

**EAST WEST
PLAYERS**

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Mako (d.)
Nobu McCarthy (d.)

EWP

For Immediate Release
December 14, 2011
Los Angeles, CA

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**Olympics, Hula, and Pidgin English Highlight
East West Players' THREE YEAR SWIM CLUB**

East West Players (EWP), the nation's largest producing organization of Asian American artistic work *and* the longest-running professional theatre of color in the country, continues its 46th Anniversary season, themed *Languages of Love*, with the mainland premiere of THREE YEAR SWIM CLUB by Lee Tonouchi. This production will be directed and choreographed by Keo Woolford. The cast of the production will feature Jared Asato, Kelsey Chock, Kaliko Kauahi, Blake Kushi, Mapuana Makia, and Chris Takemoto-Gentile.

This play is inspired by the true life story of Soichi Sakamoto, who trained the youth of Maui to swim in the plantation irrigation ditches on their path to becoming Olympic champions. Set on the island of Maui in the 1930's, this heartwarming play becomes transcendent as the art of hula becomes the metaphor for competitive swimming.

"THREE YEAR SWIM CLUB is perfect timing in that it coincides with the 2012 Olympics. With its Hawaiian setting, the art of hula is a language all in itself telling the story through movement," says EWP Producing Artistic Director Tim Dang. "This is one of those stories that not a lot of people know about and we're proud to share with everyone. It's Hawaiian history, Olympic history, and Asian American history."

Writer Lee Tonouchi is Hawai'i's leading Pidgin advocate. In the new verbal revolution Lee A. Tonouchi is known as "Da Pidgin Guerrilla" because of his activism in getting Hawai'i Creole English a.k.a. Pidgin more accepted as a legitimate language. His landmark essay collection *Living Pidgin* chronicled the discrimination and prejudices Hawai'i's Pidgin speakers face. A theater for youth version of THREE YEAR SWIM CLUB toured Hawaii, produced by Honolulu Theatre for Youth.

Director and choreographer Keo Woolford is a dancer for the renowned Robert Cazimero's Halau Na Kamalei O Lililehua. He has recently directed the feature film *UNDER THE HULA* and the short film *LUNCHTIME*. He makes his stage directing debut with THREE YEAR SWIM CLUB. His performing theater credits include his

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Ovation Award-nominated one-man show, *I LAND*, and the King of Siam in Rogers And Hammerstein's *The King And I* in London's West End opposite Elaine Paige and Josie Lawrence. He was a member of the #1 selling Hawai'i boyband, *Brownskin*, and the Hobo House Recording Team nominated for the Grammy® Award for Best Reggae Album in 2002.

The design team consists of set and projection designer Adam Flemming, lighting designer Chris Kuhl, costumer designer Ken Takemoto, sound designer Dennis Yen and property master Ken Takemoto. The stage manager is Maya Rogers.

Generous support for this production of *THREE YEAR SWIM CLUB* is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support is provided by California Community Foundation, Shubert Foundation, LA County Board of Supervisors through the LA County Arts Commission, The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the James Irvine Foundation, and Bank of America.

All performances of will be staged at the David Henry Hwang Theater at the Union Center for the Arts at 120 Judge John Aiso St., Los Angeles, CA 90012. *THREE YEAR SWIM CLUB* opens Wednesday, February 15, 2012 and closes on Sunday, March 11, 2012. Opening night will be accompanied by a pre-performance cocktail reception and a post show reception with the cast and creative team. Performances are Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm, and Sundays at 2pm. Previews are Thursday - Saturday, February 9 - 11 at 8pm and Sunday, February 12 at 2pm. The Pay-What-You-Can Performance will be held Thursday, February 16 at 8 pm with a suggested \$5 minimum donation.

General Admission Tickets range from \$26 - \$36. Preview tickets are \$20 for all seats, \$12 for all seats with student ID. Please call theatre for opening night ticket availability and special event pricing. For ticket purchases or more information, please call East West Players at (213) 625-7000 or visit www.eastwestplayers.org. Senior, student and group discounts are available. Dates, prices, and details are subject to change.