

NEIGHBORS

鄰居



Written & Directed by Elaine Lai
Sound Design & Co-director Cahron Cross



Art by Daniela Ghinoni

Daniela Ghinoni '09

For the incredible mothers who have raised us,
For all mother sentient beings,
May we be learn to be good neighbors to each other

GRATITUDE

Thank you deeply to all the cast and crew, friends, family, and colleagues who have supported me in big and small ways. Thank you to Young Jean Lee and my TAPS class in the Fall of 2020 for workshopping the first draft of this play. Thank you especially to Cahron, whose superb sound design has allowed this dream to manifest far beyond what I ever could have imagined. Thank you to Simona's mother Daniela Ghignoni and family for allowing me to use these beautiful paintings!

The first iteration of *Neighbors* was written over a decade ago while I was living in Beijing, China and reflecting upon what it meant to be Asian-embodied in America, a place that never felt quite like home. I remember showing that screenplay to a Chinese colleague of mine back then who rolled her eyes at me and said the piece was "too American." I was befuddled by that comment since my entire experience in the U.S. had taught me that I would never be American enough. I realized then, not only was I not American enough, but I was not Chinese enough either. Not enough period.

Fate would have it that I lost that screenplay when my then computer died, and instead of trying to retrieve it, I let it disappear into oblivion. And with it, my dreams for screenwriting and filmmaking died too.

During the pandemic year, I found myself revisiting dreams that I had abandoned due to previous disappointments and setbacks. And I remembered one of my first loves: theater. To my total surprise, *Neighbors* was born again, but in a very different form than ten years earlier.

May *Neighbors* inspire us to reflect on what it really means to co-exist, to share space. Even when we may look alike, getting along isn't that easy. May Asians, Asian-Americans, and all under-represented groups at the intersection of different identities be portrayed as fully-human, with all their flaws, imperfections, strengths, AND virtues.

Thank you to my mom for supporting me always, and encouraging me to do what I love. And thank YOU ALL for listening, and bearing witness to these stories. May we all create space for our diverse stories to co-exist.



NEIGHBORS CAST



ELAINE LAI

FAYE

Elaine always has trouble defining herself (bc she is constantly changing), but no trouble imagining all kinds of stories that keep her up at night. The play *Neighbors* is loosely inspired by several Chinese/Taiwanese-(American) women she has had the privilege to know and befriend this life. She hopes it will inspire you to get up and sing. Currently, Elaine is a PhD candidate in Buddhism at Stanford.



ANQI YU

COOCHIE

AnQi Yu (she/her) recently graduated from Stanford with a degree in Film & Media Studies. In her lightly employed post-grad life, she's had fun acting in radio plays, exploring East Coast beaches, and improving her ping pong skills.



MEREDY

YOUNG COOCHIE

Meredy is 9 years old and enjoys music, performance, sports, math and art. She is excited to be part of this project because it showcases her singing, acting and language skills!



CHENXING HAN

WEN

Chenxing Han is the author of *Be the Refuge: Raising the Voices of Asian American Buddhists* (North Atlantic Books, 2021). She holds a BA from Stanford University, an MA in Buddhist studies from the Graduate Theological Union, and a certificate in Buddhist chaplaincy from the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California. Like WEN, she will insist on feeding you fruit if you stop by for a visit.

NEIGHBORS CAST



MATTHEW ZHENG
ROY

Matthew "Matta" Haide Zheng (they/he pronouns) is a senior at Stanford studying Political Science and Human Biology. Matta hopes to work in end-of-life care as a Buddhist chaplain and palliative care physician in the future. His love of life and hope to heal from the struggles of being a queer child of immigrants is what inspired his voice acting as Roy in Neighbors.



HARRISON LIU
ROY SINGING

Harrison Liu is a second-year graduate student in USC, who loves singing. He believes that singing provides a sense of fulfillment in expressing oneself. Currently, he is working hard on his epidemiology research coding, so don't feel surprised if you see he has big dark circles under the eyes.



YAFENG WANG
LEE

Yafeng Wang is an academic who studied philosophy for the past decade. At this moment in time, he resonates with the following keywords: playfulness, laughter, healing, suffering, fluidity, connection, belonging, love, communities, liberation.



AMY DOUGLASS ALSO KNOWN AS CAHRON'S MOM
IRENE

Amy's acting prowess dates back to her time in high school when she played Jane Eyre, and her love for chocolate, animals, and helping others dates back to her birth. To her friends and love ones, she is the source of seemingly infinite radiant joy and generosity. She currently works as a therapist in Chicago, IL, and is a proud mother of four (two of them being dogs).

NEIGHBORS CAST



SARAH LEE
MRS. GAO

Sarah Lee is in her fourth year of undergrad studying philosophy. She's been grateful to find ~ her ~ neighbors through theater, interfaith, and outdoor communities at Stanford. Other things that bring her joy: crocheting, KenKen puzzles, and creeks!



WILL SHAN
MR. GAO

Will is a Junior at Stanford University studying Psychology and Education. When he's not voicing Mr. Gao, you can find him outdoors backpacking, dancing with reckless abandon, and working on his SUV-turned-camper.



ERICA HWANG
MRS. ZHANG

Erica Hwang is a senior at Stanford University studying English and Communication. She plays the violin, writes fiction, and spends a lot of time with her cockatiel, Jarvis.



RYAN TAN
MR. ZHANG

Ryan Tan is a senior at Stanford majoring in Computer Science and minoring in Comparative Literature. His interests include theater, game design, religion, and philosophy.

NEIGHBORS CAST



TI FEI HSU ALSO KNOWN AS ELAINE'S MOM ***MRS. CHEN***

Ti Fei Hsu is a retired music teacher originally from Taiwan. She spent over half her life in the US before returning to Taiwan. She enjoys crocheting, baking, and taking foodie photos.



DEAN HSU ***MR. CHEN***

Dean Shu (徐迪元) age 67, was born in Taiwan. He came to the United States in 1977 for the graduate studies in computer science. He has retired after working as a software engineer for over 30 years.



DESTINY CUNNINGHAM ***POLICE OFFICER 1***

Destiny Cunningham is an undergraduate history major and film minor interested in telling oral stories. She's currently working as a podcast coordinator for the BPP55 while also working on a personal podcast project. In her free time, she likes napping, attempting to rollerblade, and adopting stray cats.



RALPH H CRAIG III ***Police Officer 2***

Ralph H. Craig III was born and raised in New Orleans, LA. While living in a variety of places, he has played several roles: budding mortician; yoga teacher; traveler. Now, he is a Ph.D. candidate in Buddhist Studies and American Religions. Currently, he is writing a religious biography of Tina Turner, and he is spreading Black joy.

NEIGHBORS CAST



CAHRON CROSS

NARRATOR/CALM TROUBLESHOOTER/EVERYTHING EXTRAORDINAIRE

Pre-COVID, Cahron was an avid hugger of friends. Now he resorts to zoom-mojis, socially distant hand-waves, head nods, and hidden smiles behind polyester masks, but there's love behind it just the same. He has dabbled in numerous creative fields from hip-hop music to speech and debate, and his knack for self-deprecating humor is only eclipsed by his ineffectiveness in writing bios.

MORGAN CANAAN

Ms Palmer/Grace

Other Credits

Art by Daniela Ghignoni

Mr. Rogers' "Neighborhood 1733 Intro"

Teresa Teng's (鄧麗君) "Sweet" 《甜蜜蜜》 - also performed by Harrison Liu

"America the Beautiful" performed by Meredy

"Where is Love" from *Oliver* performed by Meredy

"A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes" from *Cinderella* (1950)

"Nearer to Thee" 《與祢更親》 performed by Ti Fei Hsu

Bach's "Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major" performed by Yo-Yo Ma

Teresa Teng's (鄧麗君) "The Moon Represents my Heart" 《月亮代表我的心》 - also performed by Harrison Liu and Chenxing Han

"So Long Farewell" from *Sound of Music* performed by the entire Asian-(American) cast

1 John 4:7-13 English Standard Version 2016 from Bible.com

Diamond Cutter Sūtra - English translation from Plum Village