ESSENTIAL THEATRE, UK

PRESENTS

THE MISTAKE

BY

MICHAEL MEARS

DIRECTED BY

ROSAMUNDE HUTT

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THE MISTAKE



BY MICHAEL MEARS DIRECTED BY ROSAMUNDE HUTT
WITH RIKO NAKAZONO AND MICHAEL MEARS

design @mwgraphicdesign

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ROSAMUNDE HUTT

— CAST —

RIKO NAKAZONO
MICHAEL MEARS

— CREATIVE TEAM —

Playwright ..... MICHAEL MEARS
Director ..... ROSAMUNDE HUTT
Scenic and Costume Design ..... MARK FRIEND
Lighting Design ..... ANGELO SAGNELLI*
and RICHARD WILLIAMSON
Sound Design ..... CLAIRE WINDSOR
Vocal Coach ..... KATE GODFREY
Production Stage Manager ..... ANT PRIOLA

— PRODUCTION TEAM —

Producer ..... MICHAEL MEARS
Co-producer and Associate ..... MARIA PATTINSON
Production Photographer ..... SIMON RICHARDSON
Original UK Graphic Design ..... JERRY WILLIAMS

Run time: 80 minutes with no intermission

*Member of the Association of Lighting Production and Design (ALPD)

The Production Stage Manager is a Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

The action of the play takes place in various locations in the 20th century: in Budapest, Berlin, London, Chicago, Washington, DC, Long Island, Tinian Island, and Hiroshima. Some verbatim testimonies from survivors in Hiroshima are woven into the text, also the words of Keiji Nakazawa, Leo Szilard, General Paul Tibbets, and others.

I have been researching what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 for many years. But it was only in June of last year that I met an atomic bomb survivor in person for the first time – who was in London to talk about her experiences. 86-year-old Toshiko Tanaka was 6 years old at the time of the Hiroshima bombing but still vividly remembers so much about that day and the following weeks and months. She lost family and school friends, suffered burns and injuries herself, and has had health issues throughout her life. I also learnt that within the last 10 years she has welcomed into her home in Hiroshima, where she still lives, the grandson of American President Truman, the man who ordered the dropping of both atomic bombs. She has also welcomed into her home the grandson of one of the crew members of the Enola Gay, the B-29 bomber that delivered the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Toshiko Tanaka strikes me as the embodiment of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness; a truly inspiring human being who gives me hope that the world's thorny problems can be resolved peacefully.

— Michael Mears

REFLECTIONS

"We thought something would happen, but we never imagined anything like the atomic bomb."

– Resident of wartime Hiroshima

"This day will go down as a black day in the history of mankind."

– Leo Szilard, after the successful nuclear chain reaction experiment in 1942

"The fate of humanity is entirely dependent upon its moral development."

– Albert Einstein

"There's no morality in warfare. You fight a war in order to win it. You leave the moral issue out of it."

– General Paul Tibbets

"An atomic bomb doesn't just fall; someone has to drop it."

– Comment by an 80-year-old woman from Mitaki township, Hiroshima, who lost her husband in the flash of the bomb.

RIKO NAKAZONO

(Shigeko, Woman, Scientist)



Riko Nakazono is a London based Japanese actor, dancer, puppeteer, and singer. Since graduating from the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in NYC, Riko has performed internationally, working with the Royal Shakespeare Company, Jim Henson's Creature Shop, English National Opera, Blind Summit, Vereinigte Bühnen Wien (Vienna), The 92nd Street Y (NYC), and Princess Cruises. Theater includes: ***My Neighbour Totoro*** (Royal Shakespeare Company & Improbable), ***Miss Saigon*** (Vienna), ***Madame Butterfly*** (English National Opera), ***The Secret Silk*** (Princess Cruises), and ***Caligula and the Sea*** (Vault Festival, London). In 2023, Riko performed in ***The Mistake*** by Michael Mears during its UK nationwide tour. TV and film credits include: *Mamma Mia! I Have A Dream* (ITV) and, most recently, *The Head* (Series 3) as series regular Keiko (HBO Max & Hulu Japan).

MICHAEL MEARS

(Playwright, Leo Szilard, General Paul Tibbets, Albert Einstein, and others)



Michael Mears was born in London, where he still lives. With over four decades experience as a professional actor, in theater, film, and television, he has worked for all the major UK theater companies, including the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the Peter Hall Company. He has performed in London's West End on numerous occasions, most notably in Bernard Shaw's ***You Never Can Tell*** and for nine months in the long-running hit ***The Woman in Black***. TV work includes *Sharpe's Rifles* (three seasons), *The Lenny Henry Show* (two seasons), *Parade's End, Sanditon, The Crown, Ghosts,* and *Too Much*. Film work includes *Four Weddings and a Funeral, Little Dorrit, The Good Soldier Schwejk, Last Night in Soho,* and *The Running Man*. As a playwright Michael is best known as a creator of original solo plays. He has written four solo plays for the stage, all performed by himself. His play about homelessness, ***Soup***, won a Scotsman Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival; ***This Evil Thing***, depicting the struggle of Britain's WW1 conscientious objectors, was performed by him over 100 times in the UK, and in nine US states including in Washington, DC, and New York City in 2018. He has written seven solo plays for BBC Radio 4. ***The Mistake*** is Michael's first play for two actors. It premiered at Edinburgh Fringe in 2022, with sold-out runs at London's Arcola Theatre in 2023, followed by a 28-date UK tour.

ROSAMUNDE HUTT

(Director)

Rosamunde has led or co-led Hijinx Theatre, Theatre Centre, and Unicorn, and is artistic director of Pursued by a Bear (***Nothing on Earth*** 2023 by Anna Reynolds). Productions include ***Love, Bombs and Apples*** by Hassan Abdulrazzak, Outstanding Production Theatre Bay Area Awards 2018 (Golden Thread Theatre, San Francisco 2018, Kennedy Center, Washington DC 2019, AIK Productions/ Turtle Key Arts); ***New Nigerians*** by Oladipo

Agboluaje (Arcola, London); ***This Evil Thing*** (Edinburgh Festival, UK & USA tours) and ***The Priest's Tale*** (UK tour) by Michael Mears. She directs for RADA-NYU/TSOA (Shakespeare in Performance) and teaches on the London Study Abroad Programme, Roger Williams University.

MARK FRIEND

(Scenic and Costume Designer)

Mark studied theater design at Wimbledon School of Art, UK. As associate designer: work with Alison Chitty includes Peter Hall's ***Bacchae*** (National Theatre and Festival of Epidavros, Greece), ***Shakespeare In Love*** with Nick Ormerod and director Declan Donnellan; ***The Nutcracker*** at Houston Ballet and ***Elf*** at the Dominion Theatre, both with designer Tim Goodchild. Mark's own design work includes: ***King John*** directed by Sir Trevor Nunn, ***The World Festival of Black Arts and Culture*** in Senegal, and ***Nation*** (National Theatre, with director Melly Still). Touring designs include Michael Mears' ***This Evil Thing*** and ***The Mistake.*** Mark is co-artistic director of the Paint the Lyric Festival in Ithaca, Greece, where he directs and runs mask-making and performance workshops.

CLAIRE WINDSOR

(Sound Designer)

Claire is a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company sound department. Her sound design credits in theater include: ***Happy Days***, ***Three Sisters***, ***Monster***, ***Palace of the End***, ***Flags***, ***Powdermonkey***, ***London Assurance*** (Royal Exchange Theatre); ***Richard III***, ***Much Ado About Nothing***, ***The Taming of the Shrew***, ***Tamburlaine***, ***The Duchess of Malfi***, ***Dido Queen of Carthage***, ***Love For Love***, ***The Jew of Malta***, ***The Rape of Lucrece***, ***Doctor Faustus*** (Royal Shakespeare Company); ***Our Lady of Kibeho*** (Royal & Derngate/Theatre Royal Stratford East); ***Fantastic Mr. Fox*** (Southampton Nuffield/Leicester Curve/Lyric Hammersmith/International tour); ***Company Along The Mile*** (Milan Govedarica and West Yorkshire Playhouse).

ANGELO SAGNELLI

(Co-lighting Designer)

Angelo is a theatrical lighting designer, based between London and New York City, designing for plays, musicals, dance, circus, puppetry, and devised theater. He has an MA in Theatre Production & Design from Guildhall School of Music & Drama and a BFA in Theatrical Lighting Design from Marymount Manhattan College. Recent theater credits include: lighting designer for the award-winning ***A Letter To Lyndon B Johnson Or God: Whoever Reads This First*** (New York, 2025); associate lighting designer, ***Titanique*** (London UK, 2024); lighting designer for award-winning shows ***What If They Are The Baby*** and ***And The Rodeo Burned Down*** (both in London, 2024).

RICHARD WILLIAMSON

(Co-lighting Designer)

Richard trained at LAMDA, UK, is head of production for C venues at the Edinburgh Festival and a trustee of the Kings Head Theatre, and develops industry leading applications zoomOSC and zoomISO. Previous work as lighting designer includes: The Olivier-award winning ***Rotterdam*** (West End / Off Broadway / UK national tour),

Dogs of Europe (Belarus Free Theatre at Barbican Theatre and international tour), ***Richard III*** and ***An Arab Tragedy*** (RSC Swan Theatre/International tour), ***Sampled*** and ***Danse Élargie*** (Sadler's Wells), ***Little Miss Sunshine*** (Arcola Theatre and UK tour); ***New Nigerians, Drones Baby Drones, Shrapnel, Mare Rider, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Mistake*** (Arcola Theatre); ***The Mistake*** (UK tour).

MARIA PATTINSON

(Associate Producer)

Maria is a theater director, coach, writer, and facilitator. Her career started with the Royal Shakespeare Company, where she worked with John Barton on epic Greek drama, and trained as a theater director under Mike Alfreds. Since then, Maria has focused on the development of new work that weaves physical theater, music, and text. She has expertise in making theater in unconventional spaces, including directing outdoor productions and promenade productions. She also has extensive experience leading community arts projects that increase diversity and access to high quality creative experiences. She is a lead facilitator for Mimar Theatre in Birmingham where she works with diverse communities on heritage, wellbeing, and regeneration projects.

KATE GODFREY

(Voice Coach)

Kate trained as a voice coach at The Central School of Speech & Drama, London, and became a member of staff at The Guildhall School of Music & Drama. She joined the National Theatre in 2001 and works on productions in London's West End, and with repertory companies throughout the UK.

In 2015 Kate became head of the Royal Shakespeare Company's voice department and now works as a freelance voice and dialect coach. Recent work includes ***Prima Facie*** (London and New York) starring Jodie Comer, and ***Elektra*** (West End, London) starring Brie Larson.

ANT PRIOLA

(Production Stage Manager)

Ant Priola is an Equity stage manager and multidisciplinary theatre artist proud to be making their off Broadway debut! Past credits include: Various work for the National New Play Network, ***Party?*** (PSM), ***Chesapeake Chicks*** (ASM), and ***Vatican Falls*** (ASM). Many thanks to the staff at 59E59 for giving them this opportunity!

ESSENTIAL THEATRE

Essential Theatre is the umbrella name for Michael Mears' theater projects, created with a select group of collaborators. Creating plays dealing with urgent and important issues – presented in a highly imaginative, inventive style, with a few carefully chosen props and set items and with skillfully crafted soundscapes and lighting. Essential Theatre aims to create small-scale theatre with large-scale ambitions – theatre that has to be seen.

MUSIC

Japanese flute (shakuhachi)
from the album by Adrian Freedman
Music On The Edge of Silence
played by Adrian Freedman
www.adrianfreedman.com

Violin pieces
Kojo (from '***Hachi-Ren***')
composed and played by Chihiro Ono
www.chihiroono.com
www.nonclassical.co.uk
www.chihiroono.bandcamp.com/album/hachiren

Three Piano Études
composed and played by Malcolm McKee

Big Band Swing Pieces
composed by Malcolm McKee

Nuclear Cello
composed and created by Claire Windsor

Rest In Peace
composed by Atsuko Hill

Children's singing by students of the Japanese School, London, directed and recorded by Mika Mochizuki and Atsuko Hill

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Other voices on soundtrack
Emiko Ishii, Leo Ashizawa

SPECIAL THANKS

To the Center on Conscience and War, to Carol Tambor, whose Carol Tambor Incentive Award helped fund ***The Mistake*** for its Edinburgh run in 2022. This 2025 US visit has been made possible with the generous help of friends and supporters in the UK and USA. With the support of the Lansbury House Trust Fund and the Quaker Arts Network. Thanks to Network for Peace, the Peace Pledge Union, and to all at CND, UK, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, to Olivier Stockman and all at Sands Films Studios, London, for the use of rehearsal space and support, to Emiko Ishii, who performed the play in Edinburgh in 2022 & in London in spring 2023, to Simon Richardson for production photography, to Jerry Williams for his original UK graphic design, and to Kate Godfrey for voice work and support for the project.

Thanks to the authors and publishers of the following books and articles for their generous permission to draw on certain passages and speeches for the play: *Hiroshima - The Autobiography of Barefoot Gen* by Nakazawa Keiji (published by Rowman and Littlefield); *Black Rain* by Ibuse Masuji (published by Kodansha International); Material on Leo Szilard courtesy of *Genius in the Shadows* by William Lanouette); *Death in Life* by Robert Lifton (published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson); Studs Terkel's interview with General Paul Tibbets (permission to quote from this given by the Estate of Studs Terkel).

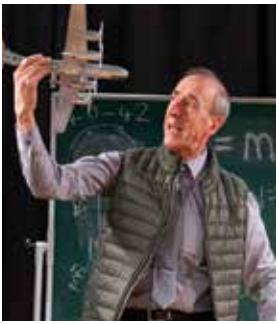
















Photos: Simon Richardson

CURATOR'S NOTE

We've all encountered stories touching on this subject, but when I experienced Michael Mears' ***The Mistake***, it was like seeing everything through a new and completely different lens. That fresh perspective, combined with the sheer theatricality and inventive way the story unfolds, made bringing this production to you not just an honor, but a genuine pleasure. Essential Theater has truly lived up to their name; they've crafted a production and a story that feels absolutely essential to witness. I programmed this for you because it offered me a profound new understanding, and I hope it will resonate just as deeply with you.



VAL DAY
Artistic Director,
59E59 Theaters

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OUR MISSION

59E59 Theaters was established by the Elysabeth Kleinhans Theatrical Foundation in 2004 to grant professional space and expertise to non-profit theater companies premiering their work in New York City. Under the leadership of Val Day, Artistic Director, and Brian Beirne, Managing Director, 59E59 Theaters presents a year-round curated program of Off Broadway plays and musicals that are nurtured and supported by providing performance spaces and equipment as well as production, ticketing, FOH, marketing, and press support. These theater companies receive 80% or more of the ticket revenue and pay no weekly rent to 59E59.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

59E59 Theaters reside on the traditional homelands of the Lenni-Lenape People on the Lenape Island of Mannahatta. We acknowledge the Lenni-Lenape as the original people of the land who were forcefully removed during colonization resulting in erased and excluded peoples and culture. We are grateful for the opportunity to work on the land and honor their elders, past and present alongside future generations for their stewardship and continuing relationship with their territory.

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