

# canadianstage

WORLD PREMIERE EVENT BY ONE OF  
TORONTO'S BEST COMPOSERS

## I SWALLOWED A MOON MADE OF IRON

Created by **Njo Kong Kie**

Set to the poetry of **Xu Lizhi**

A Music Picnic (Toronto) and Point View Art Association (Macau) Production  
in Association with Canadian Stage

May 16-26 – Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre

Former long-serving musical director of *La La La Human Steps*, composer and creator of music-theatre works *Picnic in the Cemetery* and *Mr. Shi and His Lover* (voted Best New Musical by the Toronto Theatre Critics Association), Njo Kong Kie, returns to Canadian Stage with a spellbinding solo performance that sets to music the haunting work of factory worker turned famed Chinese poet, Xu Lizhi. A powerful musical experience that combines visual elements and Xu's compelling, and often gut-wrenching poetry, *I Swallowed A Moon Made of Iron* is on stage at the Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre, May 16-26, 2019.

Xu's poetry gained worldwide attention after the 24-year-old migrant worker committed suicide (one of many employees who committed suicide between 2010-2014 at the Shenzhen plant of the electronics manufacturing giant Foxconn). With straightforward language, poetic sensibility and vivid imagination, Xu's poems provide a glimpse into factory life and give a voice to the millions of forgotten migrant workers around the globe. His poems – which he wrote over a four-year period – speak to his working conditions, homesickness, the passing of youth, lack of hope and purpose, exhaustion from the punishing work, and of his physical and emotional pains.

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“We could not be more excited to be welcoming back Njo Kong Kie to our stage, says Canadian Stage Artistic Director Brendan Healy. “The combination of his extraordinary music with the haunting poetry of Xu Lizhi makes for a moving work that raises our consciousness to the plight of countless men and women. This is a necessary and vital work and Canadian Stage is proud to present its premiere.”

*I Swallowed A Moon Made of Iron*, not only sheds light on Xu’s poems and experiences, but it also considers how our desire and need for daily comforts impacts the lives of the countless unseen, unheard and forgotten people who manufacture them.

“As we are conditioned to live an increasingly expedient lifestyle, somebody has to work harder and faster to make it happen and while I cannot physically feel the pain Xu endured in his work, I can feel the despair he experienced in his life,” says Njo Kong Kie. “The human conditions Xu insightfully described deeply resonate with me and I hope this work will play a small part in helping us remember Xu Lizhi and the millions of others whose struggles provide the digital amenities for our modern day lives.”

*I Swallowed A Moon Made of Iron* is on stage at the Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre, May 16-26. Performances run Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays at 8 PM, Wednesday at 1 PM, Fridays at 7 PM, and Sundays at 2 PM.

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## **MEDIA NIGHT: MAY 16**

**To receive further information or for an interview request, please contact  
CATHY PAINE at 416-367-8243 ext. 250 [cpaine@canadianstage.com](mailto:cpaine@canadianstage.com)**

### **Praise for Kong Kie’s *Picnic in the Cemetery*:**

“Combining chamber music, video projection, dance and an alluring spatial design that actively encourages audience interaction, *Picnic in the Cemetery* is an atmospheric study in contrasts: life and death, motion and stillness, gloom and luminosity.” – *Now Magazine*

“*Picnic in the Cemetery* is a gently entertaining and wry reminder of what it was like to drift from one daydream to another.” – *Toronto Star*

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## ABOUT CANADIAN STAGE

Canadian Stage is one of the country's leading not-for-profit contemporary performing arts organizations. Led by Artistic Director, Brendan Healy, and Executive Director, Monica Esteves, the company produces, presents, commissions, and collaborates with multiple partners on cross-disciplinary work with a focus on performance styles that integrate theatre, dance, film, visual arts and more. Sharing innovative and vibrant performance work from Canada and around the world, it stages performances at three Toronto venues: The Bluma Appel at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts; The Berkeley Street Theatre; and the High Park Amphitheatre.

## ABOUT NJO KONG KIE

Long-serving music director of La La La Human Steps, Kong Kie is a composer for dance, opera and theatre. His works include music for the play *Infinity* by Hannah Moscovitch (Tarragon), the same-sex rom-com opera *knotty together* (with Anna Chatterton, Tarragon), the operatic fable *La Señorita Mundo* (with Kico Gonzalez-Risso, SummerWorks), the concert-theatre *Picnic in the Cemetery* (Canadian Stage) and the music theatre work *Mr. Shi and His Lover* (with Wong Teng Chi) -- the first ever Chinese language production at SummerWorks, Tarragon Theatre and the National Arts Centre English Theatre.

Kong Kie has worked with choreographers Anne Plamondon, Azure Barton, Shawn Housel and others, providing original music to their productions for companies such as Nederlands Dans Theater, Ballet National de L'Opera du Rhin, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Singapore Dance Theatre and Ballet BC. His soundtrack for TV documentaries includes *Fisk: Untitled Portrait* and *China Rises*. Works in development include: *The Year of the Cello*, a play with solo cello music set in Hong Kong in the 1920s (with Marjorie Chan) and *The Futures Market*, an opera exploring the complex moral dimensions of the trade in human organs (with Douglas Rodger). Kong Kie is the artistic producer of Music Picnic. More at [www.musicpicnic.com](http://www.musicpicnic.com).

## ABOUT XU LIZHI

Chinese poet Xu Lizhi (1990-2014) was born in the rural area of Guangdong province. After high school, like millions of other young people, Xu went to the cities to look for work. At age twenty, after working briefly in Guangzhou and Jieyang, Xu landed a job in the assembly line of Foxconn in Shenzhen, making electronic parts for digital devices. In a span of four years, Xu wrote close to 200 poems, many of them about the life of migrant factory workers. Xu gained recognition as one of the best in China's worker-poet literary movement. He was regularly published, in print and online. Posthumously, his friends and colleagues published his complete work in an anthology titled "A new day", written as Xu's last post on Weibo, sent out as scheduled at midnight following his death. Much more can be learned online about Xu Lizhi's life and work.

**BRENDAN HEALY**, Artistic Director

**MONICA ESTEVES**, Executive Director

**ALEXANDRA BAILLIE & TONY BAYLIS**, Board Co  
Chairs