

# Asian Story Theater

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## ***Doctor Quynh Brings Vietnamese Water Puppets to Stage***

On Saturday, April 18, *Doctor Quynh & the Water Puppets* will be presented at the Lyceum Theatre, downtown San Diego in Horton Plaza. This year's production, based on folk tales and traditional arts of Vietnam, is the 20<sup>th</sup> year Asian Story Theater has presented an original play adapted from the folk tales of Asia or the Pacific.

*Doctor Quynh & the Water Puppets* highlights two rich traditions from Vietnamese culture. The first is folktales based on a real man, remembered as the hero called Trang ("Doctor") Quynh. The second is Vietnamese water puppets, a unique style of puppetry up to a thousand years old. The play also includes traditional Vietnamese music performed live.

Doctor Quynh is one of the great folk heroes of ancient Vietnam, a simple but clever man who stands up to the corruption and pretensions of government officials and rulers. This production includes three favorite episodes. In the first, Quynh is ordered to diagnose why the local Governor has suddenly lost his appetite, despite a continuous diet of the rarest and most expensive foods. The good doctor must treat his "patient," teaching him a lesson without literally losing his own head. Second is the story of Doctor Quynh's great love, a brilliant young woman who is his equal—at least! In fact, they are so similar that they cannot help but compete with each other. Can they find a way to marry and make a life together? In the final story, Doctor Quynh and his local Governor are called to the court of the Chinese Emperor himself. The Emperor's secret plan is to humiliate the country bumpkin, and prove once and for all how inferior the Vietnamese are, compared to the brilliant Chinese artists, poets, and scholars. Can Doctor Quynh defend the honor of his people?

*Doctor Quynh & the Water Puppets* also features one of the world's most unique puppet traditions: Vietnamese water puppets. This style of puppetry has been traced back to the rice farms in the Red River delta, on the northern end of Vietnam. Historically presented in actual rice fields, the puppeteers stood in the water behind a screen and used long controls, hidden under the water, to operate

their puppets. Musicians and singers beside the stage provided the voices and accompaniment. In *Doctor Quynh & the Water Puppets*, various types of water puppets perform. Then Teu, the traditional host of ALL water puppet shows, introduces each Quynh story. Note that our puppets are directly from Vietnam, and employ traditional wood sculpture and lacquer work. Many clips of water puppet performances are posted on Youtube.

As they have for all of their 20 years, Asian Story Theater uses a diverse cast of multi-skilled and multi-ethnic performers. *Doctor Quynh & the Water Puppets* stars Brian Lee Huynh as Doctor Quynh, and features Gingerlily Lowe, Dwight Love, Rhys Green, Kalí Kamaria, and Alex Phomthavong. Musical Direction is by Alex Khalil, with costumes by Cheryl Lindley-Lopez. The script and production was adapted and directed by Kent Lee Brisby.

Performances are at 2PM and 7PM, with tickets \$15 for adults and \$10 for students, seniors, and military. The best deal is Group tickets, only \$5 for pre-sold groups of 15 or more. Unless you are a school teacher. that is. All school teachers are admitted to Asian Story Theater shows for free. Contact the Lyceum Theatre Box office for general admission, 619-544-1000. Pre-purchase group tickets through Asian Story Theater directly at 619-527-2816. Additional information is available at [www.asianstorytheater.org](http://www.asianstorytheater.org).