

Pre-Show Information

Young Vic presents

*untitled f*ck m*ss s**gon play*



Written by **Kimber Lee**

Directed by **Roy Alexander Weise**

This document contains detailed information about the show in order to describe what you should expect when attending.

This includes information about the content warnings, plot, the space, lighting and sound, audience participation, and further access information.

All of the information in this document was correct at the time of publishing. More information will be available closer to the time of performance.

Please note that by discussing the content of the show, **the below information will contain key plot points and descriptions of what happens in the performance.**

If you would like to receive elements of this information **but avoid these spoilers, please do not read the section at the end of this document entitled 'Show Synopsis'.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Box Office team:

E-mail: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: 020 7922 2922

Show Information:

Running Time: Approx 1 hour and 50 minutes (with no interval)

Content warnings:

- Strong language, references to racist stereotypes of East Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islands people
- Implied sexual situations
- Heavily stylised and unrealistic depictions of suicide
- Blood, knives and guns

Production warnings

- Flashing lights
- Strobe
- Haze
- Loud noises

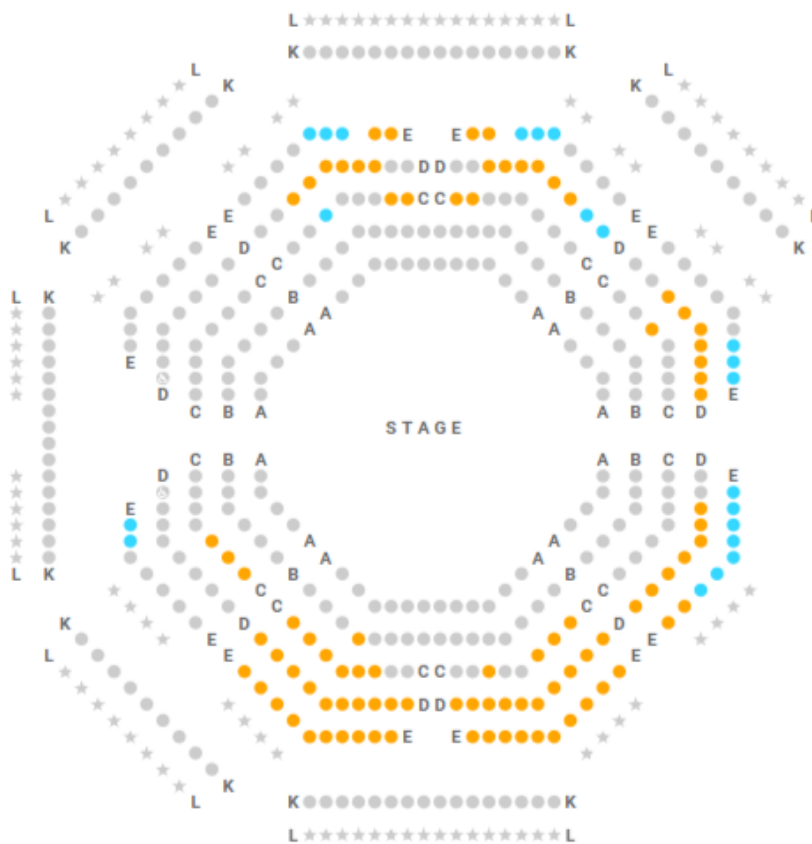
The Auditorium

This show will take place in our main auditorium, which is the larger of our three performance spaces.

For this performance, the space will be in an 'in the round' arrangement, meaning the seats are arranged on four sides of the stage (see below). In the stalls, the seats are benches, which seat two people, and in the balcony, the seats are a mixture of benches and high benches. The maximum capacity is 454.

Access to the main auditorium is via the upstairs (rows K - L) and downstairs (rows A – E) via the main doors. Our ushers are on hand to help you, they wear red t-shirts and jumpers with our logo.

Please arrive at the Young Vic with your ticket ready on your phone or have it printed before you enter or you can collect from box office.



Facilities:

There are toilets located on the ground and first floor at the Young Vic, via The Cut Bar. We have gender-neutral and accessible/baby changing toilets.

Sanitary bins are available in all.

Building Accessibility:

All indoor venues will also be accessible with lifts & ramps and toilet provided.

Assistance Dogs:

Assistance dogs are always welcome at the Young Vic, if you are planning a visit please let us know in advance which performance you will be attending by calling our box office on **020 7922 2922** or e-mailing boxoffice@youngvic.org and we will be happy to look after your dog during the show.

Access for All:

We are making access concession tickets, wheelchair spaces and seats reserved for Captioned, Audio Described, BSL and Relaxed performances available to book online. For full information about our access measures, please visit our Access for all page, on our website here:

www.youngvic.org/visit-us/access-for-all

Show Synopsis:

The play jumps across several different time periods over a century and various different geographical locations. In the historical cycles, the inaccuracies and cultural inauthenticity are purposeful and intentional, used to comment on the misrepresentation of Asian culture in Western narratives. The cycles build in pace and dramatic intensity each time.

A spotlight appears on the side of the stage, illuminating a black lectern. The narrator (Rochelle Rose) enters through a side door and stands at the podium, which is outside the circle of the 'performance space' where the actual play takes place.

The music swells as she declares the date of the first cycle of the play: 1906. She explains that this year coincides with the premiere of Madama Butterfly at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. The lights change and a musical scape begins which is 'exotic' and stereotypically Asian, which the narrator points out. The cherry blossoms, costume and dialogue suggest that the location is

Japan, although this is not specifically explained. An actor (Jeff D'Sangalang) enters the stage, dressed in vague peasant garments and carrying two water buckets on his back.

Kim (Mei Mac) enters dressed in an old-looking Kimono. The peasant on stage is delighted at the sight of Kim and offers her a lily flower from his basket. As Kim smells the flower, there is a very loud blast from a steamship. In the chaos and commotion, Kim falls over. At this point, Kim's mother Rosie (Lourdes Faberes) rushes onstage and drags Kim to her feet. Rosie tells Kim that the Americans have arrived and urges Kim to recognise the opportunity they have to escape their terrible situation for a brighter future in America. Although Kim is unsure about leaving, she obediently listens to her mother, who plans on using Kim's innocence and sex appeal to seduce an American soldier.

As Rosie re-arranges Kim's outfit and hair to make her look more presentable, Clark (Tom Weston-Jones) steps onto the stage. He is an American soldier and the central love interest in this story. Clark starts to speak as if addressing a group of peasants. He speaks confidently in random Japanese words that do not make any sense, while the intended meaning of his words is provided by the Narrator. Clark notices Kim in the crowd and is immediately drawn to her. Kim looks away shyly, not expecting the attention. Rosie catches on to this moment and immediately brings Kim forward to Clark, introducing them enthusiastically. While Kim and Clark are taken up with each other, Rosie manages to convince Clark to come over to their hut for dinner that evening. Clark kisses Kim's hand before leaving the stage, and Kim is completely enthralled by him. Rosie is overjoyed, picks up a Shamisen, and begins to play 'Proud Mary' by Tina Turner. The lights flash and move energetically.

Rosie finishes her song and dance and declares that Kim, through Clark, is their way out of their current life. Kim is less certain and wonders about all of her own dreams. She mentions that Goro, a fellow villager around her age who is a fishmonger, has offered to marry her. At this moment, Goro (Jeff D'Sangalang) scurries on and then off stage dressed in distressed peasant robes and carrying a basket of fish on his head. Rosie dismisses Kim's interest in Goro immediately, citing bigger plans for Kim if she leaves their village. Kim reluctantly agrees to go along with her mother's plan. Rosie tells Kim to take a bath to get ready, and Kim dashes obediently off stage to do as she has been instructed. Rosie, delighted with recent events, once again pulls out the Shamisen and plays another song, 'Celebration' by Kool and The Gang.

As Rosie sings, two dark-brown wooden trucks form a hexagon-shaped hut at the centre of the stage. Clark and Kim both arrive and settle into the hut. The light is low and the music is romantic. Rosie arrives and slyly officiates a surprise marriage ceremony between the pair. Clark asks about what is going on, but Rosie dismisses this and leaves, actually staying outside the hut to watch what happens. The couple flirt, with Clark being charmed by Kim's innocence and naivety and Kim saying very little. Eventually, things get more heated and the couple begin to kiss and remove their clothing. Rosie joyfully begins to sing 'Rhythm of the Night' by DeBarge while pulling down curtains which hang around the hut, obscuring the couple. There is a blackout and Rosie and Clark leave.

Lights come back up on Kim alone inside the hut. The narrator explains that it is 4 years later, and Rosie has now died. Kim hears a blast from a steamship, signifying Clark's return. She is overjoyed and runs off stage to prepare herself to greet her absent husband. While she is gone, Clark appears, now accompanied by his American wife, Evelyn (Jennifer Kirby). Evelyn is dressed in a glamorous period dress paired with a parasol and looks at her surroundings with disapproval. Kim runs on and Clark introduces Evelyn as his wife, to Kim's devastation. Evelyn is initially upset, but Clark reassures her and the two begin to kiss in front of Kim. Defeated, Kim trudges back to the hut and pulls out a doll dressed as a young boy from the woven basket inside. She holds him up and begs Clark and Evelyn to take her son away to America so he can have the life that she can't provide for him. Evelyn agrees and escorts the toy off-stage with her. Clark stays behind to console Kim who is weeping on the ground. He apologises, promises to look after their son and leaves. Kim pulls out Rosie's fish knife which is hidden in a secret pocket underneath the Futon. It is blunted. She manoeuvres the weapon, as described by the Narrator, awkwardly and clumsily, highlighting that she has never attempted this before. The lights and music are heightened and melodramatic. Kim slices her throat and dies. There is no blood or effect to evoke a sense of real-ness in this moment, it is instead overtly theatrical and performed. A blackout signals the end of this scene.

Almost immediately after the blackout, blue stage lights come up, signifying a scene change. This transitional state is paired with upbeat modern music, which creates a harsh juxtaposition to the traditional operatic sounds earlier. The actor who plays Kim immediately gets up and rushes off stage while four members of stage crew arrive on stage to rearrange the set and props to the

next formation. The two wooden trucks are split apart and parked on opposite sides of the stage, leaving a long parallel gap in between where the next scene will take place.

A similar story to the last cycle plays out, this time set on a stereotypical Polynesian island in 1949 to coincide with the Broadway premiere of the musical *South Pacific*. This cycle references the musical and its tropes closely, but follows the same basic plot points as the previous cycle: Kim meets the American Clark and is encouraged to seduce him, this time by her fiancé Afi, to enable them to escape their “primitive” island life. Kim and Clark are married and spend the night together, after which Clark leaves Kim alone and we skip to four years later. In this cycle, Kim is haunted by the ghost of the now-dead Afi whom she accidentally killed with spoiled food. Clark returns with his American wife Evelyn, and Kim is distraught. Kim asks the couple to take her son to America, and they agree and leave with the doll, she prepares to kill herself as before. However, this time right before she slices her throat, there is a “glitch” in the reality of the show, where the theatrical lighting and music disappear suddenly. Kim is momentarily confused by the knife in her hand, but quickly dismisses this and goes back to the scene. The music and lights resume, and Kim dramatically mimes killing herself, though there is no blood. The same scene change occurs and the light comes up on a new scene.

The third cycle is set in South Korea in the 1950s. Unlike the earlier cycles, this scene starts in the middle of the story, with Kim running on stage already holding her son. Kim seems to have a sense that something is seriously not right, appearing stressed and frantic in anticipation of what is coming next. By this point, the narrator is sitting in the audience, located in the front row, and speaks to the audience around her. Clark and Evelyn burst through from either side of the stage, surrounding Kim. Kim’s reaction to Clark is different in this cycle; she confronts him angrily for leaving her and points out that the Korean-sounding words he is saying are meaningless. The couple wrestles Kim’s son away from her, leaving Kim distraught. Clark leaves a prop gun on stage, and Kim matter-of-factly takes it and shoots herself, this time without any dramatic build-up from the lighting or music. There is no actual gunshot sound effect accompanying this or any of the following shootings. The same scene change occurs, with Kim running offstage to blue stage lights and upbeat contemporary music while the stage crew move the set.

The fourth cycle is even more frantic than the last, accompanied by intense flashing lights and dramatic music. The clothing suggests we are in Vietnam in 1975 when the musical *Miss Saigon* is set. Once again, Kim runs on holding the doll that is her son, now fully aware she is stuck in a cycle of stories. She tries to avoid her suicide by throwing the gun offstage. Clark and Evelyn once again appear and wrestle her son away from her. Clark stays onstage and he and Kim fight, ultimately sleeping together before Clark once again runs offstage. Defeated, Kim finds another gun hidden in her costume and dispassionately shoots herself. During the scene change that follows, Kim stays lying “dead” on the stage, causing some seeming confusion amongst the stage crew.

The stage lights come back on in flashing and nightmarish colours, and the music is loud and threatening. Kim revives from the position she last collapsed in still holding the gun she killed herself within the previous cycle, and is immediately alert and frantic, aware of the inevitable danger awaiting her. Evelyn runs across the stage with the doll, and Clark begins to chase Kim who is searching desperately for an exit. Corned by Clark, Kim looks down at her hands, realising for the first time that she is holding a gun. This time, she does not want to shoot herself, but Clark moves her hand to direct the gun at her abdomen. Kim frustratedly shoots herself and there is a blackout.

In the following montage of sequences, we see Kim kill herself again and again in increasingly gruesome ways. We see her slice her throat, shoot herself, jump off a fake bridge, and overdose on pills. When she slices her throat and shoots herself this time, there is fake blood, and she acts as if she is in real pain. These scenes are accompanied with intense flashing lights and loud abrasive music. At the end of this montage, there is a blackout followed by a scene change where everything including Kim’s body is removed from the stage and a modern-day fish counter is set up.

The next scene is set in the modern day in New York City. The lighting is warm and naturalistic. Goro, the fishmonger’s son from the first cycle, is on stage working at his fish counter in the seafood section of Natural Foods. He chats to the old woman helping him, Cio Cio San, about his passion for and expertise in all things seafood-related. He laments about a former lover, and the two sing and dance to ‘Let’s Get It On’ by Marvin Gaye. Eventually, they both leave the stage and the scene changes to an apartment on the Upper East Side. Kenny G’s music plays softly in the background.

Kim runs on, now dressed in a stylish Lululemon ensemble. She is out of breath and frantic, bolting around the space and examining the objects with suspicion. The other characters Evelyn, Rosie and Afi enter in fashionable modern clothing and laugh and chat, preparing for a dinner party to celebrate Evelyn and Afi's engagement. They recognise Kim but do not acknowledge the previous cycles, instead only saying that she should change for the party. Kim who clearly remembers the earlier events of the play struggles to figure out what is going on. The narrator is enticed by the food and, for the first time in the play, steps into the dinner party scene as the character "Brenda". Kim is startled and completely thrown by the Narrator's appearance, seemingly to dimly recognise her. Frustrated and confused, Kim begins to drink, and for the rest of the scene is followed by a pink spotlight to suggest her getting increasingly drunk.

While going to the kitchen to get more food, Rosie spots the empty lectern that has been abandoned by the narrator. She tentatively steps off stage, reaches for the mic, and suddenly acknowledges the presence of the audience. Rosie then delivers an extended monologue about her experience with and thoughts on Asian representation. She laments over what she thinks is the issue with 'kids' these days, and their need to find fault with everything. She speaks highly of stereotypical Western narratives like the ones we have seen in previous cycles where the Asian woman ends her life, claiming that they are stories about the nobility and selflessness of Asian women as mothers. She thinks that Kim has too much freedom and not enough struggle which has resulted in her series of problems and inability to fully function in her society.

Rosie's speech is interrupted by a loud buzzer and Clark's entrance. In this cycle, Clark and Kim are happily married, and Kim is torn between her confusion and her happiness about this. The group all sit down to dinner, but Kim grows increasingly uneasy, and finally bursts out in protest, referring to the tragic ending of the previous cycles. The rest of the room is startled and confused, and Rosie tells Kim to stop making a scene, which only causes her to grow more enraged. She climbs on the table and screams that she is not a lotus flower or an exotic innocent model minority, releasing pent-up frustration over the aggressions and racism she has endured.

Evelyn rises and tries to calm Kim down condescendingly. In a monologue of her own, she complains about trivial and privileged matters but likens these experiences to Kim's plight. She circles around to Kim, tells her that she is

accepted and asks Kim to let this go so they can celebrate her engagement. Kim seems to be convinced by Evelyn's efforts, but just as things are settling back into normality, she catches Evelyn and Clark sharing a flirtatious gesture and angrily confronts them about it. At first, Clark tries to deny anything is going on, but eventually, he explains that he and Evelyn did indeed have an affair, but that it has now come to an end. Exposed for cheating, Clark apologises desperately to Kim, who has a change of heart and is suddenly nonchalant about the revelations, as if having accepted the inevitability of the situation. The party continues awkwardly until Kim sees the bouquet of flowers Clark brought for Evelyn and is reminded of previous cycles. Kim once again bursts out angrily, saying she knows the other characters are planning to drive her to suicide. They all begin to argue and Kim runs offstage but re-emerges from another door into the same scene. She tries multiple means of escaping the scene, ultimately opening a door which releases an avalanche of 'exotic' Asian objects that have appeared in previous cycles. She pulls them out from the cupboard and throws them around the space as the other characters watch.

Clark tells Kim to calm down, and Kim rounds on him angrily for silencing her. As she speaks, she spots a gun on the floor which fell out of the cupboard. She picks it up and uses it to force the other characters to tell her how to escape. The narrator accidentally gives away the location of the exit, which is illuminated with a bright flash of light as Kim runs towards it. Clark and the other characters from the previous cycles stop her while the narrator watches impassively. One by one, Kim fights off or threatens the other characters until only Clark is left. Clark tries but fails to reason with Kim and walks off stage, defeated by her resolve. Only the Narrator and Kim are left on stage. Kim looks around, noticing for the first time that everyone else has disappeared. The Narrator starts packing up the food. As she does this, the lights shift completely, becoming much harsher and colder, and the facade of the entire dinner scene is exposed. The Kenny G music finally stops playing.

The narrator tells Kim that she needs to head back to her job, reassuring Kim that the scene will play out the way it always does and she will not remember. Kim insists that she does remember, and angrily asks how the narrator could allow for her son to be taken away and her to gruesomely die in each cycle. Kim once again begs to leave. The narrator replies that Kim has escaped, that this is as good as it gets, and it isn't so bad. Kim isn't satisfied and refuses to believe that this is all there is. Suddenly, there is a bright burst of light flashes

paired with the ominous sound of wind blowing. Kim asks the narrator about where the light leads, but the narrator says she doesn't know. Kim makes a choice and steps into the light, walking off stage. As she leaves, the lights begin to strobe, and there are loud whooshing and crashing sounds. The lighting and sound are very intense at this moment and may feel slightly disorienting for the audience.

The same scene change sequence from before occurs, but more chaotic and hectic than before. Kim is left lying on the ground in the middle of a more minimal staging of the Natural foods set than we've previously seen. Goro, dressed in the same outfit as when we'd last seen him, hovers over Kim with worry. Kim regains consciousness, confused by where she is and how she got there. The two talk and share a feeling of connection, dimly recognising each other from previous cycles. Goro leaves to get Kim a drink, and Cio-Cio San arrives back on stage. She and Kim greet each other and there is a moment of quiet recognition. Suddenly, the lectern lights up again, and this time Kim sees it. She approaches, contemplating taking the mic but stops just short of grabbing it. Instead, she speaks without the mic and begins to narrate the play for the first time. She circles Cio-Cio in the centre of the stage, describing her bright joyful smile and her movements which, while seemingly meaningless, have meaning to Kim.

She explains:

"Every day we must begin anew.

This is what it is to be alive."

Kim turns around, looks at the audience directly for the first time, takes them in and declares:

"End of Motherfucking Play".

BLACKOUT.

'Ooh Child' plays as the actors return to the stage for the curtain call.

More information will be available closer to the time of performance.

**If you would like any further clarification or have any questions, please do
get in touch with our Box Office team.**

Email: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: 020 7922 2922

See you soon!

Welcome Team