

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR *SUMO*

**Co-Produced with Ma-Yi Theater Company,  
World-Premiere Play to Begin Performances September 26**

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces the cast and creative team for its world-premiere production of *SUMO*, by **Lisa Sanaye Dring**, directed by **Ralph B. Peña**, in a co-production with **Ma-Yi Theater Company**. Developed during the Playhouse's 2021 DNA New Work Series, the show will run in the Mandell Weiss Forum **September 26 – October 22** (press opening: October 1). For tickets and information, please visit [lajollaplayhouse.org](http://lajollaplayhouse.org).

The cast features **Kris Bona** as “Kannushi 1,” **Michael Hisamoto** as “Kannushi 2,” **Earl T. Kim** as “Shinta,” **Ryan Nbreja** as “Tate Gyoji,” **David Shih** as “Mitsuo,” **Miller Tai** as “Fumio,” **Scott Keiji Takeda** as “Akio,” **Adam Tran** as “Ren,” **Viet Vo** as “So,” and **Shih-wei Wu** as “Taiko Drummer.”

The creative team includes: **Wilson Chin**, Scenic Designer; **Mariko Ohigashi**, Costume Designer; **Paul Whitaker**, Lighting Designer; **Fabian Obispo**, Sound Designer; **Hana Kim**, Projection Designer; **Albert “Albee” Alvarado**, Wig Designer; **Shih-wei Wu**, Composer; **Chelsea Pace**, Intimacy Staging and Fight Director; **James Yaegashi**, Cultural and Martial Arts Consultant; **Alice Tuan**, Dramaturg; **tbd casting co.**; **Stephanie Yankwitt**, **CSA/Jacole Kitchen**, Casting; **Marie Jahelka**, Stage Manager; **Kira Vine**, Assistant Stage Manager.

“It is always incredibly gratifying to mount a full production of a piece from our DNA New Work Series, where *SUMO* riveted audiences in 2021,” said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. “Lisa Sanaye Dring brings her unique perspective and fresh voice to the Playhouse in a new work that mixes ancient ritual with the guttural ferocity of competition in the fascinating world of Sumo wrestling.”

Entrenched in an elite sumo training facility in Tokyo, six men practice, eat, love, play and ultimately fight. Akio arrives as an angry, ambitious 18-year-old with a lot to learn. Expecting validation, dominance and fame, and desperate to move up the ranks, he slams headlong into his fellow wrestlers, especially Mitsuo, the highest-ranked fighter. With sponsorship money at stake, their bodies on the line, and their futures at risk, the wrestlers struggle to carve themselves – and one another – into the men they dream of being. Written by Lisa Sanaye Dring and directed by Ma-Yi Theater Artistic Director Ralph B. Peña, *SUMO* was a hit as part of the Playhouse's 2021 DNA New Work Series.

**Lisa Sanaye Dring** was honored as a recipient of the 2020/21 PLAY LA Stage Raw/Humanitas Prize. *The Wicked One* was a finalist for the Relentless Award, a finalist for the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, a finalist for the Seven Devils Playwrights Conference and a semi-finalist for the O'Neill Playwrights Conference. *Kaidan Project: Walls Grow Thin*, a play she co-wrote with Chelsea Sutton, was nominated for eight Ovation Awards including Best Production. She is writing *Kaidan Project: Alone*, an augmented reality experience, with the same team, which will be coming this fall. Lisa's work has been developed/produced by The New Group, Actors Theatre of Louisville, East West Players, Circle X, Playwrights' Arena, Rogue Artists Ensemble, The Motor Company, Theatre of NOTE and with the DCA's Reimagine Public Art Series. She recently served as the head writer on *Welcome to the Blumhouse Live*, an interactive film event for Blumhouse/Amazon Prime by Little Cinema. Lisa was a member of East West Players' Playwrights Group and is a MacDowell and Yaddo Fellow.

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## FACT SHEET

- WHAT:** ***SUMO***  
By Lisa Sanaye Dring  
Directed by Ralph B. Peña  
Co-Production with Ma-Yi Theater Company
- WHEN:** **September 26 – October 22** (Press Opening: October 1 at 7pm)  
Tue/Wed at 7:30pm; Thu/Fri/Sat at 8pm; Sun at 7pm; Sat/Sun at 2pm
- WHERE:** **Mandell Weiss Forum, La Jolla Playhouse**  
2910 La Jolla Village Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037
- WHO:** Scenic Designer: Wilson Chin  
Costume Designer: Mariko Ohigashi  
Lighting Designer: Paul Whitaker  
Sound Designer: Fabian Obispo  
Projection Designer: Hana Kim  
Wig Designer: Albert “Albee” Alvarado  
Composer: Shih-wei Wu  
Intimacy Staging and Fight Director: Chelsea Pace  
Cultural and Martial Arts Consultant: James Yaegashi  
Dramaturg: Alice Tuan  
Casting: tbd casting co.; Stephanie Yankwitt, CSA/Jacole Kitchen  
Stage Manager: Marie Jahelka  
Assistant Stage Manager; Kira Vine
- Cast:**
- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Kannushi 1</i>    | Kris Bona          |
| <i>Kannushi 2</i>    | Michael Hisamoto   |
| <i>Shinta</i>        | Earl T. Kim        |
| <i>Tate Gyoji</i>    | Ryan Nebreja       |
| <i>Mitsuo</i>        | David Shih         |
| <i>Fumio</i>         | Miller Tai         |
| <i>Akio</i>          | Scott Keiji Takeda |
| <i>Ren</i>           | Adam Tran          |
| <i>So</i>            | Viet Vo            |
| <i>Taiko Drummer</i> | Shih-wei Wu        |

**BACKGROUND:** Entrenched in an elite sumo training facility in Tokyo, six men practice, eat, love, play and ultimately fight. Akio arrives as an angry, ambitious 18-year-old with a lot to learn. Expecting validation, dominance and fame, and desperate to move up the ranks, he slams headlong into his fellow wrestlers, especially Mitsuo, the highest-ranked fighter. With sponsorship money at stake, their bodies on the line, and their futures at risk, the wrestlers struggle to carve themselves – and one another – into the men they dream of being. Written by Lisa Sanaye Dring and directed by Ma-Yi Theater Artistic Director Ralph B. Peña, *SUMO* was a hit as part of the Playhouse’s 2021 DNA New Work Series.

**TICKETS:** [lajollaplayhouse.org](http://lajollaplayhouse.org); (858) 550-1010

**SPONSORS:** Silvija and Brian Devin, Playhouse Partners  
Recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award

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