

stephanie  
chou



comfort girl

慰安婦

Generations of Chinese  
spoke of it only in whispers.

A secret so taboo, that its  
thousands of innocent  
victims were viewed with  
shame even by their own  
families.

That changes tonight.

friday march 29, 2019 | JOE'S PUB at The Public Theater



Stephanie Chou  
*Comfort Girl*

World Premiere  
Friday, March 29, 2019 | 7pm

JOE'S PUB at The Public Theater  
425 Lafayette Street, New York, NY

*Comfort Girl* is an exploration of the lives of Chinese “comfort women,” 慰安婦, a cruel euphemism for the women who were abducted and forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army during WWII. There were over 200,000 of these young women, most of whom were from China, Korea, and Southeast Asia. Lured by false promises of work or kidnapped – shipped far away from their families – they were kept in terrible conditions. Many died or were killed during the war. The few who survived stayed silent about their horrifying ordeal, because it was seen as shameful, and even considered political treason. Survivors only started speaking out publicly in the early 1990’s, and fewer than 15 known Chinese survivors are alive today.

This piece is a tribute to these young women’s incandescent courage and indomitable spirit, not only while in captivity during the War but also—in a cruel irony—when they returned home to their families, who didn’t always welcome them back with open arms. It is a story of an often-overlooked, dark chapter in history, which explores the emotional and psychological strength needed to withstand intense suffering, and the resilience needed to flourish despite great adversity. *Comfort Girl* is a story about humanity, and a celebration of the strength of the human spirit.

*Comfort Girl* was made possible by a grant from the American Composers Forum with funds provided by the Jerome Foundation.

This performance was made possible in part with public funds from Creative Engagement, supported by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and administered by Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. LMCC empowers artists by providing them with networks, resources, and support, to create vibrant, sustainable communities in Manhattan and beyond.

Presented in association with China Institute of America

*Comfort Girl*

Composed and arranged by Stephanie Chou

Stephanie Chou	voice, alto saxophone
Orville Mendoza	voice
Andy Lin	erhu, viola, violin
Kelly Lin	piano
Kenny Wollesen	drums, percussion
Peregrine Heard	narration



## Song Translations

### 滿洲姑娘

李香蘭 - 滿洲姑娘

滿洲姑娘 (1938)

詞：孫翹 王默然 曲：鈴木哲夫

奴是二八滿洲姑娘， 三月春日雪正融  
迎春花兒將開時  
奴去出嫁呀 啊親愛的郎君等著吧

銅鑼花鼓響叮噹 華麗的花轎把奴迎  
半喜半羞心兒跳  
等奴出嫁呀 啊親愛的郎君等著吧

雪呀冰呀涼的風呀 吹到北國的天邊去  
美麗的婚服已做好  
滿洲的春天快來呀 啊親愛的郎君等著吧

### “Manchurian Girl”

Originally “Manshu Masume” in Japanese, hit song from 1938

Lyrics by Akiji Ishimatsu; Music by Tetsuo Suzuki

Chinese version recorded by Li Xianglan

I'm a 16-year-old Manchurian girl; It's April, spring time, the snow is melting

Ying Chun flowers are starting to bloom

I'm going to be married, ah. Dear Lang Jun, please wait for me

Wedding gongs and drums ding-dong. An ornate flower sedan welcomes me, to pick up the bride

Half happy, half ashamed, my heart beats.

I'm dreaming of my wedding day, ah. Dear Lang Jun, please wait for me

Snow! Ice! Cold wind, ah! Blows to the Northland's horizon (Russia)

My beautiful wedding dress is already sewn

Manchurian springtime (my new chapter in life), please hurry!

Dear Lang Jun, please wait for me

## 回家

By Stephanie Chou

Ai 吔，救救我  
我想回家，我只想回家  
需要回家，我想要馬上回家  
不能夠承受  
讓我走！幫助我！讓我回家！  
一去，我永遠不再回頭。  
想家人，心疼，太丟臉。  
Will he ever take me back?

## “Go Home”

By Stephanie Chou

Ah, Save me!  
I want to go home, I only want to go home  
I must go home, I have to go home right now  
I can't take it!  
Let me go, help me please, let me go home!  
Once I go, I'll never look back  
As I think of my family, my heart hurts, I'm so ashamed.  
Will he ever take me back?

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### Other Translations

慰安婦 (Wèiān Fù)	comfort women
髒 (Zāng)	dirty
丟臉 (Diūliǎn)	to lose face; shameful
花姑娘 (Huā Gūniáng)	flower girl; derogatory way to refer to the comfort women
回家 (Huí Jiā)	go home
Cho'ben (Japanese)	military provisions, supplies; used to describe and categorize the women
Pii	derogatory word used to refer to women



## Where They Are Now

It has only been since the 1990's --nearly 50 years after WWII ended-- that public awareness on the comfort women developed. Victims started speaking out, requesting a formal apology and compensation from the Japanese government. Since then, many survivors have stepped forward, feeling it important to fight for justice before they pass. There are fewer than 15 comfort women alive in China today, all in poor health and dwindling in old age. There are similarly few survivors left in Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan, Australia, and elsewhere.

Recently there has been a dramatic increase in research and activism, resulting in international dialogue and some progress towards their goals. Some compensation was given to victims through the Asian Women's Fund, though many criticize that the funds came from private donors. Many are enraged that the Japanese government has not issued a formal apology nor fully admitted the extent of what happened, suggesting the women were 'paid prostitutes' rather than 'sex slaves.' In 2017, the first-ever video footage of comfort women stationed in China was made public.

Despite increased activism, awareness still needs to be raised about this important subject. In countless interviews conducted since the 1990's, the survivors say they all wish for two things: for a formal apology from the Japanese government fully acknowledging what happened, and for their stories to be told to younger generations so that their experiences will not be forgotten - and so that history is never repeated. They hope we will not turn a blind eye towards atrocities of this kind in our own time.

Their words are even more urgent now, as time runs out for the survivors to see justice served in their lifetime, and sex trafficking is still a major global issue.



## Composer's Note

The story of the “comfort women” has been largely overlooked. Most people in Western cultures do not know about this tragic crisis, and even fewer know about the trials the survivors faced after the war: physical and psychological trauma, shame and disgrace from their families, and little recognition or apology from their abusers -- even over 70 years later. I was shocked to learn about the “comfort women” some years ago, and aside from the historical horror, was surprised to discover that their story is still vastly unknown, even among Asian-Americans. I felt this important story needed to be told, and that music would be a way to give a voice to the women who were abused and silenced for so long.

Most of the public discussion has focused on Korean, Indonesian, and Dutch women. However, of the 200,000+ victims, more than half were Chinese girls, imprisoned in their own homeland for months or years, as war raged throughout Japanese-occupied China. I chose to explore the lives of Chinese comfort women in particular, not only because of my Chinese heritage, but also because it seemed their stories were at great risk for being lost forever.

I wrote *Comfort Girl* with the intention of increasing awareness of this sad chapter in history, and celebrating these women's bravery and resilience. By bringing together music aficionados, people interested in the topic, historians, activists, social justice supporters, abuse victims, those interested in Asian culture and art, and more - I hope to create a musical experience that inspires social change. Learning more about the past will inspire us to examine our lives more closely now, and look to the future to see what changes we can make in today's charged climate of #MeToo, #Time'sUp, and this extremely tumultuous time in history.



## **Additional Credits**

Roy Hendrickson	audio engineer
James Wordsworth	vocal coach for Steph
Nicholas Betson	projection operator
Raquel Loving	image research assistant
Lucy Rinzler-Day	image research assistant
Merit Myers	graphic designer
John Abbott	cover photography

## How You Can Help

Please consider donating to *Comfort Girl* to help us continue to develop the piece, finish a studio recording, and bring it to larger audiences. Your contribution will simultaneously support new music and help the legacy of the comfort women live on.

You can make a contribution at the merchandise table or online

**[www.stephaniechoumusic.com/about-comfort-girl](http://www.stephaniechoumusic.com/about-comfort-girl)**



## Learn More

### Articles

“Comfort Women” Wikipedia Article

“China’s Comfort Women” by Lucy Hornby, *The Financial Times*

“Jan Ruff-O’Herne” - Wikipedia Overview

“The Forgotten Ones” 2001 transcript of interview with Jan Ruff O’Herne and her daughters, Carol Ruff and Eileen Mitton

### Books

*Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan’s Sex Slaves*  
(*Contemporary Chinese Studies*)

by Peipei Qiu (Author), Su Zhiliang (Contributor),  
Chen Lefei (Contributor)

The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the  
Second World War by George Hicks

### Films

*Fifty Years of Silence*

Directed by Ned Lander, Documentary Film, 1994, English - about Jan  
Ruff O’Herne

*The Apology*

Directed by Tiffany Hsiung, Documentary Film, 2016, English with  
subtitles - about three survivors

*Twenty-Two*

Directed by Ke Guo, Documentary Film, 2015, Chinese  
with subtitles - about the 22 remaining Chinese survivors (at the time of  
filming; many have passed since then)

*Spirit’s Homecoming*

Directed by Cho Jung-rae, Historical fiction about two Korean friends, 2016,  
Korean

### Organizations

Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues,  
([www.comfort-women.org](http://www.comfort-women.org))

Comfort Women Justice Coalition (SF),  
([www.remembercomfortwomen.org](http://www.remembercomfortwomen.org))

The Apology Campaign, (Women’s Human Rights Education Institute)

The Asian Women’s Fund Dignity Project

United Nations Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War  
Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity

Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan

Justice for Comfort Women UK

Amnesty International Australia’s Justice for “Comfort Women” Campaign

Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation

For more resources please visit:  
[www.stephaniechoumusic.com/about-comfort-girl](http://www.stephaniechoumusic.com/about-comfort-girl)

## Biographies

**Stephanie Chou** is a saxophonist, singer, and composer based in New York City. Her music combines classical and Chinese influences with jazz and pop harmonies and rhythms. Raised in Irvington, NY, Chou studied mathematics and music at Columbia University. In 2011, she released her first album, *Prime Knot*, a jazz quintet CD featuring trumpeter Marcus Printup (Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra). She has written for ballet and theater as well as for the concert stage. Her work “C for G” was commissioned and choreographed by American Ballet Theatre principal ballerina Susan Jaffe, and premiered in 2012 at Goucher College, Maryland. In 2017, Steph released a new album, *Asymptote*, which features jazz musicians Kenny Wollesen, John Escreet, David Binney, and Zack Lober, as well as viola and erhu virtuoso Andy Lin. The release concert was co-presented by China Institute at Joe’s Pub. She has performed her music in Taipei, Taiwan and Beijing, China. She has also performed throughout NYC at venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, B.B. King’s, Miller Theater, Flushing Town Hall, and The Cutting Room, as well as in festivals in Italy, New Orleans, Chicago, Vermont (Discover Jazz Festival), and NY (Summer on the Hudson, Sunset Jazz at Lyndhurst). She is a recipient of the 2016 Jerome Fund for New Music (JFund) - a grant from the American Composers Forum with funds provided by the Jerome Foundation - to write, record, and premiere a new piece of music with China Institute. She is also a recipient of the 2018 Creative Engagement Grant from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, which provided funding for the same project. She is currently working on new projects with engineer/mixer/producer Roy Hendrickson.

[www.stephaniechoumusic.com](http://www.stephaniechoumusic.com)

**Orville Mendoza** recently appeared in the world premiere of the Huey Lewis and the News musical *The Heart of Rock and Roll* at The Old Globe (coming soon to Broadway) and previous to that, the national tour of Bess Wohl’s *Small Mouth Sounds* directed by Rachel Chavkin. He received a Barrymore Award and a Drama Desk nomination for originating the role of “Tempura” in Christopher Durang & Peter Melnick’s musical *Adrift in Macao*. He’s appeared on Broadway in *Pacific Overtures* and *Peter and the Starcatcher*. Off-Broadway, he was proud to play “Manjiro” in the Classic Stage Company revival of *Pacific Overtures* starring George Takei and directed by John Doyle. Other Off-Broadway credits include *Found* (Atlantic Theater Co.), *Passion* (CSC revival, also directed by John Doyle), *Charles Francis Chan...*, *Antigone*, and *The Seagull* (all at National Asian American Theatre Company), *Ivanov* (NAATCO & The Mint), *Romeo & Juliet*, *Timon of Athens*, and was an original company member of Stephen Sondheim & John Weidman’s *Road Show* (all at The Public Theater/NYSF). Regionally, he’s worked all across the US from



The 5th Avenue in Seattle to Long Wharf Theater in New Haven. As a vocal artist he's performed with Mastervoices (fka Collegiate Chorale) in *Knickerbocker Holiday* directed by Ted Sperling (cast recording on Ghostlight Records), and *West Side Story Suite* for two seasons with New York City Ballet at Lincoln Center and their Paris tour. He can be seen on television in the recurring role of "Semo" in "The Blacklist," also "Law & Order: Criminal Intent," and several commercials.  
[www.orvillemendoza.com](http://www.orvillemendoza.com)

**Wei-Yang Andy Lin**, a Taiwanese born violist and erhuist (Chinese violin), is the artistic director and co-founder of the New Asia Chamber Music Society. He holds his bachelor and master's degrees from The Juilliard School, and a Doctor's degree in Musical Arts from SUNY Stony Brook. Mr. Lin has won numerous competitions including Taiwan National Viola Competition, First Prize in the 2008 Juilliard Viola Concerto Competition and subsequently made his Lincoln Center solo debut at the Avery Fisher Hall (now David Geffen Hall) with the Juilliard Orchestra. He has also appeared as soloist with orchestras such as Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra, Incheon Philharmonic, Orford Academy Orchestra and Children's Orchestra Symphony. He is a founding member of the award winning Amphion String Quartet. The quartet was a winner of the 2011 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition and on the roster of the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society CMS2 Program from 2013~2016. The quartet's debut album with Nimbus Records in England was picked by the New York Times as one of "The Best 25 Classical Music Recordings of 2015." He has also been invited to perform chamber music with Itzhak Perlman where The New York Times described, "Mr. Perlman, playing first violin... answered in kind by the violist Wei-Yang Andy Lin." Andy is also a world recognized professional erhu player. He has performed the erhu solo part at the U.S. Premiere of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' "Kommilitonen!" with the Juilliard Opera Production, as well as the world premiere of Jeeyoung Kim's "Engraft" for solo erhu and string orchestra with Solisti Ensemble at Carnegie Hall. He also premiered Winnie Lan-In Yang's "Fantasy for Erhu and Strings" with the New York Classical Players. He has been invited by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra of the Grant Park Music Festival in Chicago to play the solo erhu part in "Iris dévoilée" by Chen Qi-Gang. He has also appeared as an erhu solo in the U.S. Premiere of Yeow-Kwon Chung's "Red Cliff" Piano Concerto with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. Recently, he has performed a haegeum concerto "Choosang" on the erhu with Busan Metropolitan Traditional Music Orchestra at the Busan Maru International Music Festival in Korea. He has also been invited by the Metropolitan Museum to give recitals at their Gallery Concert Series and Patrons Lounge Concert. He has appeared at OK Mozart and Chamber Music Northwest festivals, as

well as a recital at the Caramoor Center for the Music and the Arts.  
[www.andylinviola.com](http://www.andylinviola.com)

**Kelly Lin**, born in Taiwan, is an active piano performer who began her musical studies at an early age on the piano, violin, viola, and erhu. Dr. Lin has made regular appearances at Carnegie Hall, Trinity Church on Wall Street, Lincoln Center, and Merkin Hall. From summer 2014-present, Dr. Lin has been the piano faculty and accompanist for the Berkshire Summer Music, the Westminster Piano High School Camp, 4string Music Festival, and QM International Music Center. She is currently a collaborate pianist at the Juilliard School, Mannes at the New School, Manhattan School of Music, Columbia University, and Young Concert Artist. Dr. Lin received full scholarships while getting her BM, MM, and AD at University of Southern California as a piano performance major, studying with John Perry. In 2015, she received her Doctorate of Musical Arts in piano performance at Rutgers University with Daniel Epstein, where she also received full scholarship with a teaching assistantship, while balancing a busy schedule as a solo pianist, accompanist, piano teacher, and chamber musician.

**Kenny Wollesen** is a drummer, vibraphonist, percussionist and instrument builder based in New York City. He is the founder of the Wollesonic Laboratories and the Himalayas marching band. Wollesen has recorded and toured with John Zorn, Bill Frisell, Tom Waits, Steven Bernstein, Sean Lennon, David Byrne, Norah Jones, John Lurie, among many others. He is a founding member of the New Klezmer Trio and of the downtown super group Sexmob. Kenny grew up in Santa Cruz, CA, studying at Aptos High School and at Cabrillo College with flugelhornist and arranger Ray Brown.  
[www.wollesonic.com](http://www.wollesonic.com)

**Peregrine Teng Heard** is the artistic director of The Associates Theater Ensemble, with whom she has devised and performed *Sheila, Free-some*, and *Black Protagonist*. New York: *Sehnsucht* (JACK), Chuck Mee's *soot & spit*, Piehole's *Ski End* (New Ohio), *Power Couple* (ANTFest), and *Frontieres Sans Frontieres* (Bushwick Starr). Regional: Jon Jory's *Tom Jones* and *Remix 38* (Actors Theatre of Louisville). Voiceover work includes Cadillac, MasterCard, Sonos, and Roomba. Peregrine earned her BA in East Asian Studies from Yale.  
[www.peregrineheard.com](http://www.peregrineheard.com)





Memorial in Shanghai Normal University, China

[www.stephaniechoumusic.com](http://www.stephaniechoumusic.com)