

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS

FAST-PACED MODERN COMEDY

CHINGLISH

By David Henry Hwang

Directed by Jeffrey Lo

May 4 – June 10, 2023 (opening night: May 10)

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (21 March 2023) — **San Francisco Playhouse** presents the comedy *Chinglish* by Tony Award winner and Pulitzer Prize finalist **David Henry Hwang** (*M. Butterfly*, *Yellow Face*, *Soft Power*). In this fast-paced modern comedy, culture and customs collide as a naïve American sign manufacturer travels to China in search of a lucrative contract. As he discovers the complexities of the venture, he learns that some things aren't so easily translated. Directed by in-demand Bay Area director **Jeffrey Lo**, *Chinglish* will perform **May 4 – June 10, 2023** (opening night: May 10) at San Francisco Playhouse, 450 Post Street. The play will be performed in English, with one quarter of the dialogue in Mandarin with projected English supertitles. For tickets (\$15-\$100) and more information, the public may visit sfplayhouse.org or call the box office at **415-677-9596**.

Chinglish premiered at the Goodman Theatre, where it was hailed as “One of the funniest plays in memory” (*Chicago Sun-Times*) and enjoyed an extended run. It then moved onto New York City, where it was called “Fresh, energetic, and unlike anything else on Broadway” (*Associated Press*) and “A lethal comedy about business, sex and the failure to communicate that bristles with intelligence” (*Bloomberg*). In response to changing US relationships with China, the script was updated in 2015.

The comedy comes from the prolific mind of **David Henry Hwang**, an American playwright, librettist, screenwriter, and theatre professor at Columbia University whose works often dissect the interplay between his birth country (U.S.A) and his family heritage (Chinese). He has won the Tony Award for his play *M. Butterfly*, Obie Awards for his plays *FOB*, *Golden Child*, and *Yellow Face*, and three of his works – *M. Butterfly*, *Yellow Face*, and *Soft Power* – have been finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

For this production, San Francisco Playhouse has assembled a notable cast of company favorites and newcomers, including:

Michael Barrett Austin (he/him), who was seen in *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, returns to the Playhouse as Daniel Cavanaugh, an American sign manufacturer. He has also performed with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Center Repertory Company, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, 42nd Street Moon, Hillbarn Theatre, and New York Fringe Festival. Austin has toured with The National Theatre for Children and Shakespeare at Stinson. He is a member of PlayGround, a Contributing Player with ARC, and an alumnus of Just Theater and TheatreFirst.

Matthew Bohrer (he/him) makes his Playhouse debut as Peter Timms, a British teacher who serves as a consultant. Bohrer has been seen at Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson Theatre, La Mirada Theatre, The Old Globe, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Diversionary Theatre, Rubicon Theatre Company, and Festival of

New American Musicals. Television credits include “Lucifer,” “Grown-ish,” “Modern Family,” “Goliath,” “Masters of Sex,” “Successful People,” “I Didn’t Do It,” “General Hospital,” “House of Lies,” “Scandal,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” and “Workshop.” Film credits include *Unfriended*, *Five Minutes* (TIFF), *Elie’s Overcoat* (SAG Showcase), and *D’Arline* (Sloan Foundation Award). Bohrer is also the creator and star of *Teach Me, Bitch!*, coming soon to Amazon.

Alex Hsu (he/him) returns to the Playhouse after appearing in *La Cage aux Folles* and *A Christmas Story*, to play Cai Guoliang, the Minister of Culture. Hsu performed in the National Tours of *Irving Berlin’s White Christmas* and *The King and I*. Nominated for Theatre Bay Area (TBA) and San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC) Awards, Hsu performed regionally with American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, San Jose Stage Company, Marin Theatre Company, 42nd Street Moon, Palo Alto Players, Hillbarn Theatre, and Broadway By the Bay. Hsu can be seen in Tubi TV’s *Production Detail*.

Sharon Shao (she/her) who was seen in *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*, returns to the Playhouse as translator Miss Qian and Prosecutor Li. She has also appeared in productions with California Shakespeare Theater, Shotgun Players, and Cutting Ball Theater.

Nicole Tung (she/her) makes her Playhouse debut as Xi Yan, Vice Minister of Culture. Tung has performed with Aurora Theatre Company, Woodminster Summer Musicals, American Musical Theatre of San Jose, and in TheatreWorks Silicon Valley’s New Works Festival.

Phil Wong (he/him) makes his Playhouse debut as Bing, Cai’s nephew and a translator, as well as Judge Xu Geming. Featured as a guest artist in the Tony Award recipient National Tour of *Freestyle Love Supreme*, Wong has appeared onstage at American Conservatory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, California Shakespeare Theater, Z Space, Shotgun Players, Hillbarn Theatre, Los Altos Stage Company, Palo Alto Players, and Ray of Light Theatre. He is also the co-founder of Bay Area Theatre Cypher, a collective of local hip hop theatre artists.

Xun Zhang (he/him) makes his Playhouse debut as Zhao, a translator. He appeared in Plethos Productions’ *Chinglish*, directed by Wynne Chan, who will assistant direct this Playhouse production. He has also acted in U.C. Berkeley productions and is a host for VMedia Arts.

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Chinglish features assistant direction by **Wynne Chan**, scenic design by **Andrea Bechert**, assistant scenic design by Sook Jung, lighting design by **Wen-Ling Liao**, sound design by **Chris Saucedo**, and projections design by **Spenser Matubang**.

CREATIVE TEAM:

David Henry Hwang (Playwright) is a Tony Award winner (and three-time nominee), a three-time OBIE Award winner, a Grammy Award winner (and two-time nominee), and a three-time Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. His stage work includes the plays *M. Butterfly*, *Chinglish*, *Yellow Face*, *Golden Child*, *The Dance and the Railroad*, and *FOB*, as well as the Broadway musicals *Aida*, *Flower Drum Song* (2002 revival) and *Disney’s Tarzan*. His screenplays include *M. Butterfly* and he is currently penning the live-action feature musical remake of *Disney’s The Hunchback of Notre Dame* as well as an Anna May Wong biopic to star actress Gemma Chan. For television, he was a Writer/Consulting Producer for the Golden Globe-winning television series “The Affair” and is now creating two television series, “Billion Dollar Whale” for Westward/SKG and another for Netflix. Called America’s most-

produced living opera librettist, he has written thirteen libretti, including five with composer Philip Glass, as well as *Dream of the Red Chamber* with Bright Sheng, twice presented to acclaim and sold-out houses at San Francisco Opera. He co-wrote the Gold Record-winning “Solo” with the late pop music icon Prince. A professor at Columbia University School of the Arts, Hwang is a Trustee of the American Theatre Wing, where he served as Chair, and sits on the Council of the Dramatist Guild. Recent honors include his 2022 induction onto the Lucille Lortel Playwrights’ Sidewalk and his 2021 induction into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His latest musical, *Soft Power*, a collaboration with composer Jeanine Tesori, opened in New York at the Public Theatre, where it received a 2020 Grammy nomination for Best Musical Theatre Album and was a Finalist for the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

Jeffrey Lo (Director, he/him) is a Filipino-American playwright and director. He directed San Francisco Playhouse's productions of *Hold These Truths* and *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*. He is the recipient of the Leigh Weimers Emerging Artist Award, the Emerging Artist Laureate by Arts Council Silicon Valley and Theatre Bay Area Director's TITAN Award. His plays have been produced and workshopped at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The BindleStiff Studio, City Lights Theater Company, and Custom Made Theatre Company. Directing credits include *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Language Archive*, and *The Santaland Diaries* at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley; *Red Bike* at Center Repertory Company; *Vietgone* and *The Great Leap* at Capital Stage; *Peter and the Starcatcher* and *Noises Off* at Hillbarn Theatre; *The Crucible*, *Yellow Face*, and *The Grapes of Wrath* at Los Altos Stage Company; *Uncle Vanya* at the Pear Theatre (BATCC award for Best Production); and *A Doll’s House, Part 2* and *Eurydice* at Palo Alto Players (TBA Awards finalist for Best Direction). Lo has also worked with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, San Jose Repertory Theatre, and is a company member of Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company and San Francisco Playground. In addition to his work in theatre he works as an educator and advocate for issues of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and has served as a grant panelist for the Zellerbach Family Foundation, Silicon Valley Creates, and Theatre Bay Area. He is the Casting Director/Literary Manager at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley.

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE:

Founded by **Bill English** and **Susi Damilano** in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** has been described by *The New York Times* as “a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around” and deemed “ever adventurous” by *The Mercury News*. Located in the heart of the Union Square Theater District, **San Francisco Playhouse** is the city’s premier Off-Broadway company, an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square theater fare. The Playhouse provides audiences the opportunity to experience professional theater with top-notch actors and world-class design in a setting where they are close to the action. The company has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting, and design, including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award and the Bay Guardian’s Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award, as well as three consecutive Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for Best Entire Production in the Bay Area. *KQED/NPR* recently described the company as “one of the few theaters in the Bay Area that has a mission that actually shows up on stage. Artistic director Bill English’s commitment to empathy as a guiding philosophical and aesthetic force is admirable and by living that mission, fascinating things happen onstage.” The Playhouse is committed to providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create and experience dramatic works that celebrate the human spirit.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **San Francisco Playhouse** presents the comedy ***Chinglish*** by Tony Award winner and Pulitzer Prize finalist **David Henry Hwang** (*M. Butterfly, Yellow Face, Soft Power*). In this fast-paced modern comedy, culture and customs collide as a naïve American sign manufacturer travels to China in search of a lucrative contract. As he discovers the complexities of the venture, he learns that some things aren't so easily translated. ***Chinglish*** premiered at the Goodman Theatre, where it was hailed as "One of the funniest plays in memory" (*Chicago Sun-Times*) and enjoyed an extended run. It then moved onto New York City, where it was called "Fresh, energetic, and unlike anything else on Broadway" (*Associated Press*) and "A lethal comedy about business, sex and the failure to communicate that bristles with intelligence" (*Bloomberg*). In-demand Bay Area director **Jeffrey Lo** helms the Playhouse production.

WHEN: Previews: Thursday, May 4 – Tuesday, May 9, 2023
Opening: Wednesday, May 10, 2023
Closes: Saturday, June 10, 2023

SHOWS: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays: 7pm
Fridays: 8pm
Saturdays: 3pm & 8pm
Sundays: 2pm & 7pm

WHERE: San Francisco Playhouse (450 Post Street, San Francisco)

TICKETS: For tickets (\$15-\$100) or more information, the public may visit <https://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/2022-2023-season/chinglish/> or call the box office at 415-677-9596.

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PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co.
lauren@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: <http://cbpr.co/press/chinglish>