

# HOMEcomings: A NEW MUSICAL

Music and Lyrics by Serena Saotome Feniger | Book by Sam Ahn  
TDPS Thesis in Musical Theater Composition | Spring 2025

## Who?

Producer(s): Serena Saotome Feniger, Sam Ahn  
Music and Lyrics: Serena Saotome Feniger  
Bookwriter: Sam Ahn  
Director: Serena Feniger  
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## What?

Junko, now a successful banker at age 55 with a husband and three kids, seemingly has achieved the American Dream. But after the death of her father, Junko and her family fly from the States to her native Japan for the funeral. The trip takes an unexpected turn when Masako, Junko's mother, demands that she move back — permanently.

This Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies (TDPS) Thesis in Musical Theater Composition will be presented as a **staged reading**. It will explore the nuances of Asian and mixed Asian heritage, what it means to call a place home, and how musical theater can be used as an art form to further Asian representation and highlight cultural experiences.

## When?

Date of First Rehearsal: January 13, 2025

Current Tech Week Dates: April 6-8

Performance Dates:

April 9 @ 8 pm

April 10 @ 8 pm

April 11 @ 8 PM

April 12\* Matinee @ TIME TBD

\*potential to add 8 pm show, if it does not conflict with actors observing Passover

Overall Dates (First Rehearsal to Last Performance): January 13-April 12, 2025

## Time Commitment

Weekly Estimated Time Commitments (in Hours): On average 3-7 hours a week, increasing to 6-8 hours in the month leading up to tech.

This is a new work in development — we don't expect a full production, but we aim for a staged concert. As a result, hours may vary depending on the week.

## Content Warnings

Content warnings include discussion of death, presentation of a funeral service and cremation, discussions of race and racial passing, and mention of an anti-Asian hate crime.

## Audition Submission Requirements

VIDEO AUDITIONS ONLY! All auditionees should submit ONE 1-2 minute cut of a contemporary musical theater song and ONE side from the sides below (does not need to be memorized). Please submit both videos through our [Audition Form](#). \*In person CALLBACKS as needed on 11/9\*

## Character Breakdown

*All roles will sing.*

*\*Characters that identify as mixed race white and Asian (Wasian) does not mean that the actor has to strictly identify as a mixed race Asian.*

JUNKO SUZUKI – Female, 55, Asian. Mezzo-soprano. A workaholic Vice President trying to stay afloat in her sinking investment bank. Raised in Japan. University educated in the United States. Mother of three and wife to Adam.

MASAKO SUZUKI – Female, 76, Asian. Mezzo-soprano. Junko's newly widowed mother. A homemaker resentful of how long Junko has been away.

ADAM – Male, 58, White. Baritone/Tenor. Junko's husband who wanted to be a writer but works in publishing. Met Junko in college at UCLA, where he was a member of Theta Xi.

ELI\* – Male, 20, Wasian. Baritone/Tenor. Junko and Adam's first child and eldest son. Spring Rush Coordinator of Theta Xi at UCLA, Junko and Adam's Alma mater. Hiding his breakup with his girlfriend from his family.

KATIE\* – Female, 19, Wasian. Soprano with a high mix. Junko and Adam's second child. Middle child and oldest daughter. Student at University of Oregon. Insecure about her Asian identity, specifically how white-passing she is.

AYAME\* – Female, 13, Wasian. Soprano with a high mix/belt. Junko and Adam's youngest child and second daughter. Has discovered a newfound affinity for Buddhism.

BUDDHIST PRIEST – Male, 57, Asian. Baritone. Oversees the Buddhist rites of the funeral. A source of counsel for Junko in the second act.

### **Sample of Musical**

Here is a sample from the Opening Number of *Homecoming*: [Touchdown](#).

## SIDES

### JUNKO

Otōsan grew rice on a hectare of land  
I never understood why he did it all himself  
Plowing the fields and leveling the land  
Every day, he'd come inside and I'd massage his limbs  
And I'd ask him, everyday, even when I had heard it a million times,  
I'd ask him, Otōsan, why do you grow rice?  
And he'd say  
Ichiryūmanbai!  
Like Christ fed the five thousand  
One grain turns into ten thousand  
That's what he'd always say  
And I loved hearing it  
But we were poor  
And the summer I was 15 the pests invaded the fields  
So Otōsan flooded the fields until the pests had gone  
But the water choked the rice  
And there was no crop, no yield, no money  
When I left Japan  
I made a promise to myself  
That I had been blessed with opportunity  
To go to America  
Full scholarship  
And that I wouldn't waste it  
And through so many nights  
Of solitude and pain  
110 hour workweeks  
I reminded myself of the gift I had been given  
The first time I returned to Japan was five years later  
To present my parents with my first paycheck  
To pay for a dinner that cost more than five harvests  
I turned to Otōsan and said  
Do you remember how you always used to say  
Ichiryūmanbai  
Otōsan, you planted a seed in me  
That has sprouted and grown  
You did everything for me  
Now I'll handle the rest  
But he sat there  
In silence  
Then left the room  
without a word.

## **MASAKO**

32 years ago, my daughter left for America  
Promising that she'd come back  
Having made something of herself  
And take care of her parents  
Instead she stayed there and all that came of hers was her money.  
She married a white man who calls me mAsAkO  
Even a daughter who doesn't look Japanese  
Spent any visit here working  
Never so much as to look in our direction.  
Father for 50 years but no daughter beside him at his deathbed  
Where was she?  
Across the ocean  
Not answering her phone for hours  
He died when he realized that she was never going to answer the phone  
All he wanted to tell her was it's time to come home  
And so I did everything!  
In 24 hours!  
Funeral arrangements  
Funeral suit  
Funeral flowers  
And by the end of it  
When all I wanted was to grieve my husband  
I decided  
Fine  
There's no man of the house now  
To call the shots  
So now I will.  
Junko, my daughter  
It's time to come home  
Move your family  
You've made your fortune  
You've had your fun  
Now it's time to be the daughter you promised to be  
Or will you also be gone when it's my time to go?

## **ADAM**

She fixed me, I guess you can say

Ha ha ha ha!

Before I met Junko, I didn't really know what I liked

Everything was... fine

Partying was fine

Hanging out with the guys at my frat was fine

Even dating around was fine

They were nice, pretty girls

It was all fine

But then I met Junko

She actually was mad at me when she first met me

Said I had taken her book

We were in a seminar together about American literature

"That's my copy!"

And I just stood there, dumbstruck

"Why is this girl so angry?"

And she said,

"That's my book! You took my copy by mistake! This is yours."

And handed me my copy and I took the book in my backpack and gave it to her without another word

I said, "What's your name?"

And she said "Junko"

And I said, "My name is Adam. It's nice to meet you"

And she said, "Well, Adam, you should be more mindful next time of your belongings"

And left without saying another word

That night, I couldn't stop thinking about it

"Why was she so angry?"

For the first time, something wasn't fine

It was actually upsetting

Upsetting in a way because I couldn't tell why this girl was so stressed

Over a book

A dumb, stupid book

I wanted for some reason to hold her in my arms

Until her breathing slowed and

Until everything was fine for her

**KATIE**

(on the phone with her boyfriend)

Hey how's it going

Ohp is it working?

Ugh Facetime.

Ohp, ohp, ohp! Okay, I think it's working now.

I miss you too.

Yup it's a little chilly in here.

Yeah, yeah, I'm okay.

...

I guess I'm not.

The weirdest thing is that

I feel like I'm the only one who's sad.

Eli's being an asshole.

He won't shut up about stupid Theta Xi.

You'd think a 14 hour flight and a 13 hour time difference would shut him up

But noooooo

As though his stupid frat is the thing that matters right now

And my mom is just silent throughout all this

I asked her, "Is she ok"

And she responded, 'I'm missing work'

Like WHAT?!

Are you serious right now?

Your father just died of a heart attack and you're thinking about work?

And I wanted to scream at her

But I can't

Because her dad just died.

Anyway

How are you?

Oh my God it's so late there

Thanks for staying up for me

Yeah you should go to bed

No no no I'm fine, I should be with my family anyway

Hope I don't kill Eli

Or my dad

Or everybody

Haha!

...

Okay

I love you

Bye

## **ELI**

I care so much about Theta Xi because they need me!  
Somebody has to do it!  
Somebody has to clean the house after the party  
Somebody has to rangle the kids  
And yes, somebody has to carry on the traditions of rush  
And initiate them into a brotherhood!  
Yes, a brotherhood!  
And I don't want to hear anymore of your fucking scoffing  
These are my friends!  
These are my people who have shared their life stories with me and I've shared mine with them  
They're the ones who will always pick up the phone  
And when things get tough, they won't fucking judge me  
They're not gonna be like, "Oh my God, Eli, why didn't you do this, why don't you do that"  
It's not so fucking COMPLICATED with them  
They don't fucking pry, they don't probe  
They just listen and then you have a drink and you smoke a joint  
And you just fucking exist together and that's FINE  
That's what I WANT  
Instead of all of you fucking judging me and getting on my ass all the time  
Do this, do that  
JESUS  
Why does everyone EXPECT something from me  
This was the same bullshit that Jenny was always pulling  
"I need you to express your emotions"  
Why do I NEED to do anything?!  
What emotions do I need to express?!  
It's all FINE, it's all ALRIGHT  
And it's not like any of you actually care  
No one asked me  
No one asked me, "How are you and Jenny doing"  
And if no one asks me that  
Then of course I'm not gonna just say out of nowhere  
We broke up  
Actually, she dumped me  
So yeah  
We're done  
Right before we flew out here  
She dumped me



## **AYAME**

I don't think it's stupid

I don't think it's stupid at all

You're the stupid one

**YOU'RE ALL THE STUPID ONES**

Everyone's so... mad!

Everyone's so mad at each other and we don't even share it

We just pretend like we're this happy family

But something's clearly wrong

And it's because when we ask each other how we're doing

We're always saying fine

And then we don't ask "Really?!"

We just accept it even though we know something's clearly not fine

That's so **FRUSTRATING**

And I'm I'M not fine.

Mom, you don't spend any time at home

Dad, you don't care

And Eli and Katie, you can't go 10 seconds without fighting about something that **DOESN'T**

**MATTER**

**NONE OF THIS MATTERS**

**OKAY?!**

And all of it matters!

Gah! I don't know!

At least Buddhism is saying something!

At least there's a point to it!

The point is there is no point!

And that's what you all have taught me

## **BUDDHIST PRIEST**

Yes, I'm married.

It's quite common in Japan actually.

I believe it is something like 90%.

It was strategic: we needed sons to pass our temples onto.

It's hard, isn't it? Marriage. Parenting.

Even for Buddhist priests, it's hard.

They do something for the hundredth time even when you've asked them not to.

They hurt your feelings.

They don't see you.

When that happens, I can feel the anger inside of me

But instead of seek to contain that anger

I let it go

And when I feel joy

I let that go, too

Human suffering stems from the dichotomies we create

From the distinction between good and bad

Right and wrong

Why is a bad feeling wrong? Why is a good feeling right?

Why is a good feeling wrong and a bad feeling right?

The answer is not to choose

But to let go of feeling itself.

Sometimes, though, there are times when it is too much

Even for me

For someone who has devoted his life to Buddhist thought and practice

During those times

I think of the mantra

This, too, shall pass.

When the flood comes

When you lose a loved one

When you feel most alone

Just remember

This, too, shall pass