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West Coast Premiere Shadow Play illuminates the indigenous Aynu culture of Northern Japan

A unique international collaboration by ShadowLight Productions
in partnership with Fort Mason Center Presents
at the Southside Theater, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, January 15 – 19, 2014

November 21, 2013. The Great Story ("*Poro Oyna*") of ancient Northern Japan meets the power of Shadows.

ShadowLight Productions, in partnership with Fort Mason Center Presents, proudly announces the West Coast premiere of **PORO OYNA: The Myth of the Aynu**, a collaborative undertaking featuring master musicians representing the indigenous Aynu community of Hokkaido, Japan. The Aynu are a people who are little known in the west. The project will provide the Bay Area audience with a rare opportunity to experience the mystery and power of this ancient culture through the prism of modern shadow theatre. **PORO OYNA** will be presented at the Southside Theater, Fort Mason Center in San Francisco, January 15 – 19, 2014.

Poro Oyna, "the Great Story," is an Aynu creation myth that evolves around the legend of Aynu Rakkur, who is a god who "looks and smells like a human." He is considered to be the progenitor of human beings ("aynu") and most powerful of all gods in the Aynu mythological world.

PORO OYNA: The Myth of the Aynu tells an episode from this legend where Aynu Rakkur rescues the Sun Goddess from the evil Monster, restoring the order in the land of humans. The story is adapted by **Tetsuro Koyano**, a multidisciplinary performer/shadow artist in Tokyo, and **OKI**, an Aynu culture bearer and musician specializing in the traditional string instrument *tonkori*. **OKI** also served as Art Director and created the original soundtrack interweaving modern renditions of traditional Aynu songs. **PORO OYNA** is directed by shadow master **Larry Reed** whose hallmark shadow casting method combines the Balinese Traditional shadow theatre aesthetic, the scale of film, and the immediacy of live performance. Performed using a cinema size screen, **PORO OYNA** will utilize silhouettes of puppets, masked-actors, and cutout sets. The play will also feature shadow design by **Kawamura Koheisai** and live performances by **OKI** and **Marewrew**, a 4-woman chorus group specializing traditional Aynu songs, and **Urotsutenoyako Bayangans**, a shadow theatre company based in Tokyo. **PORO OYNA** will be performed in Japanese and Aynu with English narration.

The Aynu (also spelled as "Ainu") are indigenous people of Northern Japan and Russia, whose culture dates back to 1,200 BC. They were a society of hunter-gatherers and had profound insights into local lands, plants, animals, and ecosystems, which were encoded in their language, rituals and beliefs. After centuries of oppression, displacement, discrimination, and systematic assimilation, the Aynu were officially recognized as "indigenous to Japan" by the Japanese Diet in 2008; however, their history, language and cultural heritage are still largely unknown to the rest of Japan and the world. Ainu language, which has no written form and less than 15 native speakers alive, has been designated as a critically endangered language by UNESCO.

Larry Reed (Director/Shadow Master) is the artistic director/founder of ShadowLight Productions and is a trailblazer in the contemporary shadow theatre field. He is also one of the first Westerners to have trained in traditional Balinese shadow theatre (*wayang kulit*). Reed has collaborated with numerous artists and organizations from various disciplines and cultural background including: Octavio Solis (*7 Visions and Ghosts of the River*), Lee Breuer (*Peter and Wendy*); Puppet & Its Double of Taiwan (*Monkey King at Spider Cave*); and Karen Kandel (*The Good-for-Nothing Lover*) among others.

OKI (Story Adaptation, Original Soundtrack, Art Direction, Live Music) is an Asankara (Asahikawa, Hokkaido) Aynu musician who specializes in the indigenous Karafuto (Sakhalin) Aynu string instrument, tonkori. He is a pioneer in the contemporary Japanese music scene, producing distinctive and innovative original music using tonkori while leading the effort to preserve and promote the Ainu music traditions. OKI has toured alone and with his DUB AINU BAND extensively in Asia, Europe and the United States. OKI and DUB AINU BAND were presented in The Kennedy Center's Japan! Culture + Hyper Culture Festival in 2008.

Koyano Tetsuro (Story Adaptation, Lead Performer) is a traditional Balinese mask dancer (Topeng) and founder/Artistic Director of Urotsutenoyako Bayangans. He is also an active member of Teatre Cahaya, a group formed with top Southeast Asian artists; has participated in the Kyogen master NOMURA Mannojo's "Mask Road Project"; and made guest appearances in the works by the internationally acclaimed performing arts company, Pappa Tarahumara. Koyano received high recognition from the Consulate General of Indonesia in Japan in 2005 for his services to the Balinese performing arts community. He is also a recipient of Asian Cultural Council fellowship in 2006.

MAREWREW (Live Music/Ensemble) is an all female singing group dedicated to reviving, promoting and preserving the traditional Ainu musical form of "upopo." Slightly similar to Western canons, an upopo song traditionally consists of various rhythmic patterns sung by 3-4 female singers at different timing, creating an organic, trance-like experience for the listeners. In 2010, Marewrew released a self-titled debut album produced by OKI. Their 2nd album, "Motto ite, Hissori ne," was released in August 2012. "Marewrew" means "butterflies" in Aynu.

PORO OYNA: The Myth of the Aynu begins with a preview performance on January 15, opens on January 16 and runs through January 19 at the Southside Theater, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. Community events such as panel discussions, student matinees, artist Q&A's and other special events will be scheduled during the one-week run.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.shadowlightaynuproject.org>

The West Coast premiere performances of **PORO OYNA: THE MYTH OF THE ANYU** are made possible by the funds from: National Endowment for the Arts; The Japan Foundation through the Performing Arts Japan program; and The MAP Fund, a program of Creative Capital supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and Fort Mason Center.

The 3-year development phase of **PORO OYNA** was made possible by funds from: The Saison Foundation; The Asahi Beer Arts Foundation; Asian Cultural Council; The Japan Foundation through the Performing Arts Japan program; and The MAP Fund, a program of Creative Capital supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

PORO OYNA's San Francisco run is produced by ShadowLight Productions in partnership with Fort Mason Center Presents.

ShadowLight Productions is one of the very few professional shadow theatre companies in the world honoring ancient shadow theatre traditions while innovating through the use of contemporary technologies and interdisciplinary approaches. Founded in 1972 by Larry Reed, the company's mission is to expose the general public to shadow theatre in a wide range of forms including, but not limited to, live performances, film, and other media. Its activities range from traditional shadow theatre performances and creation of new works to documentary films on various shadow theatre traditions and arts-in-education programs. With each project, we aspire to create work as a tool for cultural diplomacy.

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FACT SHEET
PORO OYNA: THE MYTH OF THE AYNU

<http://www.shadowlightaynuproject.org/>

- WHAT:** **PORO OYNA: THE MYTH OF THE AYNU**
The West Coast Premiere of a new shadow play illuminating the indigenous Aynu culture of Northern Japan
- WHO:** Adapted by **OKI** and **Koyano Tetsuro**
Directed by **Larry Reed**
Original Soundtrack by **OKI**
Art Direction by **OKI**
Shadow Design by **Kawamura Koheisai**
Live music by **OKI** and **Marewrew**
Shadowcasting by **Urotsutenoyako Bayangans** (Kawamura Koheisai, Uehara Aki, Watanabe Takashi)
- WHERE:** **Southside Theater**
Fort Mason Center, Building D
2 Marina Boulevard (at Buchanan Street)
San Francisco, CA
- WHEN:** **January 15 – 19, 2014**
- ❖ Wednesday January 15 at 7:30 PM (Preview)
 - ❖ Thursday, January 16 at 7:30PM (Opening)
 - ❖ Friday, January 17 at 8:00PM
 - ❖ Saturday, January 18 at 2:00PM and 8:00PM
 - ❖ Sunday, January 19 at 2:00PM
- Special Events**
- ❖ Thur, Jan 16 at 10:30AM: Matinee for the SF public school students
 - ❖ Thur, Jan 16: Pre-show blessing ceremony by the Karuk tribe of Northern CA
 - ❖ Fri, Jan 17 at 7PM: Pre-show panel discussion (subject & participants TBA)
 - ❖ Sat, Jan 18: “sing-off” between the Karuk and Aynu singers after each show
 - ❖ Sun, Jan 19: Family Day. During the Fort Mason Farmers’ Market (exact time and content TBA)
- TICKETS:** **\$15 – 35. Begin Sales on Monday, December 9, 2013**
Tickets and Info: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/520698>
- ❖ Senior, Student and Group (10 & more) discount available.
 - ❖ Show appropriate for ages 8 and up.
 - ❖ Discount available for children under the age of 18.
- WEBSITE:** <http://www.shadowlightaynuproject.org/>
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