



BROWN

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***410[GONE]* at Brown Theatre Explores the Limits of Love**

410[GONE], a new play by Brown University alum, Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig '05, uses comedy to take a look at the limits of love and how we release loved ones when they are gone. This “tragi-comedy suicide play” draws on Chinese and American cultural traditions to tell the story of Twenty-One, a young Chinese-American women struggling to find answers in the wake of the death of her brother, Seventeen.

This piece of new writing will be performed in Leeds Theatre at Brown University Theatre from April 2 – 12, directed by Erik Ehn, a successful playwright himself and Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University.

410[GONE] draws on a wide range of pop culture references ranging from the Dance Dance Revolution arcade game to pachinko arcades to Chinese opera and the story of Euripides. After the suicide of Seventeen, his sister, Twenty-One, is left looking for a meaningful solution to the mystery his death leaves in her life. Meanwhile, Seventeen is moving through a digitally-enhanced version of the traditional Chinese underworld, encountering the Goddess of Mercy and the Monkey God, who struggle to process the impact this intruder has in their ordered world. The title of the play refers to the http 410 status error code, “Gone,” which indicates that the requested resource has been intentionally removed and will not be available again. Cowhig’s script combines the digital,

the traditional, and the everyday worlds of her characters to bring humour and levity to a difficult and often painful subject.

Cowhig is an alumna of Brown University who also holds an M.F.A. in Writing from the University of Texas. She wrote the first draft of *410[GONE]* while studying at Brown University as an independent study with former Seaver Professor of Literary Arts and current Playwright-At-Large Paula Vogel. At that time, the piece was entitled *The Other Side of the Closet* and was produced in 2005 by Brown student-run theatre group Production Workshop. Cowhig will be on campus during the run and will participate in a talkback following the matinee performance on Sunday, April 5.

In its current form, *410[GONE]* was originally produced by Crowded Fire Theater in San Francisco. Describing that production in 2013, Hyphen Magazine – an Asian American cultural and arts magazine, wrote:

“*410[GONE]* re-organizes and layers familiar Asian American dramatic elements (traditional folk elements, etc.) and typical American experiences (fast food, etc.) to expose, but never define, Twenty-One’s grief, Seventeen’s spiritual dilemma, and a relationship between a brother and sister. In short, the play’s exploration of heritage eventually becomes a frame through which the audience witnesses the most vulnerable of human processes: loving, dying, and letting go. Frances’ bricolage of imagery creates a cultural frame that is so emotionally accurate one forgets its critical role in creating the experience ... If you cry at this play, don’t worry. It’s just because it hurts so good.”

Speaking about this production, Erik Ehn said:

“For me, *410[GONE]* is a meditation on how love holds on and how love lets go. I’ll be frank about my influences and point to the biblical passage in St. Paul’s letter to the Romans: ‘And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow - not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.’ The play is not theological in this way, but it is full of deep yearning and explicit consideration of the values and limits of attachment.

I am very pleased to be working with the talented students at Brown to explore this complicated and multi-layered text. We’re looking to bring out the humor while honoring the heartache. The cast has already gone so far, soulfully and with courage.”

As part of its commitment to community engagement and engaged scholarship, the Department of Theatre Arts & Performance Studies at Brown University will also host a series of community conversations around the development and performance of the play. These free events will create a safe space to discuss some of the particular mental

health challenges that Chinese and Chinese-American students on campus at Brown University might face. Working with partners at the Brown Center for Students and Color, and Counseling and Psychological Services, the conversations will be carefully facilitated to engage the community at Brown in difficult, but hopefully meaningful and transformative conversations.

410[GONE] is produced by the Brown University Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and by Sock & Buskin, the student-staff-faculty board that selects and runs the mainstage theatre season at Brown University. *410[GONE]* runs April 2nd until April 12th, performances at 8pm, Thursday to Saturday. Sunday matinees at 2pm. Tickets: \$15 (\$12 seniors, \$7 students). For ticket sales and more information: call (401) 863-2838, or visit the Box Office in the Leeds Theatre Lobby (83 Waterman St, Providence), Tuesday - Friday from 12pm - 4pm, or email boxoffice@brown.edu. To book online, visit: brown.edu/tickets.

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