of all, it’s an opportunity to work on my acting career. I’m learning so much about this process already. Also, this is an opportunity for me to express myself to the world, to other people, so they can know what others go through, and that appearances are deceiving.
What does “Love of Theater” mean to you? Love of theater means not always loving every little aspect of the theater world, but being able to work it out because you love what you are doing.

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

PING CHONG (CREATOR, UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS)
Ping Chong is an internationally acclaimed artist and pioneer in the use of media in the theater. His theatrical works bring his unique artistic vision to bear on major historical issues of our times, and focus on bringing unheard voices and underrepresented stories to the stage. Encompassing puppetry, dance, documentary theater, sound, media and other experimental theater forms, his works have explored a wide variety of subjects from a hidden genocide in Africa to modernization in China to the experiences of Muslim youth in post-9/11 America. Throughout, the common thread has been a unifying commitment to artistic innovation and social responsibility.

Since 1972, as founder and artistic director of Ping Chong + Company, he has created over 100 productions which have been presented at major theaters, festivals and museums worldwide. Major interdisciplinary works include Alaxsxa/Alaska (2017, LaMaMa ETC and Alaska tour), Collidescope: Adventures in Pre and Post Racial America (with Talvin Wilks, 2013 University of Maryland, 2015 University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2017 Wake Forest University), Throne of Blood (2010 Brooklyn Academy of Music and Oregon Shakespeare Festival), Cathay: Three Tales of China (2005, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and The New Victory Theater) and Kwanidan (1998, Center for Puppetry Arts, Henson International Festival of Puppet Theatre. The New Victory Theater). Chong is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a USA Artist Fellowship, two Bessie awards, two OBIE awards, a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship and the 2014 National Medal of Arts.
KIRYA TRABER (CO-DIRECTOR, CO-WRITER)
Kirya is a nationally awarded writer, performer and cultural worker from Northern California, currently living in Brooklyn, NY. She is a co-host for PBS’s digital series First Person and an Artist in Residence with Lincoln Center Education. Her work includes Overhead, Both My Grandfathers, Permitted and the forthcoming blues music project What We Needed: Then and Now. Kirya received her MFA in Acting from the School of Drama at the New School. She is the recipient of the California Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts, Robert Redford’s Sundance foundation award for Activism in the Arts, Congresswoman Barbara Lee’s Certificate of Recognition, an Astrea Lesbian Writers Fund award for Poetry and is a former judge for the LAMDA Literary awards in LGBT Drama. Kirya has continuously worked as a facilitator and cultural organizer, with youth and adults, in schools and community based settings and within the juvenile justice system.

KATHERINE FREER (PROJECTIONS DESIGNER)
Katherine is a multimedia designer working in theater, installation and film. Recent designs: The Wizard of Oz (Syracuse Stage, dir. Donna Drake); Alaxsxa / Alaska (La Mama, dir. Ping Chong); The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (Indiana Repertory Theater and Syracuse Stage, dir. Risa Brainin); Peculiar Patriot (National Black Theatre, dir. Talvin Wilks); Detroit 67 (Chautauqua Opera Company, dir. Steve Broadnax); The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga (TheatreWorks, dir. Leslie Martinson); Alaxsxa / Alaska (Lincoln Center Education, dir. Ping Chong); Dial M For Murder (Indiana Repertory Theater, dir. James Still); Crane: On Earth, In Sky (Lied Center, dir. Maija Garcia); Mary Poppins (Syracuse Stage, dir. Peter Amster); Macbeth (Richard Rodgers Amphitheater, dir. Carl Cofield); The Wholehearted (Z Space, dir. Suli Holum and Deborah Stein); Poster Boy (Williamstown Theater Festival, dir. Stafford Arima); The Great Gatsby (Indiana Repertory Theater, dir. Peter Amster); Stet (The Abingdon, dir. Tony Speciale); and The Christians (The Wilma and Syracuse Stage, dir. Tim Bond). Katherine is a Helen Hayes nominee and an Innovative Theater Award nominee. She is a founding member of Imaginary Media. For more info, portfolio and full production history please visit: katherinefreer.com

MARIKA KENT (LIGHTING DESIGNER)
Marika is a New York City based designer. Recent and upcoming theater and dance include Alaxsxa/Alaska: Beyond Sacred (Ping Chong + Co); Piano Tales (James & Jerome); Public Enemy (The Pearl); Abigail’s Party (The Barrow Group); Now is the Time... (Little Lord); Black Girl Magic Show (nicHi Douglas); How To Hamlet; Rhinbecca, NY; You on the Moors Now (Theater Reconstruction Ensemble); No Realists Allowed (Whitey Jacobs Dance Collective); No Words; Variations on a Box; and Beatrice’s Rainbow (Ariel Rivka Dance). www.mariakent.com

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