

A DREAM IN HANOI

BACKGROUND & ARTISTS

Central Dramatic Company of Vietnam (Nha Hat Kich Viet Nam).

Established in 1952, the company is dedicated to developing a national identity and an aesthetic for modern Vietnamese drama. Founded by the distinguished poet The Lu and playwright Nguyen Xuan Khoa, the company initially performed drama, dance and song in the popular *cheo* tradition. In the mid-1950's it concentrated on serious dramatic works that combined elements from the traditional Vietnamese *tuong* style with the modern influences of Stanislavski, Brecht and Artaud. The theater supported the nationalist side in the war with France in the 1950s. In 1955, over 200 actors and thousands of audience members joined for a production of *The Victory of Dien Bien Phu*. In the following decade, the Central Dramatic Company thrived, giving more than 100 performances a year throughout the country. During the war with the United States, (from 1965 to 1975) the company staged plays for North Vietnamese troops on improvised stages on battlefields throughout the country. In the 1990s as the Vietnamese government gradually encouraged ties with the West, the company has mounted many new Vietnamese plays, as well as productions of Moliere's *The Miser* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. It has also participated in several international theater festivals. In 1998, the company toured the West Coast of the United States under the auspices of the Vietnam America Theater Exchange. Performances were given at California State Universities at Fullerton and Los Angeles, Oregon state universities at Ashland, Eugene and Portland, and the University of Washington.

The Vietnam America Theater Exchange

The bilingual, bicultural production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that is the subject of A DREAM IN HANOI was created under the auspices of the Vietnam America Theater Exchange (VATE). VATE is the first reciprocal theater exchange project between Vietnam and the United States. Founded in 1998 by American scholar and educator Lorelle Browning, VATE builds on the recent normalization of diplomatic relations between the two nations by helping to expand U.S.-Vietnamese educational and artistic contact. In describing the mission of VATE, Browning writes: "... we believe that art, and especially theater, is our most universal language – one that is absolutely essential to human communication. Since theater's essence is profoundly collaborative, it requires us, as artists, educators and audiences, to discover and negotiate a common bond, a place where we fully experience our human connections and accept and transcend our differences."

In September 1998, with funding from the Ford Foundation, VATE organized and sponsored a six-week tour of Vietnam's Central Dramatic Company in the United States. On the tour, Vietnamese artists performed Luu Quang Vu's *Truong Ba's Soul in the Butcher's Skin* at colleges and universities on the West Coast and presented workshops on classic Vietnamese theater to several thousand American educators, students and to the general public. In the fall of 2000, with renewed funding from the Ford Foundation, Compaq, the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, and the U.S. State Department, VATE organized bilingual, bicultural productions of Tennessee Williams' *A Glass Menagerie* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Vietnam. The productions featured the actors and artistic staff of the Central Dramatic Company of Hanoi and Artists Repertory Theater of Portland, Oregon.

The Artists

F. MURRAY ABRAHAM (narrator, *A Dream in Hanoi*) has appeared in over 60 films, such as *Mighty Aphrodite*, *Finding Forrester*, *The Name of the Rose*, *Star Trek IX*, *By the Sword*, *Children of the Revolution*, *An Innocent Man*, *Scarface*, *The Ritz*, and *Amadeus* (Best Actor Oscar, Golden Globe, and Los Angeles Film Critics Award). Of his more than 80 plays, favorite performances include *The Man in the Glass Booth* (with Harold Pinter), *The Caretaker*, *Antigone*, *Uncle Vanya* (OBIE Award), *The Seagull*, *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (Geraldine Page), *A Month in the Country* (Helen Mirren), and *Waiting for Godot* (with Steve Martin and Robin Williams).

DOÃN HOÃNG GIANG (co-director, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) has directed over 300 plays in both contemporary and traditional Vietnamese genres. He has written more than 50 plays, including *The Eyes*, *My Ha My*, *In the Name of Justice*, *Ms. Sita*, *History and Witness*, and *Danbien's Song*. Mr. Giang's plays *My Ha My* and *In the Name of Justice* have been staged in over 30 different productions throughout Vietnam. Giang studied theater in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and China as well as Vietnam's Stage and Movie School. From 1958-1960, he was editor and director of art and literature programming for Vietnam Radio. From 1964 to 1972, he was an actor for the Central Dramatic Company of Vietnam. From 1972 on, he has been directing plays for the company. At present, Giang is chairman of the Arts Council of Vietnamese Theatrical Artists Association.

ALLEN NAUSE (co-director, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) is the artistic director of Portland, Oregon's Artists Repertory Theater. He has directed many of its most popular productions, including *The Crucible*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Wit*, *A Delicate Balance*, *Incorruptible*, *Three Days of Rain*, *Amazing Grace*, *Beast on the Moon*, *Fortinbras*, *A Perfect Ganesh*, *A Pirates' Lullaby* (Drammy Award, World Premiere), *A Taste of Honey*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* and *A Long Day's Journey into Night*. An international actor and director, Nause represented American regional theater in the 1994 U.S.I.A. Arts in America Tour, directing *A Journey Through American Comedy*. On this tour, he performed and did workshops in Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal,

Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Allen has performed at many of the Northwest's major theaters, including the Portland Repertory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Tacoma Actors Guild, Seattle Repertory Theater, The Empty Space Theater, A Contemporary Theater and Intiman Theatre. He appeared in the feature films *Frances* and *The Runner Stumbles*, and will be seen in the upcoming *Gathering Evidence*. Allen directed the feature film *ZigZag*, starring Dan Reed.

ĐÔ DOÃN CHÂU (co-producer and designer, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) is the artistic director of the Central Dramatic Company of Vietnam, and was the set designer for over 100 of its productions. He is also a painter, whose works have been displayed in Europe, Asia and the United States.

LORELLE BROWNING (co-producer and dramaturg, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), a professor of English and Peace Studies at Pacific University in Oregon, is the founder and director of the Vietnam America Theater Exchange, the umbrella organization that made possible the American/Vietnamese co-production portrayed in *A DREAM IN HANOI*. In addition to teaching Shakespeare, peace studies, and Vietnamese culture and history at Pacific University, Ms. Browning has served as the coordinator of Renaissance Studies at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and as project coordinator for A.C.T.E.R., A Center for Theater Education and Research at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

KRISTEN MARTHA BROWN (Helena) received her training in theater at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. She has appeared in numerous roles, including Rosalind in *As You Like It* for the Portland Actors Ensemble, Kaleria in *Summerfolk* and Lady McDuff in *MacBeth* for LAMDA, the Velveteen Rabbit in *The Velveteen Rabbit* for Triangle! Productions, Jeri Lee in *Last Days at the Dixie Girl Café* for the Lakewood Theater, and Tanya and the Angel in *Sex, Lies and Coffee Beans* for Princess Multnomah Productions.

ANH DŨNG (Oberon) trained at Hanoi's Professional Theater and Film college. He has been an actor in the Central Dramatic Company of Vietnam since 1971, and has received gold medals for his performances in *Truong Ba's Soul in the Butcher's Skin*, *Memories of the Moonlit Hill* and *The Girl on The River*. In addition to appearing in hundreds of productions for the Central Dramatic Company, Mr. DŨNG has written and directed works for television and the large screen. He directed *The Nightingale Returns to Its Nest*, *Classmates*, *The Fallen*, and *The Road to Nghe*, and was author and co-director of *Happiness Is Waiting*. In 1993, he was awarded the title of "Eminent Artist" by the Vietnamese government.

NGÂN HOA (Hermia) trained at Hanoi's Professional Theater and Film college and has been a member of the Central Dramatic Company since 1995. She has performed as Lark in *The Eyes*, Lu Vien in *The Warning Bell*, Hoa in *Farewell at Sunset* and Clementine in *Maxime's Restaurant*. She received an award for her performance of "Girl" in the *Leaf-Shaped Boat* at the Vietnam National Small Stage Festival in 1996. Her film roles include Huong in *The Sound of Birds in the Fields*, Anne in *The Sweetness of Lychee Fruit*, Kim in *Wind Blowing Through Dappled Sunlight*, and Sanh in *Their Time*.

DAMON KUPPER (Flute/Thisbe) has appeared in numerous productions of the Texas Shakespeare Festival and the Buffalo Shakespeare Festival and on television in *The Young and the Restless* (CBS) and *The Mystical Realm* (OCTV, Berlin). He has worked as a street performer in the United States, Central America, Europe and Asia, specializing in clown and pantomime acts. He received his M.F.A. in acting from the University of California at Irvine and has taught movement and stage combat at El Camino College and the Academy of Theater and Film in Hanoi.

ĐÔ KỶ (Demetrius) graduated from the Central Dramatic Company's Professional Training course in 1982 and from the Directing Course of Hanoi's Professional Theater and Film College in 2000. His roles, in productions of the Central Dramatic Company, have included Colexop in *The June Farewell*, Dung in *Playing for the Other Side*, Manh in *Witness of History*, Lieutenant Cuong in *In the Name of Justice*, Doctor Hoang in *My Life Is a Song*, Khoa in *Living by Another's Name*, and First Mate in *Disease of Arrogance*. Đô Kỳ recently made his directing debut with *Blue Daisies in the Pond* by Luu Quang Vu. He is a vice director of the Central Dramatic Company.

DOUG MILLER (Lysander) has appeared in numerous productions of the Idaho Shakespeare Festival, the Tygres Heart Shakespeare Festival, the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and Portland Center Stage. His roles have included Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Richard in *Richard III*, Navarre in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Hal in *Henry IV (Part 1 and 2)*, Prospero in *The Tempest*, the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, Hortensio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Geoffrey in *The Lion in Winter* and Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. He received his M.F.A. in Theater Arts from the University of Delaware in 1992.

QUANG THÁI (Bottom) has been working at the Central Dramatic Company since 1958. He has played in hundreds of Vietnamese and foreign plays, of which the most prominent are: *It Happened in Irkutsk*, *Maxime's Restaurant* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mr. Thai is a recipient of the title of "Eminent Artist" from the Vietnamese government.

CHIÊU XUÂN (Titania) Graduated from the Acting Course of Hanoi's Professional Theater and Film College in 1990. She has also studied and worked extensively in France. She played numerous roles in Vietnamese and foreign plays, including the lead role in *Maxime's Restaurant* and *A Stormy Night* by I. Caragiale. In 1996, she received the award for Best Actress in the Vietnam National Film Festival for her portrayal of Na in *My Lover Is Getting Married*. She also received a gold medal at the Vietnam National Stage Festival in 1999.