

MARJORIE CHAN - Full biography

Marjorie is a multi-disciplinary theatre artist working as playwright, librettist, director and dramaturge. A nine-time nominee, Marjorie is the recipient of four Toronto Dora Awards, (one for Outstanding Performance and three for Outstanding New Opera). In 2005, she was named the K.M. Hunter Theatre Artist, an Ontario-wide award for mid-career artists. In 2017, she was awarded the George Luscombe Mentorship in Theatre Award from Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts. In 2020, she was awarded the Bra 'D'Or, from the Playwrights Guild of Canada, for outstanding support of female artists. Marjorie was previously Artist-in-Residence at Banff Playwrights' Lab, Cahoots Theatre, Factory Theatre, Theatre Direct Canada, Tapestry New Opera, SUNY (Geneseo, New York), and Theatre du Pif (Hong Kong).

As a playwright and librettist, Marjorie's works have been performed in the USA, Scotland, Hong Kong, and Russia as well as having their premieres in Canada. Marjorie is most well-known for her dramas focusing on Chinese history. Her first play, *China Doll* explored the seeds of feminism in China, with the metaphor of the bound foot. *China Doll* was nominated for Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Production as well as the Governor General's Literary Award. *China Doll* was also performed overseas as a part of Festival Canada Hong Kong as well as receiving its Cantonese language debut in spring 2017 in Hong Kong. Her second full-length play, a nanking winter focused on the 1937 invasion of Nanjing, delving into contemporary and historical ramifications. It received its American premiere in December 2009. Her play, *The Madness of the Square*, set during the heady days leading up to the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 premiered in Toronto in April 2009, and was excerpted for the 20th Anniversary Memorial in Nathan Philips Square. For Common Boots Theatre, Marjorie wrote *Tails From the City*, a site-specific winter promenade show set in and around the Evergreen Brickworks in December 2015. Her most recent full length play was *Lady Sunrise*, a reinvention of Cao Yu's modern classic, which premiered at the Factory Theatre in February 2020. Other projects in development include *The Year of the Cello*, with composer Njo Kong Kie, and a new play *Chinoiserie*. Some of her work is available from Playwrights Canada Press and Scirocco Drama.

As a librettist working with composer Abigail Richardson, Marjorie wrote *Mother Everest* (Opera To Go, Tapestry), about an ambitious mountain climber, as well as *Sanctuary Song* (Tapestry/Theatre Direct/Luminato), a new opera for families centered around a captive elephant named Sydney. Marjorie and Abigail were awarded a Dora for Outstanding New Opera in 2009 for *Sanctuary Song*. It was remounted by Theatre Direct with performances in Toronto and at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Marjorie collaborated with composer Alice Ping Yee Ho on *The Lesson of Da Ji*, (Toronto Masque Theatre) based on the notorious historical concubine Da Ji from the Shang Dynasty. It was awarded the 2013 Dora for Outstanding New Opera. In May 2015, Marjorie's opera with Edinburgh-based composer John Harris, *M'dea Undone*, a new contemporary adaptation of *Medea*, premiered in the stunning rustic setting of the clay ovens at the Evergreen Brickworks. Her most recent operatic collaboration is *The Monkiest King*, with composer Alice Ping Yee, which premiered in May 2018, for the Canadian Children's Opera Company's 50th anniversary. It was nominated for the Outstanding New Opera Award at the Doras. She is currently collaborating with composer Serouj Krandijian on a new opera, *The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs*, premiering in 2023. Her other short operatic collaborations have been with composers Ivan Barbotin, Wende Bartley, Stephen Andrew Taylor, and Gareth Williams.

Open to diverse and interesting forms, Marjorie's writing has also supported experimental contexts, docu-theatre, dance pieces, interactives, site specific works, sound theatre, radio drama, concerts, cabarets and 'cell phone' plays. Invitations to festivals and retreats include: Playwrights' Lab (Banff Centre), Cahoots Playwriting Retreat (Cahoots/Shaw Festival), CrossCurrents Festival (Factory), Groundswell Festival (Nightwood Theatre), International Festival of Authors (Harbourfront), Dim Sum Festival (fu-Gen Theatre/Harbourfront), Rhubarb Festival (Buddies in Bad Times), Seedling Festival (Theatre Direct Canada), Hysteria Festival (Buddies in Bad Times), RED Festival, Lab Cab Festival, and the inaugural Stratford Festival Writers' Retreat.

Trained at George Brown Theatre School as a performer, Marjorie was awarded the John Bannerman Bursary for outstanding performance upon graduation. In her first production outside of school, Marjorie garnered a nomination for the Dora Mavor Prize (Outstanding Performance in a Professional Debut.) She then proceeded to perform across the country from New Brunswick to British Columbia with numerous award-winning companies, including Nightwood Theatre, Cahoots Theatre Company, Theatre Passe Muraille, Factory Theatre, Vancouver Playhouse, Persephone Theatre, Carousel Players, Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, Shakespeare-in-the Rough, Canadian Stage, Factory Theatre, Grand Theatre, Actors' Repertory Company and da da kamera. As well, Marjorie has had an active career in film, television and voice.

As a director for Theatre du Pif in Hong Kong, Marjorie has directed bilingual versions (English/Cantonese) of Knives and Hens and A Doll's House. For opera, Marjorie has assisted Ross Manson for the unique promenade piece, A Synonym For Love, and Maria Lamont for Maria Stuarda at Pacific Opera Victoria. For Cahoots Theatre, she has directed John & Waleed by John Millard & Waleed Abdulhamid, Ultrasound by Adam Pottle, The Enchanted Loom by Suvendrini Lena and I Call myself Princess by Jani Lauzon. She was nominated for the John Hirsch Prize for directors in 2017. Most recently, she directed China Doll at Gateway Theatre, the workshop production of Wall with Door by Katie Ready-Walters (TPM) as well as the digital production of John & Waleed by John Millard & Waleed Abdulhamid (TPM).

In addition to her writing, Marjorie is currently the Artistic Director of Theatre Passe Muraille since July 2019. She was previously the Artistic Director of Cahoots Theatre from 2013 - 2019, after previously serving as the Associate Artistic Director from 2006 - 2010. She is a passionate and outspoken advocate for arts access and education. For Cahoots, Marjorie created Crossing Gibraltar, a theatre-training and performance program for refugees and newcomers, with comprehensive programs bringing arts outreach to over 100 newcomers primarily in under-served neighbourhoods. For this work, Marjorie was nominated for the Canadian Citizen Award in 2010. Marjorie also teaches playwriting workshops in community and school settings from the elementary to the university level.

Born in Tkaronto (the original Mohawk name for Toronto) to parents who emigrated from Hong Kong, Marjorie is grateful to work in Treaty 13 territory which has been home to many nations and caretakers, including the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, and the Anishnabek including the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit, the current caretakers. As well, she acknowledges the many names of caretakers that were lost, erased, or never recorded due to the colonial history of Canada.