



San Diego Repertory Theatre

Sam Woodhouse, Artistic Director • Larry Alldredge, Managing Director

presents

VIETGONE

By Qui Nguyen

Directed by Jesca Prudencio

JANUARY 31 – FEBRUARY 18, 2018 • IN THE LYCEUM SPACE

Scenic/Projection Designer	Justin Humphres
Costume Designer	Anastasia Pautova
Lighting Designer	Bo Tindell
Sound Designer/Composer	Melanie Chen Cole
Stage Manager	Heather M. Brose*
Assistant Stage Manager	Danielle Dudley
Assistant Director	Christine Nathanson
Dramaturg	Jim Short
REP Producer/Casting Director	Kim Heil

CAST

Quang	Ben Levin*
Tong	Katherine Ko* ^
Nhan/ Khue/ Asian Guy/American Guy	Lawrence Kao*
Playwright/ Bobby/ Hippie Dude/ Redneck Biker/ Giai	Shaun Tuazon*
Huong/ Flower Girl/ Thu/ American Girl/ Translator	Emy Coligado*

UNDERSTUDIES

Sammy Cantu (Quang), Ciarlene Coleman (Tong/Huong), Chris Bona (Nhan/Khue/Asian Guy/American Guy), Wilfred Paloma (Playwright/Bobby/Hippie Dude/Redneck Biker/Giai)

PLACE AND TIME

Vietnam; Fort Chaffee, Arkansas; and others
Mostly 1970s



* Members of the Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

^ Actor is sponsored by Players Club Member Joseph Voland.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.



**BEN LEVIN
(QUANG)**

Ben Levin is a Chinese-American actor and musician from New York City. He has appeared in films such as *Allegiant (Divergent series)*, *Sleepwalk With Me*, *Admission* and on TV shows such as *Ugly Betty*, *The Big C*, *Colony*, *Dimension 404* and most recently a recurring role on ABC's *Time After Time*. He will be appearing in the upcoming season of *Arrested Development* and recurring on the third season of *Love* on Netflix. He is thrilled to be making his debut at San Diego REP! Follow him on Twitter @thebenlevin



**KATHERINE KO
(TONG)**

Katherine Ko was born and raised in Southern California. In 2017 she received her MFA in acting from the University of California, San Diego, which has one of the top graduate acting schools

in the nation. Her credits include: *Mendelssohn's A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Hermia at the Walt Disney Concert Hall with LA Philharmonic late 2017, *Hollywood* at the La Jolla Playhouse (Faith McClean), *Midsummer Night's Dream* at Santa Cruz, *Angels in America part 1 and part 2* as Harper and several other plays at UCSD. She also toured with pop singer Shakira with her song "Did It Again." Katherine is a trained dancer and co-owns her own Korean traditional dance studio with her mother in Los Angeles. She is an employee of the LAUSD, teaching Korean music and dance to elementary and middle school students who are part of KDLP. She is fluent in Korean and ASL. Katherine is thankful for the opportunity to be performing in *Vietgone*.



**LAWRENCE KAO
(NHAN / KHUE / ASIAN GUY / AMERICAN GUY)**

Lawrence Kao is an actor, or that's what he tells people. Son of an accountant and a mailman, he was born in Hacienda Heights California, groomed to become a doctor, a pediatrician according to his

parents. However, forced to play musical instruments as a kid by his mother, Lawrence grew fond of the arts and a curiosity for the imagination. While receiving his Bachelor of the Arts degree in Theatre at UC Irvine, he found another outlet of self-expression through dance, which led to his participation on MTV's America's Best Dance Crew. After graduating, Lawrence continued to flex his theatre muscles at award-winning theatre companies such as East West Players & South Coast Repertory. If you find him on television shows, he won't last long before he dies brutally. He is now currently a member of The Kinjaz. A few credits include: *The Walking Dead*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *The Originals*, *Honey 4*, *Circle*, *Hawaii 5-0* and a bunch of bootleg films he slings out of the back of his trunk. He is excited to be making his debut at San Diego REP. Follow him @iamlawrencekao



**SHAUN TUAZON
(PLAYWRIGHT / BOBBY / HIPPIE DUDE / REDNECK BIKER / GAI)**

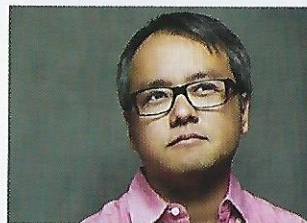
Thank you for supporting live theatre! All my love and doughnuts to my family and Justin. Memorable

credits: *#SupershinySara* (La Jolla Playhouse); *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (Intrepid Theatre Company/ New Village Arts); *West Side Story* (Lamb's Players Theatre); *The 25Th Annual... Bee* (Intrepid Theatre Company); *Rent* (San Diego Musical Theatre); *Zanna, Don't!* (San Diego Premiere); *Deconstruction Of A Drag Queen* (Craig Noel Award Nomination, Circle Circle dot dot); *In The Heights* (Cabrillo Music Theatre); as well as productions with Diversionary Theatre, The Old Globe, Breakthrough Workshop Theatre, ion theatre and more. BA in Theatre Arts from SDSU. @ShaunTwaz



**EMY COLIGADO
(HUONG / FLOWER GIRL / THU / AMERICAN GIRL / TRANSLATOR)** National Tour & Germany: *Miss Saigon*. Broadway: *Miss Saigon*. Regional Theater selects: Echo Theatre, Knightsbridge Theater, Pan Asian Rep Theater. TV: recurring roles in *Malcolm In The Middle* and *Crossing Jordan*; *Claws*, *Fresh Off The Boat*, *Shameless*, *Chuck*, *Grey's Anatomy* to name a few; regular series roles in NBC & ABC pilots. Film: *Three Stooges*, *Don't Come Knocking*, *Miss*

Congeniality 2.
emycoligado.com.
For Mom & Dad.



**QUI NGUYEN
(PLAYWRIGHT)**

Qui Nguyen is a playwright, screenwriter and co-founder of the OBIE Award-winning Vampire Cowboys Theatre Company of NYC. His plays include *Vietgone* (2016 Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ ATCA New Play Award, 2016 LADCC Tim Schmitt Award, 2016 Edward M. Kennedy Prize finalist); *War is F**king Awesome* (Frederick Loewe Award); *She Kills Monsters* (2014 AATE Distinguished Play Award, 2012 GLAAD Media Award nom); *Soul Samurai* (2009 GLAAD Media Award nom) and the critically acclaimed Vampire Cowboys shows: *The Inexplicable Redemption of Agent G*, *Alice in Slasherland*, *Fight Girl Battle World*, *Men of Steel*, *Six Rounds of Vengeance* and *Living Dead in Denmark*. Recent awards include a 2016 Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing in a Preschool Animated Program (*Peg+Cat*) and a 2015 New York Community Trust Helen Merrill Playwriting Award. He is proud member of the WGA, The Dramatists Guild, The Playwrights

Center, Ensemble Studio Theatre and The Ma-Yi Writers Lab. He's an alumni of New Dramatists and Youngblood. For television, he's written for PBS's *Peg+Cat* and SYFY's *Incorporated*. Currently, he's a screenwriter for Marvel Studios.



**JESCA PRUDENCIO
(DIRECTOR)**

Jesca Prudencio is a theater director focused on creating highly physical productions of new plays, musicals and documentary theater in New York, regionally and internationally. Favorite credits include Will Snider's *How To Use a Knife* (Mixed Blood & UCSD), David Henry Hwang's *Bondage* (The Drama League's Directorfest) and Ben Fisher's *Mobile Happiness Bazaar* (La Jolla Playhouse's WoW Festival). She holds a BFA from NYU Tisch, and received her MFA in Directing from UC San Diego, where she directed *VENUS*, *The Venetian Twins*, *Campo Maldito* and *Borealis*. Assistant directing credits include Ping Chong's *Throne of Blood* at BAM and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, *Disney's The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at La Jolla Playhouse and *Plenty* at The Public Theater. She is the recipient of The Drama

ARTIST PROFILES

League Fall Fellowship, The Old Vic's US/UK Exchange and the inaugural Julie Taymor World Theater Fellowship, which supported her travels through Thailand, Japan and the Philippines as she explores traditional art forms and develops new work with local artists. She is founder and Artistic Director of People Of Interest, which creates new theatrical events that address community specific issues, including *FAN: stories from the brothels of Bangkok* (Thailand), and *A&Q: a documentary theater piece on the "war on drugs"* (Philippines).

jescaprudencio.com

HEATHER M. BROSE (STAGE MANAGER)

Recent PSM credits include: *Rapture, Blister, Burn, My Mañana Comes, Uncanny Valley, Steal Heaven, RED, In the Time of the Butterflies, Venus in Fur, In the Heights, The Mountaintop, Clybourne Park, Tortilla Curtain, Doubt, Water & Power* San Diego REP; *Alice Chan*, La Jolla Playhouse; *Cabaret, It's a Wonderful Life, Private Lives* Cygnet Theatre; *American Rhythm, West Side Story*, Lambs Players Theatre; *Salome and The Father* directed by Estelle Parsons for The Actors Studio starring Al Pacino and Dianne Wiest; and *Stephen Sondheim's 70th Birthday Bash at the Hollywood Bowl*. Proud member of Actor's Equity Association.

ANASTASIA PAUTOVA (COSTUME DESIGNER)

Anastasia has worked as a set and costume designer for more than 15 years in Russia and Western Europe. Now she is very proud working with San Diego REP Theatre. Anastasia is the very happy mom of 10y old Nikolas. Her recent credits include: *A Streetcar Named Desire, Steal Heaven, In the Time of the Butterflies, The Mountaintop, Midsummer Night's Dream, Macbeth, The Diary of Anne Frank, The House of Bernarda Alba, Princess Turandot, Cyrano de Bergerac, Three Sisters*. Education: MFA from St-Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy.

MELANIE CHEN COLE (SOUND DESIGNER/COMPOSER)

Melanie Chen Cole is delighted for her San Diego REP debut! She has designed over 100 productions in San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Her recent regional credits include: *At the Old Place, #SuperShinySara* (La Jolla Playhouse); *The Imaginary Invalid* (The Old Globe); *Romeo & Juliet* (Old Globe/USD MFA Program); *American Hero, Having Our Say* (New Village Arts); *Travels with My Aunt, An Illusion* (North Coast Repertory Theatre). Melanie holds an M.F.A. in Sound Design for Theatre & Dance from UC San Diego. melaniesound.com

JUSTIN HUMPHRES (SET/PROJECTION DESIGNER)

Justin Humphres is a scenic and media designer based in California and a founding member of People Of Interest. Justin's design work has been seen in New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, San Diego and Chicago. Justin is very excited to be joining The REP for the first time.

BO TINDELL (LIGHTING DESIGNER)

Bo is a freelance lighting designer based out of Los Angeles and very excited to join San Diego REP for the first time. Regional Designer Credits: Greenway Court Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, NY Fringe, Courage Theatre, The TRIP, Ubuntu Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse. M.F.A. from UC San Diego and B.A. from Cal State Fullerton. wbttindell.com

JIM SHORT (DRAMATURGE)

Jim Short is very excited to join the team at San Diego REP. He is currently working on his PhD in Theatre and Drama at UCSD with interests in the Italian commedia dell'arte, Theatre for Youth and the intersection of embodied performance and cognitive neuroscience. As a theatre scholar, actor and director, he has worked across the country with the Lexington Children's Theatre, Shrine Mont Camps, the National Theatre for Children and Heifer Project International.

This playbill does not include the following listings on the title page:

Fight Choreographer.....George Yé

U/S Playwright, Bobby, Hippie Dude, Redneck Biker, Giai.....Chris Ruetten

This playbill contains an incorrect bio for PSM Heather Brose. Below is the correct bio:

Heather M. Brose, Stage Manager

Recent PSM credits include: *Hand to God, Disgraced, My Mañana Comes, Uncanny Valley, Steal Heaven, RED, In the Heights, The Mountaintop, Clybourne Park, Tortilla Curtain, Doubt, Water & Power, SDREP; FOC '15-'17, Big Fish, American Rhythm, West Side Story, MIXTAPE, Smoke on the Mountain, Lambs Players Theatre; Pageant, A Behanding in Spokane, Little Shop of Horrors, Cabaret, It's a Wonderful Life, Private Lives, Cygnet Theatre; Alice Chan, La Jolla Playhouse; Salome and The Father* directed by Estelle Parsons for The Actors Studio starring Al Pacino and Dianne Wiest; and Stephen Sondheim's 70th Birthday Bash at the Hollywood Bowl. Proud member of Actor's Equity Association.

An Inside Look at Playwright QUI NGUYEN

When asked what inspired *Vietgone*, in a February interview in *American Theatre*, playwright Qui Nguyen said: “I’ve always wanted to tell my family’s stories. However, my first attempt at doing so was absolutely horrendous... I had never written a play before, so I had no voice as a writer; all I could do was imitate scribes that I liked. At that time, the writer that influenced me the most was David Henry Hwang. I imitated him the best I could, wrote the play, and surprisingly it was produced Off-Broadway a few years after I graduated. When my family finally got to see it, I looked over at my mom proudly and asked, ‘So what’d you think?’ She responded bluntly, ‘It doesn’t sound like you.’ I was shocked. ‘What do you mean it doesn’t sound like me? You’ve never read anything I’ve ever written.’ I thought she was referring to my voice as a writer. What she meant was, literally, it didn’t sound like her son. She told me, ‘You’re mischievous and you’re funny and you like to goof around, and this play doesn’t show any of that.’ My response to her was a very mature, ‘Screw you, Mom. If you really want to see me be all those things, I’ll write those things, and I’ll show you how much you won’t like it.’

And so I started this theatre company called Vampire Cowboys with director Robert Ross Parker and producer Abby Marcus that became the incubator for all my rebellious, mischievous ideas. We pioneered our own style of shows, lovingly dubbed ‘geek theatre,’ by creating pop-culture-infused action-adventure stories with heroes who were female, people of color, and/or LGBTQ. We gave out beers, we bent genres, we featured a gratuitous amount of spectacle and songs and fights and profane animated short films at every performance. It was all super fun—a theatrical party—and all very ‘me,’ and none of it resembled anything like that first

play that my mother criticized. I knew I’d get back to writing those family stories one day, but I thought, ‘I’ll wait until I get much older and finally be mature enough to tackle those stories correctly.’ And so I kept making my downtown shows and people kept selling them out, and at some point the big theatres like South Coast Rep took notice.

It’s now been nearly a decade and a half since we started Vampire Cowboys; I now have kids and my parents are getting older. I’m realizing that I’m never going to magically grow into that fictional writer in my head. I’m never going to be that ‘mature.’ All I can be is me. And with that in mind, I thought, ‘Okay, f**k it. I’m going to write my parents’ story, but I’m going to be all those things my mom told me I should be, which is just myself.’”

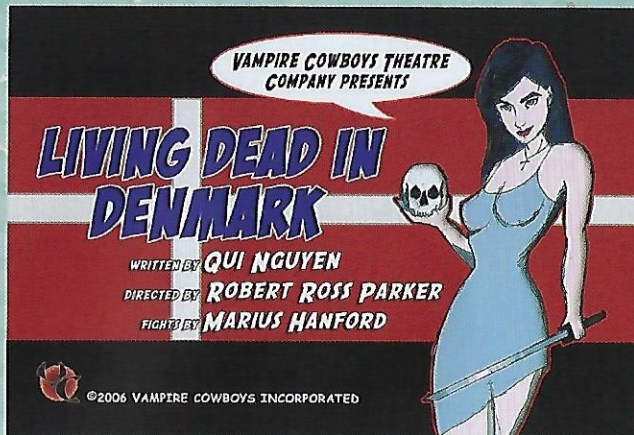
Nguyen talked to his parents and tried to gather their stories, some of them painful; many he hadn’t heard when he was younger. Nguyen noted, “Anybody coming from a tumultuous situation like the Holocaust, Vietnam or Syria—they often don’t want to talk about it. So the first thing I did was get my dad drunk a whole lot, and that kinda freed up the chops a little bit. But what really got them talking ... is that Asian parents really hate the idea of their kids being dumb. So I pretended to be dumb and say things like, ‘Oh the Vietnam War was a war between Vietnam and France, right?’ And they’re like, ‘No, that’s wrong! Why you so stupid?’ Kinda getting them atrociously mad was the thing that got them to open up to me.”

“That’s what’s so great about art: it allows us to humanize people and create bridges between people. Lots of different people are part of the American fabric. That’s what our country was founded on.”

Qui Nguyen

And so, Nguyen, already known for his award-winning live-action comic book plays like *She Kills Monsters* and *Alice In Slasherland*—and who, by the way, now writes for Marvel Studios—tackled this difficult story through an entirely new lens. As he said in an interview with Seattle Repertory Theatre, “When my parents told me stories about Vietnam, they told me the real stories, what actually happened. But what I imagined was kung fu movies. Because the only things I ever saw [growing up] that had a lot of Asian people in it, were kung fu movies.”

The result? An original pop-culture infused version of reality, complete with rap and modern slang that is set in 1975, but speaks directly to today’s



world, especially as refugees and immigrants are a daily topic in the news. Plus, a piece of theatre that speaks to younger audiences in a meaningful way. That was part of Nguyen's point:

"Everyone deserves a chance to see themselves onstage," he said in an interview on NPR. "With *Vietgone*, I wanted to address the huge lack of sexually powerful, driven, and complex Asian-American male and female characters on our stages. I wanted to see a sexy Asian male and a sexy Asian female be sexy for something other than being "exotic." And I wanted to make something that a young "yella" kid could see and feel proud of themselves after seeing it. In response, I remember a specific email I received during the South Coast Rep run of *Vietgone* from someone who wrote, "As an Asian-American kid, it feels like the world keeps telling me that I'm supposed to be weak. But when I saw *Vietgone*, it made me feel strong." That's the heartbeat of why I do what I do.

I've also gotten great emails from Vietnam War vets who never thought they would ever be recognized positively for their service. I think that *Vietgone* has tapped into way more people than I thought it would. I don't think that changes what I want to make as an artist, but it does make me stop and realize that beyond all my jokes, maybe my plays make more impact than I ever thought they would."

And we can look forward to two more plays in the coming years that encompass Nguyen's family experience of traversing two worlds, as told through his entrancing style. So stay tuned!

For full articles see: *American Theatre's* "Qui Nguyen Keeps It in the Family With '*Vietgone*'" interview by May Adrales, Feb 2017 and NPR's "'*Vietgone*:' A Sex Comedy About Mom, Dad and Refugee Camps" by Kat Chow, heard on *Morning Edition* in October 2016.

ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Exciting Free Events to Enhance Your REP Experience



TALKIN' THEATRE WITH TODD: PUTTING THE REAL AMERICA ON STAGE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25 AT 7PM BEFORE THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
Join REP Associate Artistic Director **TODD SALOVEY** for a conversation about the challenges of inclusivity and diversity on the American stage. Todd's guests are: *Vietgone* director **JESCA PRUDENCIO**, REP Associate Producer and Casting Director **KIM HEIL**, Actor **MONIQUE GAFFNEY** and Actor/Arts Educator and Program Manager for ArtistsUnited/ArtesUnidas **CATALINA MAYNARD**.

SAM'S SALON: WELCOME TO AMERICA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1 @7PM BEFORE THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
REP Artistic Director **SAM WOODHOUSE** invites you to hear the stories of new immigrants from Asia and Africa who now call San Diego home. Sam's guests are distinguished professor of Ethnic Studies at UCSD **YÊN LÊ ESPIRITU**, teacher and Vietnamese refugee **PAM PHAM-BARRON** and members of the **INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE** of San Diego. Sam's Salon is Sponsored by **SUZANNE AND LAWRENCE HESS**

MEET THE ARTISTS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2 AFTER THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
After the show, join the cast of *Vietgone* for an open discussion of the work onstage. REP Associate Producer and Casting Director **KIM HEIL** is your host.

MEET DIRECTOR JESCA PRUDENCIO

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3 AFTER THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
Stick around after the show for an intimate conversation with *Vietgone* Director **JESCA PRUDENCIO**.

FREE BEER FRIDAY

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9 AFTER THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
Enjoy the performance of *Vietgone*, then stick around for a beer from **THORN BREWING**.

AMIGOS DEL REP: THE HOUSE OF MEXICO

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10 @7PM BEFORE THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
Before the show, join **AMIGOS DEL REP**, San Diego REP's ensemble of local Latino artists, to honor our community partner the **HOUSE OF MEXICO**. Enjoy some Latin-inspired hip-hop from one of the House's associated dance groups.

ART GALLERY OPENING: TOKYO PIE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26 @7PM BEFORE THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
Local cartoon artist **CERI LANGELL** invites you to examine the influence between eastern and western styles of comic art in her exhibition of graphic design work, *Tokyo Pie*. Join us pre-show for a chance to meet the artist.

ART GALLERY OPENING: FLESH AND BONE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30 @6PM BEFORE THE 7PM PERFORMANCE
Come pre-show to view the exhibit *Flesh and Bone* and watch **NHUY REID** give demonstrations of printmaking in the lobby and see firsthand how she makes her unique art.

LIVE HIP-HOP DANCE PERFORMANCE BY CULTURE SHOCK

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8 @7PM BEFORE THE 8PM PERFORMANCE
CULTURE SHOCK DANCE CENTER is San Diego's premier urban dance training facility. Check out the incredible hip-hop dance skills of Culture Shock's dancers in a mini-dance concert in our lobby before the show.