Best wishes for a successful 2018-2019 Performing Arts Season!

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THE UMBRELLA PRESENTS

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

By Susan Kim
Adapted from the Novel by Amy Tan

Produced by Brian Boruta
Directed by Michelle Aguillon
Stage Management by Sydney Boncoddo
Scenic Design by Brian Boruta
Sound Design by Grant Furguiele
Costume Design by Anna Silva and Maureen Festa
Lighting Design by PJ Strachman
Properties Design by Sarajane Morse Mullins

This production is made possible by the generous support of
Kate and Mark Reid
in memory of Kate’s mother, Micheline Sakharoff.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB
The Long Wharf Theatre (New Haven, CT) and the Shanghai People’s Art Theater
co-produced the World Premiere of THE JOY LUCK CLUB in Shanghai in 1993.
The U.S. Premiere was produced by the Long Wharf Theatre in 1997.
The New York Premiere was produced by Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in 1999.
THE JOY LUCK CLUB is produced by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

Funded in part by the

Mass Cultural Council
Dear Friends,

Welcome to another exciting season of theater at The Umbrella Annex – our second and last season here, as we await completion of major construction on a new Performing Arts Wing at 40 Stow Street this summer.

I hope that you had a chance to see some of our performances last year. The Umbrella was recognized with 31 DASH nominations and 11 DASH awards from the Eastern Massachusetts Association of Community Theaters; including Best Production of a Play: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, and Best Production of a Musical: PARADE. Bravo and Kudos to our amazing production teams led by Brian Boruta!

This season has again thrilled audiences, and we are expecting an even higher level of production in our next, expanded season to take place back in our new, multitheater space. Greatly improved audience experiences, technical capabilities, and professional support will help realize the visions of the directors, designers, casts and crews of The Umbrella Stage Company, which we proudly launched in February as Greater Boston’s newest professional equity theater!

Meanwhile, we invite you to join us on May 4 at our festive ARTRAGEOUS gala, themed “The Umbrella Takes Center Stage,” hosted by Brian Boruta, and celebrating our Performing Arts Program and award-winning director Nancy Curran Willis.

At this time of very exciting growth and transformation, we are grateful for your ongoing support of The Umbrella and ask you to help us spread the word about this wonderful organization and all we have to offer. Beyond just Performing Arts, our other programs in Arts Education, Studio Arts, Arts & Environment, and an Arts Gallery offer touch points for the entire community to connect with the Arts and other art lovers. This, we hope, creates a place for a truly vibrant Arts community in our region.

Thank you for coming to this production of THE JOY LUCK CLUB. We look forward to seeing you throughout the year!

Jerry Wedge
Executive Director
CAST

Karina Wen as Jing-Mei
Kara Chu Nelson as Rose
Karla Lang as Waverly
Audrey Wong-Centauro as Lena
Lea Oppedisano as Ying-Ying
Vivian Liu-Somers as Lindo
Christina Chan as An-Mei
Liza Fermin-Granada as Suyuan

with

Kai Chao
Eric Cheung
Linda Chin
Nicholas Miller
Letter From The Director of Performing Arts:

Thank you for joining us for THE JOY LUCK CLUB, our second to last production here at The Annex.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB was the first title chosen for this season. Sweepingly beautiful and full of heart, this universal story of intergenerational relationships is as relevant now as it was 30 years ago. When Michelle first approached me with the idea, I was shocked to learn that she’d had such trouble finding a home for this production. Representation matters now more than ever, and it is a privilege to present these stories.

We close our season and our residency at The Annex in April with a production of the smash hit musical AVENUE Q. While we wrap up here, construction at 40 Stow Street also nears completion and we’ve just announced our lineup of shows for our inaugural season back in our new home. More information on all of those shows can be found here in your program book.

Thank you for joining us and for supporting live theater.

Enjoy the show!

Brian Boruta, Director of Performing Arts
Audrey Wong-Centauro (Lena St. Clair) was born in Boston, MA, and is of Chinese and Thai descent. After graduating from BU and NEU in her 30’s, she left 17 years in the corporate world behind to pursue her passion and dreams in fitness/health, acting, dancing/singing, and real estate. She has been featured in an array of commercials/film/print work, but this will be her first stage appearance since high school. Audrey is co-founder of Chained Evolution, a revolutionized, all-in-one fitness and nutrition store in Waltham, MA, where she is able to thrive in her utmost passion - helping people. She is grateful to her family and friends for their support, her loving husband for encouraging her to follow her dreams, and to The Umbrella and all of those in JLC, especially Michelle Aguillon, for this rewarding experience.

Christina R Chan (An-Mei) is making her acting debut with The Umbrella. Some favorite roles include Tien Fu Wu UNBINDING OUR LIVES (ArtsEmerson/Chinese Historical Society), and Prospero BLOOD (Femme Vital), Chorus WILD SWANS (American Repertory Theater). Her play STIR FRYING MAHJONG was 2017 Eugene O’Neill Theater Conference Semi-finalist. Christina is a 2017 and 2018 Boston Live Arts Grantee (The Boston Foundation). She is a 2016 Company One PlayLab Fellow and co-founder of the Asian American Playwright Collective. Christina is thrilled to be directed for the first time by her ‘ole’ Royal National Theatre classmate. She graduated from Trinity Rep Theater Conservatory under former Artistic Director, Oscar Eustis. Shout out to the wonderful JLC cast and production team. She thanks her friends, family, M and B for their support.

Kai Chao (Ensemble) says THE JOY LUCK CLUB book and movie have always been special to him. For many, it was the first glimpse into “growing up Asian” in America; for him, it was the first time he realized he was part of the story. Kai was last on The Umbrella stage as Phaedra in LA CAGE AUX FOLLES, and as a Roustabout in SIDE SHOW. Some of his favorite roles include Bert in MARY POPPINS (Pentucket Players); Bobby in A CHORUS LINE (Woodland Theater Co); Ito in MAME, Ching Ho/Dancer in THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE, Rug/Dancer in BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (Reagle Players); Albert in BYE, BYE BIRDIE (Wakefield); Emcee in CABARET (TCS); Dancer with Disney Entertainment. He also received the Los Angeles Dramalogue Critic’s Award for his performance in PACIFIC OVERTURES (Irvine CLO). Thank you to The Umbrella and Michelle for letting me “share” these stories, and to Al, who will always be my “Tin”.
Note from Director Michelle Aguillon

Even though the story of THE JOY LUCK CLUB centers around four immigrant women from China and their America-born daughters in San Francisco, their relationships are recognizable and relatable to everyone. Their struggle to understand and accept one another is a universal theme. As mothers and daughters, parents and children, we hope - through patience, love and understanding - to be seen as our true selves.

After many years of trying to get THE JOY LUCK CLUB produced in the Boston area, I was asked by Vivian Liu-Somers and Christina Chan if I would be interested in directing a staged reading. I said, “Why don’t I do one better, and propose it to The Umbrella?” I figured it was a longshot, but I proposed it anyway, and here we are!

For many years, I was told “no way, you’ll never get all those Asian actors.” And guess what? We did! We are proof that we are out there, wanting to work, wanting to tell our stories, just like everyone else. I am proud to present this show and its cast, who worked very hard over the past few months. We dined together, laughed, and shared our stories.

Thank you to Brian, whose vision and efforts to help us diversify theater in the greater Boston area is remarkable, and who made THE JOY LUCK CLUB and other works deemed “impossible to cast” possible. I would like to thank my amazing cast, my production and design team, and everyone at The Umbrella who made this production possible. I would like to thank Christina, my classmate from the National Theater, and my friend Vivian, for bringing back the idea to me! Dreams do come true.

Finally, I would like to dedicate THE JOY LUCK CLUB to my Mom and sisters Lynn, Terri, and Annie, but especially to Gabbie, my daughter, who loved this movie growing up. I am proud to help finally bring Amy Tan’s bestselling novel to life onstage. I hope you enjoy THE JOY LUCK CLUB.
Eric Cheung (Ensemble) is a second-generation Cantonese-American on his dad’s side of the family. He has done stand-up for NBC’s Diversity Initiative, stand-up and sketch at The Comedy Studio, docenting for WGBH, WBUR, WECB, WMFO, Learning Ally, ten characters for Post-Meridian Radio Players, and Boston Podcast Players, stage-acting with five characters for Theatre@First, three characters for the MRS. HAWKING play series, Acme, Another Country, Office of War Information, Bridge Rep, Chinese Historical Society of New England (in a play live-streamed on HowlRound), Cape Ann Theatre Collaborative, and Dream Role Players, and film with Rhino Crate, Emerson MFA, and was in STAR TREK (2009). In June, he will perform with Dream Role Players in their production of MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING at Hastings Park in Medford. He’d like to wish his uncle Aubrey Cheung out in California and his aunt Jeanne in Greenfield, MA well.

Linda Chin (Ensemble) is usually involved in theater backstage or in the audience, and is grateful for the opportunity to be telling this story with actors she greatly admires. Many thanks to Michelle, Sydney, Kendra and the wonderful Joy Luck Club and Workman families for their support and encouragement. Much love to my late parents who immigrated from China to create a better life for their children, my dad for using his mah-jong winnings for my college education, my mom for her special sea bass with ginger and scallions, my husband for not dousing it with soy sauce, and my kids for appreciating their Chinese heritage.

Lisa Fermin-Granada (Suyuan) is thrilled to have her theater debut comeback, after being away from the stage for over twenty years, with The Umbrella! She is thankful to Michelle, Brian and Sydney for casting her, and hopes to be in future shows with the incredible cast and crew for years to come! Some of her favorite past roles include Margot Wendice in DIAL M FOR MURDER (The Rita), Phoebe in AS YOU LIKE IT (The Rita), Pamela in A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG (The Rita), and Hetty in OVERTONES (The Rita). When Lisa isn’t acting she keeps busy with her day job as a SPED Educator with Lexington Public Schools. She gives special thanks to her parents, sister, and friends who have come out to support her, along with her eternal love and gratitude to her pride and joy, husband Al and daughters Alisa and Lauren!

Karla Lang (Waverly) is excited to be making her debut at The Umbrella and is delighted to be playing her favorite character from one of her all-time favorite books. She was last seen onstage as one of the Three Blind Mice in SHREK THE MUSICAL (Wellesley who’s who in JOY LUCK CLUB
Since 1855, Salem Five has been listening to the needs of our communities. In keeping with that commitment, we are pleased to support The Umbrella Community Arts Center production of “THE JOY LUCK CLUB.”
Players) and as a showgirl in FOLLIES (Concord Players). Other favorite roles include April in COMPANY (Longwood Players), Purity in ANYTHING GOES (Encore Theater), and Texas/ “Two Ladies” in CABARET (Milton Players). She has also performed with Reagle Music Theater and regularly sings with the New World Chorale. Many thanks to Michelle, Sydney, and Brian for this wonderful opportunity and experience, and to Jeremy for his love and support. Karla is a fifth-generation Chinese-American, and dedicates her performance (including her onstage eye-rolls and “Ai-ya” moments!) to her real-life mother and daughter.

Vivian Liu-Somers (Lindo) is delighted to make her Umbrella debut, and has acted and directed with many Boston-area theater groups and festivals. Favorite roles include Christmas Eve in AVENUE Q (Arlington Friends of the Drama), Melissa in LOVE LETTERS (Weston Friendly Society), Peter Quince in A MIDSUMMER’S NIGHT DREAM (Newton Country Players), and Bill Bradley and various roles in TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES written by Anna Deavere Smith (Lexington Players). She also has participated in readings and workshops including SOMEONE WHO ISN’T ME (Fresh Ink Theatre), THE TOKEN FALLOPIANS OF MIDDLETON HEIGHTS (Playwrights’ Platform and Fresh Ink Theatre) and STIR FRYING MAHJONG (Company One). This role is dedicated to my father, who taught me mahjong strategy, and in memory of my mother, the OG Lindo, who served food and guilt along the way.

Nicholas Miller (Ensemble) is thrilled to be working with The Umbrella again, having last been seen as a guitar-slinging Boo Radley in the award-winning production of TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD. Past credits include: Valentine in ARCADIA (The Concord Players), Seth in LANGUAGE OF ANGELS, Matt in DOG SEES GOD, Nick in THE AMERICAN PLAN, Trevor in NEIGHBORHOOD 3, James Dean in BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS and Sam in REFUGE (Happy Medium Theater), Ensemble in DANCING WILDE (Boston Actors Theater), Spot the Dog in DRACULA (RE)VAMPED (Imaginary Beasts) and Painter in INTERVIEW (Heart and Dagger). Many thanks to Meesh for the opportunity to be a part of this modern classic. Many, many thanks to Amy, Sage and River.

Kara Chu Nelson (Rose) is honored to be returning to The Umbrella to perform in her first non-musical production! Kara has also worked at North Shore Music Theatre, Seacoast Rep, Hackmatack Playhouse, Patrick Dorow Productions, and Fiddlehead Theatre Company, among others. Favorite past roles include “Somewhere” Girl in WEST SIDE STORY (Hackmatack and Fiddlehead), The Mistress in EVITA (The Umbrella and Regatta Players), Éponine in LES MISERABLES (Norton Singers), and Hope Cladwell in URINETOWN (Longwood Players). Kara is so grateful for Michelle, Brian, and the JLC team for this wonderful opportunity to learn and be challenged. Many thanks to Mom and Dad, who never miss a show.
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Lea Oppedisano (Ying Ying St. Clair) is proud to be making her debut at The Umbrella. Prior roles include Irma in LOOKING FOR NORMAL (Hovey Players), Amy in WINGS, Catherine in RAPTURE, BLISTER, BURN, Diana in NEXT TO NORMAL (Vokes Players), Phillis in FOLLIES (Concord Players, EMACT DASH Award Best Actress in a Musical), Luisa in NINE (Arlington Friends of the Drama), Florence in CHESS (Needham Theater), Claire in BOSTON MARRIAGE (Actors Company), Georgie in THE FULL MONTY, Woman in GOLF: THE MUSICAL, Claire in PROOF (Majestic Theater). In memory of my grandmother, my “Bita”, Conchita Zulueta Jahrling.

Karina Wen (June) is excited to be performing in her first show with The Umbrella! Originally from Lexington, she is currently a student at Brandeis University majoring in theater and women’s, gender, and sexuality studies. Recent performances include BYE BYE BIRDIE, GUYS AND DOLLS, and A CHORUS LINE (Priscilla Beach Theatre), IN THE HEIGHTS (Wheelock Family Theatre), WOYZECK and A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM (Brandeis), and URINETOWN (The Longwood Players). A big thank you to Michelle, Sydney, and the whole team for making this such a wonderful, snack-filled process!
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music and lyrics by David Yazbek

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Brian Boruta
(Producer/Scenic Designer) THE JOY LUCK CLUB marks Brian’s 33rd production with The Umbrella and his 30th as the Director of Performing Arts, during which time he has earned Best Production nominations for GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS, BLOODY BLOODY ANDREW JACKSON, RED, ANGELS IN AMERICA, EQUUS and BONNIE & CLYDE; a DASH Award for Best Play for TRUE WEST and TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, and Best Musical for PARADE and BIG FISH. Directing credits include: with The Umbrella: PARADE (Dash Award for Best Director of a Musical) BIG FISH (DASH Nom.), HAIR, EVITA, SIDE SHOW, NEXT TO NORMAL, THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW. Elsewhere: SWEENEY TODD, LEGALLY BLONDE, GODSPELL, SEUSSICAL THE MUSICAL, THE ACTOR’S NIGHTMARE, SISTER MARY IGNATIUS EXPLAINS IT ALL FOR YOU. Favorite on-stage credits include Billy Lawlor in 42ND STREET (DASH Nom.), Judas/ John the Baptist in GODSPELL, Cosmo Brown in SINGIN’ IN THE RAIN, Austin in TRUE WEST, and Greg in A CHORUS LINE. As a designer and educator, Brian has worked with numerous college, high school and community groups including Merrimack College, Goddard College, Framingham State University, The Performing Arts Center of MetroWest, Brookline, Chelsea and Wellesley Public School. His solo piece, UnMasqued, has been workshopped and performed at the Wheeler Theater in Port Townsend, WA. Brian holds a Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College and was named the recipient of the 2014 Framingham State University Young Alumni Achievement Award for his work in the performing arts.

Michelle Aguillon
(Director) THE JOY LUCK CLUB marks Michelle’s 5th production with The Umbrella Stage Company. Michelle recently appeared as Beatrice Carbone in The Umbrella’s A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE. Also: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (DASH Best Production 2018), DISGRACED, TRUE WEST (DASH Best Production 2016) (The Umbrella); TERRA NOVA, OF MICE AND MEN (Quannapowitt Players), PROOF (Nora Theatre Company); MARJORIE PRIME, PILLOWMAN, RABBIT HOLE, GOOD PEOPLE, KIMBERLY AKIMBO, SENSE AND SENSIBILITY, LOOKING FOR NORMAL, A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM, G.R. POINT (IRNE Best Director); RETURN TO MORALITY (Titanic Theater); COMMUNICATING DOORS, RAPTURE BLISTER BURN (Vokes Theater); GOD OF CARNAGE, ANTON IN SHOW BUSINESS (Acme Theater); MISS SAIGON, SECRET GARDEN (Turtle Lane Playhouse); GODSPELL (Metro Stage Company). Theater training: San Francisco State University, California State University at Long Beach, and the National Theater of London. Future projects include SYLVIA (April, Theater Uncorked, the Calderwood, Boston), and VIETGONE (area premiere, May, Company One).

Sarajane Morse Mullins (Properties Design) is a Boston based performer and theater practitioner. She is thrilled to return this season after last designing the properties and set dressings for GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS. Umbrella Stage Company performing credits include Lucille (PARADE), Blanche (BONNIE AND CLYDE) and ensemble roles in EVITA and BIG FISH. Her work onstage and offstage has been recognized by nominations from organizations such as the EMACT Dash, the IRNEs, and ArtsImpulse. As an actor, Sarajane has appeared at The
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Huntington Theatre Company, The Greater Boston Stage Company, Turtle Lane Playhouse, and over 50 productions in the Midwest before moving to New England. Since 2010, she has directed, designed, stage managed or taught theater for over 20 organizations in the greater Boston area including UMASS Boston's Urban Scholars program, The Vineyard Playhouse, The Winchester Music School, Somerville Community Schools, and Kidstock! Creative Theater. She is an equity membership candidate and annually adjudicates for the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild.


Sydney Boncoddo (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be back working with The Umbrella again. Recent stage management experience includes DISGRACED (The Umbrella); THE PILLOWMAN (Hovey Players, NHCTA Festival Award for Excellence in Stage Management); COYOTE ON A FENCE, BLACK COMEDY and AMERICAN BUFFALO (Acme Theater); ROCKET MAN and OSCAR & FELIX (Hovey Players); OF MICE & MEN (Quannapowitt Players); PROOF and MISTER ROBERTS (The Concord Players). Thanks to the team and especially Michelle for the trust and opportunity to help tell this story, and endless love to Andy and Will for everything.

Kendra Cui (Dramaturg) is a Hong Kong native and recent graduate of Wellesley College, and is excited to be working on a play with such rich historical and cultural detail to uncover. THE JOY LUCK CLUB is her first foray into dramaturgy, having previously directed plays including THE WHITE SNAKE (Wellesley College Upstage) and PEAR BLOSSOM DREAM (Wellesley College Theatre)—which she translated from its original Chinese. Thank you to Michelle and the cast for creating such a wonderful cast of characters to spend three months with.

Maureen Festa (Costume Design) is thrilled to return to The Umbrella this season. Maureen works mostly as a costume designer, whose work includes: The Umbrella's productions of HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH, TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (DASH nomination), DEAR ELIZABETH, MELANCHOLY PLAY, HAIR, and LA CAGE AUX FOLLES, for which she was nominated for an ArtsImpulse award for best costume design. Other recent work includes THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW (The Footlight Club, DASH nomination), and she is the 2010 EMACT DASH winner for best costumes for AN IDEAL HUSBAND (The Footlight Club). She is a frequent collaborator with Theatre on Fire (including IRNE-winner THE MISADVENTURES OF SPY MATTHIAS and the Elliot Norton Award-nominated A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE), and has also worked with the Arlington Friends of the Drama; Fort Point Theatre Channel; Hovey Players; Praxis Stage; and Vokes Theatre.

PJ Strachman (Lighting Designer) with The Umbrella: ANGELS IN AMERICA: PERESTROIKA. Other recent designs include MY STATION IN LIFE, EVERY CHRISTMAS STORY EVER TOLD (Gloucester Stage Company); DELICATE PARTICLE LOGIC, ANTIGONE, A BRIGHT ROOM CALLED DAY, SILENT SKY (Flat Earth Theatre); THE O.K. DIARIES (Blue Spruce Theatre); A STORY BEYOND, YELLOW BIRD CHASE (Liars and Believers); LOS MEADOWS (Boston Public Works); ULTIMATE THINGS (Unreliable Narrator); THE MAN FROM WILLOW’S BROOK (Wax Wings). She also designs for and mentors at several local schools. Upcoming works: KING OF SHADOWS (Flat Earth Theatre); ELEKTRA (Liars and Believers); PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA (as lyricist, Blue Spruce Theatre).
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A Note from the Dramaturg

As dramaturg, my responsibilities typically entail serving as a research consultant of sorts, and in a play such as THE JOY LUCK CLUB, where Chinese traditions and 20th century historical events form the core of the story, there has certainly been no shortage of material to excavate.

However, in working with the designers, actors and director to ensure historical accuracy, I also must look beyond mere factual correctness and consider: who constructs ‘history’? What preconceptions do we have when examining stories of the past? And how do we make sure people of past generations—especially those who have been marginalized—have agency in constructing their own narratives?

“Imagine a daughter not knowing her own mother!”

There can sometimes be a tendency to perceive the historical and the traditional as static and unchanging, when—in fact—the past has always been filled with dynamic change. The four daughters of the Joy Luck Club, for example, all express frustration at their mothers’ outdated and unchanging attitudes. However, they do so without understanding that their mothers have adopted these attitudes as a result of adapting to the ever-shifting social circumstances of their formative years.

And the first half of 20th century China—when the Joy Luck Club mothers are in their youth—was indeed filled with monumental and relentless change. In thirty-eight years, three vastly different forms of government cycled in and out of power, and China experienced both domestic and international conflict. The beginning of the 20th century, during which China was ruled by the Qing emperor, saw significant Western influence, especially in coastal cities. Following British and French victories in the 19th century Opium Wars, the Qing government was forced to concede territories in cities such as Tianjin and Shanghai (where some of the play takes place) for Western European settlement. This meant that, by the 1920s, jazz-influenced Chinese folk songs co-existed alongside traditional Chinese opera in many metropolitan areas. In the 1930s, Hollywood film stars such as Marlene Dietrich and Clark Gable strolled the Shanghai riverside, while age-old practices such as polygamy persisted among the Chinese elite.

Amidst this backdrop of foreign influence, a group of wealthy, overseas-educated political leaders led by Sun Yat-sen overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1911, establishing the ruling Nationalist Party and rejecting some imperialistic practices such as foot-binding. The 1911 revolution presaged four decades of ensuing conflict: periodic invasions by Japan which culminated in the Second
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With the evening's host, Brian Boruta, Director of The Umbrella Performing Arts

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Sino-Japanese War (World War Two) that Joy Luck Club mothers are caught up in; and further domestic conflict as the Chinese Communist Party pushed the Nationalist Party to Taiwan, establishing the modern Chinese government in 1949. The China that the Joy Luck Club daughters come to know is vastly different to the one their mothers grew up in.

“What if I blend in so well they think I’m one of them?”

The other half of THE JOY LUCK CLUB story is set in the Chinese-American diaspora of 1980s San Francisco. Some of the earliest Chinese immigrants in the in the USA—among them laborers who built the first trans-continental railway—settled in the city, and in 1880 established the First Chinese Baptist Church that An-Mei attends. By immigrating to the oldest Chinese settlement in America, the Joy Luck Club mothers can sustain their Chinese roots with the support of their community.

But growing up Chinese and Chinese-American are different. The mothers of the Joy Luck Club must now contend with being a racial minority for the first time in their lives. They are living in a country where most people—their own daughters even—cannot contextualize the values they hold and the stories of their lives in China. It is in this environment that the Joy Luck Club mothers must find a way to pass on their personal histories to their daughters—in a way they want to be seen, heard and remembered.

Take a moment now to try to imagine your parents (however you define them) as people who existed before you came into their lives. It might be challenging—our entire lives, we have only known them through the role of ‘parent figure’. But understanding someone’s personal history fully requires moving beyond a static view of who this person is, and what role they served in your own life. It requires understanding someone as a fully-formed individual who learns, grows and changes; it requires us to make a conscious effort to remember others’ narratives on their own terms, and not ours.
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First Chinese Baptist Church:
Located on Waverly Place (Waverly Jong’s namesake) in San Francisco’s Chinatown, this church was established in 1880 and today provides services in both Cantonese and English.

Five Elements:
The five Chinese elements are water, air, wood, metal and earth.

Mahjong:
A tile-based game played with four players and developed in the Qing dynasty. While exact rules often vary, the ultimate goal is to use strategy and luck to amass high-scoring tile combinations.

Moon Festival (or Mid-Autumn Festival):
A harvest festival celebrated on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, when the moon is said to be brightest. Traditions include lighting lanterns and eating mooncakes. Unlike the Gregorian calendar, the traditional Chinese calendar tracks the movement of the moon rather than the sun.

Moon Lady (also known as Chang E):
A mythical figure who resides on the moon with a rabbit. After she consumed an elixir of mortality meant for her husband, she rose from the earth to the moon.

Suzie Wong:
The titular character of the 1957 novel The World of Suzie Wong. She is a Hong Kong prostitute who falls in love with a British artist in colonial Hong Kong.
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