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WORLD PREMIERE CONCERT AT JOE'S PUB WILL EXPLORE LONG-TABOO SUBJECT THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF JAZZ

Chinese-American composer/musician Stephanie Chou's new work focuses on the "comfort women" forced into sexual slavery by Japanese troops during World War II

February 20, 2019 (New York, NY)— On **March 29, 2019**, New York-based composer, saxophonist, and singer Stephanie Chou and her ensemble will premiere her new work, *Comfort Girl*, at **Joe's Pub at the Public Theater** in New York City.

Commissioned by the American Composers Forum, *Comfort Girl* is a musical exploration of the lives of Chinese "comfort women" who were abducted into sexual slavery by the Japanese army during WWII. The work 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.

Comfort Girl combines traditional Chinese music with American jazz. Orchestrations feature an inventive mix of traditional erhu (Chinese two-stringed violin) with contemporary voice, saxophone, strings, piano, and percussion.

Says Chou: "I was shocked when I first learned about the 'comfort women' some years ago. Aside from the brutality and horror of what happened, I was even more surprised to discover that very few people of my generation are aware of this issue – even among the Asian-American community. I felt this important story needed to be told, and that music would be a great way to give a voice to the women who were sexually abused and then silenced for so long. As a Chinese-American woman, their story resonated deeply for me."

Of the over 200,000 women enslaved by the Japanese army during WWII, more than half were Chinese girls, imprisoned in their own homeland for months or years, as war raged throughout Japanese-occupied China. *Comfort Girl* highlights an often-overlooked chapter in history that still has echoes today, as the few remaining survivors continue to fight for justice, and sex trafficking is still a major global issue. There are fewer than 15 comfort station survivors left in China today, all in poor health and old age. Prominent comfort station survivor and Korean activist, Kim Bok-dong, passed away in January 2019. Chou says, "She was one of the last surviving comfort women, and I don't want their story to die with them."

In addition to Chou, the concert features singer/actor Orville Mendoza (*Pacific Overtures*, *2004 Broadway Revival*; *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *original Broadway cast*; *Miss Saigon*, *2nd National Tour*), violist/erhuist Andy Lin, pianist Kelly Lin, and drummer/percussionist Kenny Wollesen.

Comfort Girl is Chou's most ambitious work to date. "My goal," she says, "was to create a concept album that is bold and fearless, artistically challenging, and which generates further awareness of the comfort women."

MORE

Chou, 31, is a first-generation Chinese-American who grew up in Irvington, New York and now lives in Manhattan. She has performed her music from New York to Beijing, in music festivals around the world, at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, B.B. King's, Vermont's Discover Jazz Festival, and Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Her 2012 ballet composition "*C for G*" was commissioned and choreographed by Susan Jaffe, legendary American Ballet Theater Principal Dancer (1980-2002) and former Ballet Mistress for ABT.

Stephanie Chou's 2017 album *ASYMPTOTE*, which contained fresh jazz and pop interpretations of traditional Chinese songs, received critical acclaim. *Comfort Girl* is set to be recorded in New York following the Joe's Pub engagement.

Music critics and others requesting comps for the *Comfort Girl* premiere at Joe's Pub may email stephchoumusic@gmail.com or call 914 282-1044 to make arrangements.

[Stephanie Chou: COMFORT GIRL World Premiere](#)

Date: Friday, March 29, 2019

Time: Doors open at 6, Show at 7 p.m.

Place: JOE'S PUB at the Public Theater, 425 Lafayette Street, New York City.

For TICKETS: call 212-967-7555, online at www.joespub.com, or in person at the Public Theater or Joe's Pub. Journalists: please email stephchoumusic@gmail.com to request comps.

For more information on Stephanie Chou, please visit www.stephaniechoumusic.com.

Recordings of Stephanie Chou's music are available from www.stephaniechoumusic.com, iTunes, Apple Music, Amazon, Napster, and more.

"[Chou] hit upon a novel expression for her sax—and her vocals—by embracing her Chinese heritage and using its musical folk and pop legacy to create a unique blend of traditional Chinese, classical and jazz. She showcased this superbly at Lincoln Center's David Rubenstein Atrium on Thursday, March 8 to a full house... With her exquisite arrangements, she [Chou] led her quartet... on a rousing and lyrical set focused on her impressive album *Asymptote*... What was so remarkable about

Chou's performance was its tasty diversity of styles...."

—*ZEALnyc*, 3/9/18, Dan Ouellette

"Chou is a strong singer with an unadorned mezzo-soprano, a strong saxophonist and a brilliantly individualistic composer who's shifting the paradigm, blending Chinese themes from over the centuries with jazz, classical and more than a little rock in places... Her music is relevant, and lyrical, and amazingly eclectic..."

-- *New York Music Daily*, 3/9/18

"Stephanie Chou is a genuine triple-threat in the music business. A multi-instrumentalist, she plays alto saxophone and piano at the level of virtuosity, and also sings in an expressive, highly personable manner with a wide range. Chou's work challenges expectations and defies categorization, but its brilliance in terms of conceptualization and performance makes the music compelling and wholly enjoyable listening. The emotions in her soundscapes are real threads of the human drama... Simply exquisite, the instrumentalists and Chou's vocals [are] placed perfectly in the arrangements to create an unmistakable mood."

--*The Gazette*, 8/18/16, Thomas Staudter
