

Press Kit

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The Story

A searing portrait of war and prejudice, this new motion picture will take you on a haunting journey into the hearts and minds of the forgotten heroes of World War II – the all-volunteer, Japanese-American 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

In 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, there were 5,000 Japanese Americans serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Overnight, these second-generation citizens were stripped of their official duties – simply because they looked like the enemy.

On the mainland, 120,000 innocent men, women and children were rounded up and swept into remote internment camps, where they would remain behind barbed wire for the duration of the war.

Determined to prove their loyalty, the discharged Hawaiian Territorial Guardsmen of Japanese descent successfully petitioned the U.S. government to allow them to serve. These 1400 Hawaiian Nisei (second-generation Japanese-Americans) became the 100th Infantry Battalion.

In July 1943, after rigorous training, they were sent to North Africa, then Italy. Fiercely courageous, they suffered so many casualties the 100th was soon dubbed the “Purple Heart Battalion.”

In June 1944, they were joined by the 442nd – comprised of Nisei volunteers from the internment camps and Hawaii – and proceeded to liberate five towns in Northern Italy.

That September, they were shipped to Southern France and freed three more towns, before being recruited for what would become one of the top ten most important battles of World War II – the impossibly-dangerous rescue of the Texas “Lost Battalion.”

Two hundred and seventy-five men of the Texas' 36th Division had been trapped for more than a week on a high plateau in France's Vosges Mountains, surrounded by 7000 experienced German soldiers. Allied planes tried dropping them food and ammo, but the supplies kept rolling out of reach down the ridge.

When attempts by much larger regular-Army units failed to break through, the 100th/442nd was ordered to finish the job. Though their ranks were already decimated and the Nisei were unimaginably exhausted, they spent four days and nights in brutal uphill hand-to-hand combat – while suffering frostbite and trench foot so severe they could hardly walk.

The Nisei saved 211 out of the 275 Texans, but suffered more than 800 casualties of their own. During two years of combat, their extraordinary valor resulted in an unparalleled 21 Medals of Honor, 9486 Purple Hearts, eight Presidential Citations, 53 Distinguished Service Crosses, 588 Silver Stars and 5200 Bronze Star Medals – making them the most decorated unit of their size and length of service in American military history.

“ONLY THE BRAVE” is the first motion picture about the 100th/442nd as seen through the eyes of the men who lived it. Written and directed by award-winning playwright **Lane Nishikawa**, the story was based on the actual experiences of his three Nisei uncles who served in the 100th/442nd – as well as other veterans who shared their memories with him over the years.

The film captures the personal tragedies and sacrifices of the soldiers – played by **Jason Scott Lee, Mark Dacascos, Yuji Okumoto, Greg Watanabe and Ken Narasaki** – during the final days of their rescue of the Texas “Lost Battalion” (represented by **Jeff Fahey and Guy Ecker**).

Nishikawa also stars as the platoon leader, who is haunted by the death of his father (**Pat Noriyuki Morita**) and the hardships on the wives and girlfriends left behind (**Tamlyn Tomita and Emily Liu**).

A Mission From Buddha Production, “ONLY THE BRAVE” was produced by Karen Criswell, Eric Hayashi, and Jay Koiwai and funded in part by grants from the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program and donations from families of veterans who served in the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and the Military Intelligence Service – spearheaded by the National Japanese American Historical Society.

This long overdue film has been endorsed by U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye (a WWII veteran and Medal of Honor recipient who lost an arm while serving with the 100th/442nd), U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka, U.S. Congressman Ed Case, and such organizations as the 100th/442nd Veterans Associations of America, the Japanese American Citizens League, the Organization of Chinese Americans, the Japanese American National Museum and the Go For Broke Educational Foundation.

Production Notes

“ONLY THE BRAVE” is the first motion picture to dramatize the story of the legendary 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team from the perspective of the men who actually lived it.

Written and directed by one of the country’s leading Asian American artistic voices, **Lane Nishikawa**, this landmark contribution to our understanding of this often overlooked chapter in American history would not have been possible without the contributions of numerous individuals and companies.

Funding was made possible through an initial grant of \$100,000 from the **California Civil Liberties Public Education Program**, as well as a unique partnership with the **National Japanese American Historical Society** in which additional monies were raised through equity partners and donations from hundreds of families of the 100th/442nd.

“ONLY THE BRAVE’s” extraordinary international cast of actors worked for less than scale to ensure that this film could be made – so that the injustices faced by Japanese-Americans during World War II will never occur again.

Producers **Karen Criswell**, **Eric Hayashi** and **Jay Koiwai** toiled tirelessly for over two years, during which they have played an instrumental role in every aspect of the production – from fundraising through post-production and beyond.

Allowing the film to be shot on a limited budget without compromising its production values, various companies either discounted or donated their services, facilities, or equipment. Among them were **NBC/Universal Studios** for access to its back lot locations, sets, lighting, props, and staff expertise; **Kodak Film** for an additional 100 reels to supplement the film purchased; **Panavision** for use of its state-of-the-art Super 16 cameras at less than its usual rates; and the **New Otani Hotel** in Los Angeles for 100 complimentary room nights to house the cast and crew.

No less important were the remarkable contributions of the film score by composers **Dan Kuramoto** and **Kimo Cornwell**, performed by Asian-American fusion band **Hiroshima**; cinematography by **Michael Wojciechowski** (whose previous credits include “Searching for Debra Winger”); art direction by two-time Emmy nominee **Alan Muraoka**; hair and makeup design by two-time Academy Award nominee **Linda Arnold**; costume design by veteran **Larry Velasco**; military technical assistance by **Dan King** and former Marine Sgt. **Quay Terry** (a medal recipient for

service in Operation Iraqi Freedom); and special effects by **William Dawson** and **Barry McQueary**.

As important were the many volunteers who turned out to help the filmmakers recreate the convincingly realistic battle and wounded field hospital scenes – thanks to the help of First Assistant Director **Ken Wada** and Extras Coordinators **Mike Iwamasa** and **Andrew Chang**, who contacted Asian American Studies groups on college campuses and other organizations.

Principal photography for “ONLY THE BRAVE” took place over 18 days in Los Angeles – ten on the Universal Studios back lot for the exterior of the French town, six days at Ernest Debs Regional Park in Pasadena for the battle scenes, and two days at the George & Sakaye Aratani Japan America Theater’s large 30’ x 60’ stage for the internment camp and other flashback scenes.

Director-writer-actor

LANE NISHIKAWA

Lane Nishikawa – who makes his feature film directorial debut with “**ONLY THE BRAVE**” – has been called “one of Asian America’s most compelling voices” by Academy Award-winning filmmaker Steven Okazaki – who noted that “his work is funny, angry, and deeply moving.”

Upon seeing one of Nishikawa’s one-man shows, the esteemed *Los Angeles Times* theater critic Sylvie Drake declared that “his core is molten lead, his language all friskiness and abrasion...Nishikawa is a poet first, an actor second, a presence always...Nishikawa is at his best when the language takes over and we’re exposed to a tumbling profusion of culture images racing by...”

His acclaimed body of work over two decades has continually broken new ground in examining the human condition of the Asian American experience.

Through his trilogy of critically-acclaimed one-man shows, Nishikawa tackled such sensitive issues as the plight of Asian American writers who can’t get published (“Life in the Fast Lane”), the despair of Asian American actors who are excluded from mainstream roles (“I’m on a Mission from Buddha”), and how the media has stereotyped those who did succeed (“Mifune and Me”).

His celebrated play, “The Gate of Heaven,” portrayed the unlikely lifelong friendship between a Japanese American soldier and the Jewish survivor he liberates from the Dachau concentration camp – and the racial injustices both have endured.

Another, “Gila River,” followed the dreams of a young Nisei baseball star from his internment during World War II to becoming an American soldier and finding himself face to face with his brother who is fighting for Japan.

No less powerful, his trilogy of films – “Forgotten Valor,” “When We Were Warriors” and “Only the Brave” – celebrated the unparalleled courage of the Nisei soldiers who voluntarily fought in World War II while many of their families were imprisoned in internment camps back in the States.

“I write pieces that give an inside view, a sense of the truth about the Asian-American experience – what it’s like to breathe in my skin. I write for change, so that one day I might walk down any American street and not have someone look at me and try to guess which country I’m from,” Nishikawa says of his unique vision which continues to have a profound influence on younger generations in particular through his tours of college campuses and theaters throughout

the U.S., Canada and Europe, as well the PBS broadcast of “I’m on a Mission from Buddha” in the early 1990s.

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The son of an accountant and beauty salon owner, Nishikawa was born in Wahiawa on Oahu, then raised in San Francisco from the time he was three. He returned to Hawaii with his sister every summer to live with his grandmother until her death.

Like other children of Nisei (2nd generation Japanese-Americans), Nishikawa grew up hearing stories about how his relatives endured World War II after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Among them was the imprisonment of his aunts, uncles and cousins in an internment camp in Manzanar, as well as the deployment of his uncles to Europe to fight the Nazi’s as members of the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team. All of it would have a profound influence on his artistic vision as an adult.

Nishikawa worked his way through San Francisco State University in a series of odd jobs – from clerking in a Japanese electronics store to sorting boxes at UPS to handling baggage at the airport. “Most of them were either swing shift or graveyard so I could do theater,” he recalls.

He created his own degree – a B.A. in Asian American Theater – in interdisciplinary studies by combining creative writing, ethnic studies and theater. It was a subject that fascinated him, because “if you look at Asian-American history in terms of literature, there were a lot of novelists, short story writers and poets – but not a lot of playwrights back then.”

While still a student, Nishikawa had already begun writing when he was introduced to the Bay Area’s Asian American Theater Workshop (later known as the Asian American Theater Company).

“I would go see the plays they were doing. What amazed me were these stories about Asian American lives, and that was something I felt I wanted to pursue and look into – because it was exactly what I was writing about in terms of free verse, spoken word poetry, street poetry (whatever you want to call it), it was very similar. But here you had a real structure to it and all the characters were Asian, and it really affected me. And that’s when I started to try to understand the world of theater,” he says.

About the same time, he discovered his passion for the stage through the annual street fair in San Francisco’s Japantown, where he performed his own poetry, free verse, to an audience of more than 10,000. On another occasion, he performed for 3000 prisoners at San Quentin.

“My poetry – they call it ‘spoken word’ right now – half of it was character-driven. My poetry became much more comedic. And then characters would start forming,” he explains of the genesis of his one-man monologues.

In 1985, Nishikawa wrote and performed the first of his now-renowned one-man shows – “**Life in the Fast Lane**” – about the personal turmoil of being an Asian-American writer who can’t get published.

“The show was set up as if I was being interviewed in a television studio. I was in a chair, answering questions, but the audience never heard the questions, just my answers, the personal struggle of a Japanese-American writer,” he explains.

“Between the answers, performance pieces unfolded in vignettes: remembering my grandmother back in Wahiawa, growing up in a Japanese and black neighborhood in San Francisco, hearing a bigot’s view on his daughter’s marrying an Asian guy, taking an inside look at an American internment camp, going to Hiroshima for the first time, seeing the ghost of my uncle, a 442nd soldier.”

Produced by Eric Hayashi (now a producer on “Only The Brave”), the show toured on and off for four years throughout North America, including a six-week engagement at the Odyssey Theater in Los Angeles.

Beginning in 1986, Nishikawa served as the Artistic Director for the **Asian American Theater Company** for ten seasons – where he was responsible for selecting and staging six productions a year from submissions across the country, along with an intensive reading series that presented six plays in six weekends. In collaboration with Hayashi as the executive director, he managed to accomplish the near-impossible for community-based theater groups: move AACT into the ranks of an equity house, so their performers could be paid and regarded as professionals.

In 1991, he debuted his biting comedy, “**I’m On A Mission From Buddha**,” about the plight of Asian American actors trying to break into mainstream roles in a country where “American” means “white.”

The explosive 90-minute show featured 18 vignettes in which he played a repertoire of characters – ranging from a stand-up comic and Japanese rap artist to a sushi-fearing redneck and 442nd Nisei veteran of World War II. He also wove in candid, autobiographical monologues about the humorous ironies of growing up Japanese in America and the manic frustrations of being an actor with an Asian face.

Where did the material come from? “In all the plays I had done, I was in leads or good supporting roles. And then you go down to L.A. and audition, and there would be like two lines: ‘Let me take your blood pressure.’ ‘That bullet came pretty close to an artery.’ Yes, the industry has definitely changed in the last five to ten years. Still, when you look at it, it’s a very minute number of roles that are offered that aren’t martial arts related.”

Following a major national tour, also produced by Hayashi, “I’m On A Mission From Buddha” played at the Los Angeles Theater Center for almost two months, then was adapted for

television and premiered on PBS' KQED-TV in San Francisco, on January 25, 1991, and was subsequently broadcast on public stations throughout the country.

One of his most moving pieces, "**The Gate of Heaven**," was unveiled in 1996. Co-written and performed with Victor Talmadge, the powerful story of an extraordinary friendship between a Japanese American soldier and the Jewish survivor he rescues from Dachau was inspired by his uncle's experience as a member of the Army unit that liberated the notorious concentration camp during World War II.

"With nothing but a bare stage, two actors and a few props, 'The Gate of Heaven' provides a powerful examination of a 50-year bond between two men...All by themselves Talmadge and Nishikawa carry the bulk of the highly emotional play, gracefully balancing humor and pathos and delivering unforgettable performances," wrote Mark Nishimura in the *Hokubei Mainichi*. As well, the *Los Angeles Times* praised the uplifting story of friendship and honor as "poignantly alive."

"The Gate of Heaven" – which later became the basis of Nishikawa's first film – ran for five weeks at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego as part of its 1997 regular season, then moved to the Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. for another full run. Among its other notable engagements, it was presented at the U.S. Holocaust Museum on the 50th commemoration of the Holocaust.

In 1997, Nishikawa spent a year as the Co-Artistic Director of the Eureka Theater, which was known for mounting socially-conscious works, and later served as a Resident Director at the prestigious San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, where his interpretation of one of the classics was mounted with a multi-ethnic cast.

Nishikawa's third one-man play, "**Mifune and Me**," looked at 150 years of Asian-American images, both positive and negative.

"Like 'The Gate of Heaven' and 'I'm on a Mission From Buddha,' 'Mifune' transforms real-life stories into dramatic vignettes that explore the human condition through humor, insight and empathy," wrote Rita Goldman in *Centerpiece: The Maui Arts & Cultural Center Magazine*.

For its engagement on the Stanford University campus, the *Stanford Lively Arts* noted that "as a child growing up in Hawaii, Nishikawa idolized movie-star Toshiro Mifune, the action hero who fought thousands on screen, always emerging unscathed. As a playwright, actor and all-around irrepressible wit, Nishikawa has emerged as a hero to many, exposing the absurdity and hilarity beneath stereotypes that shadow Asian American lives. In this compelling series of vignettes, he pokes fun at the media's portrayal of Asian Americans, as he has experienced it in his quest to conquer Hollywood and his own identity. His many characters expose the borders that challenge our collective understanding of ourselves and the communities we thrive in."

Of the piece, Nishikawa explains: “As with all my plays, I look at my material from three points of view: the personal, the historical and the social, which is sometimes a bit political. As much as I like to point a finger at any given situation, I’ll point that finger at myself, too. I love humor. If you can’t laugh at yourself, how can you expect to be taken seriously?”

In 1999, he adapted “The Gate of Heaven” into his first film, “**When We Were Warriors**” – made possible through a grant from the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund.

For the 35-minute short feature, Nishikawa and Victor Talmadge reprised their roles in the drama about two men facing unfathomable obstacles and persevering to find humanism in their lives and the world that surrounds them. The film opens with Sam Yamamoto, a Nisei, meeting Leon Ehrlich, a Jewish man whom Sam has liberated from the Dachau concentration camp in Germany during World War II – then follows the evolution of their incredible bond as they each survive personal and social injustices, along with psychological wounds.

His second film, “**Forgotten Valor**,” won the Best Short Feature in the Hawaiian International Film Festival in 2001.

“This is a highly professional, highly polished endeavor,” wrote *Sacramento Bee* film critic Joe Baltake. “...There are moments in ‘Forgotten Valor’ that are reminiscent of William Wyler’s ‘The Best Years of Our Lives’ (1946). Nishikawa gets at the undercurrent of discontent that prevents men like George from achieving any degree of happiness....The film is extremely relevant, even though it’s been inspired by events that happened more than five decades ago. That war is still very much alive inside the minds and hearts of some of its survivors.”

In 2001, he returned to playwriting with “**Gila River**,” which followed the dreams of a young Nisei baseball star from his internment during WWII to fighting in the Pacific for America and coming face to face with his brother who is fighting for Japan.

A year later, when the National Endowment of the Arts funded an official White House Millennium Project pairing 50 nationally-recognized artists (from actors to filmmakers) with hosting arts organizations in each of the 50 states, the Maui Arts & Cultural Center (representing Hawaii) selected Nishikawa as their recipient. The three-month residency that followed resulted in his play, “**When We Were One**,” inspired by his grandparents’ unlikely love story and the history of Maui during the first 25 years of the 20th Century.

In 2002, he received his second California Civil Liberties Public Education Program Grant, allowing him to develop his first feature length motion picture, “**Only the Brave**.”

In 2004, Nishikawa spent a ten-week residency helping 28 prisoners at the Maui County Correctional Center write and perform their play, which he directed at the Maui Arts & Culture Center. It was voted Best Play of the Year by the *Maui News*.

Over the years, he has taught creative writing and acting at Stanford University, San Francisco State University and Maui Community College, among other schools.

His unique style of free verse – which became the basis of his one-man plays – have been published in *Time to Greez: Incantations from the Third World*, *Ayumi: The Japanese American Anthology*, *Bridge Magazine*, and *The 20th Century Edition of Gidra*.

In recognition of the extraordinary impact of his work, Nishikawa has received numerous honors over the years – including a Solo Performance Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National J.A.C.L. Ruby Yoshino Schaar Playwright Award, the Henry and Chiyo Kuwahara Award from the J.A.C.L., the Japanese American Community Cultural Center Humanitarian Award, the George Nakashima Peace Award, special recognition from The Harvard Foundation, and the first Asian-American to receive a UC Regents Fellowship from the University of California – Santa Barbara.

Actor

JASON SCOTT LEE

Never one to be stereotyped into either ethnic or martial arts roles, Jason Scott Lee has drawn rave reviews for his extraordinary acting talent in both action and dramatic roles.

Born in Los Angeles, the third generation of Hawaiian/Chinese ancestry, Lee was raised on the island of Oahu, where his family settled when his was two.

He began acting at the age of 19, while attending Fullerton Junior College in California, through the encouragement of drama teacher Sal Romeo, who would also become his mentor. Foregoing a college degree, Lee joined Romeo's "Friends and Artists Theatre Ensemble" (F.A.T.E.) in Hollywood – where its tiny 50-seat black box theatre became his sanctuary for exploring and focusing his craft in acting. At the same time, Lee began landing small roles on television and in films like "Born in the East L.A."

His first major break came in the critically-acclaimed independent film, "Map of the Human Heart." A year later, Lee starred in the box office hit, "Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story," as the legendary martial arts phenomenon, opposite Lauren Holly as Linda Lee. While preparing for "Dragon," he trained in Jeet Kune Do and the Filipino fighting arts, and has since become a certified instructor under Sifu Jerry Potet.

He went on to achieve international fame as the classic character of Mowgli in Walt Disney Pictures' "The Jungle Book" – then take on such major roles as the lead in London's West End Stage production of "The King and I" and the voice of David in Disney's animated "Lilo and Stitch."

Actor

MARK DACASCOS

In 2006, Mark Dacascos can also be seen starring opposite Lucy Liu and Cedric the Entertainer in the New Line Cinema/Rat Entertainment action-comedy film, "The Cleaner," and with Jason Scott Lee and Kuno Becker in Harvey Weinstein's 18th century film epic, "Nomad."

He balances his starring turns in film with regular appearances as "The Chairman" on the Food Network's hit series, "Iron Chef: America," as well as participating in Shakespeare intensives and pursuing the study of his acting craft. Dacascos studied with one of the industry's finest coaches, Howard Fine, and continues to work with the highly esteemed Larry Moss, Lisa Robertson, and the renowned Guild Hall's head of voice, Lady Patsy Rodenburg.

Born in Hawaii but raised in Germany, the multi-lingual actor is of Japanese, Irish, Filipino, Spanish and Chinese descent. He began his training in Kung Fu at a very young age under the tutelage of his own Martial Arts champion parents, and continues to learn and train with several other well respected teachers.

Dacascos has starred in over 20 feature films, including "Cradle 2 the Grave" with Jet Li, the cult classics "Only the Strong" and "Drive," the French hit "Crying Freeman," and the internationally-acclaimed "Brotherhood of the Wolf." Dacascos also starred in the popular syndicated series, "The Crow: Stairway to Heaven," inspired by the movie.

"Only the Brave was one of the most heartfelt and meaningful projects I've had the honor of working on," he says.

Actor YUJI OKUMOTO

Born and raised in Hollywood, California, Yuji Okumoto began his acting career over 25 years ago. He has since been featured in more than 30 motion pictures, including "Pearl Harbor," and appeared in several dozen television shows, including "Knots Landing" and "JAG."

After graduating from Hollywood High, Okumoto took his first acting class while attending Cal State University in Fullerton. He was discovered and signed by an agent while performing in Arthur Kopit's play, "Indians." His first professional role was on the CBS daytime drama, "The Young and the Restless," and his big career break came in 1985 as the lead bully in "Karate Kid 2," starring Pat Morita.

Okumoto is spending early 2006 filming in the Philippines in "The Pearl of the Orient." He currently resides in Seattle, where he owns and operates his own Hawaiian restaurant, called Kona Kitchen.

"It was truly an honor to be part of 'Only the Brave,' he says. "The sacrifices made by the men of the 100th, 442nd, 522nd, and the MIS should never be forgotten. Hopefully, this film will continue to remind all of us the debt of gratitude owed to these individuals."

Actor

TAMLYN TOMITA

Since making her screen debut in “The Karate Kid, Part II” with Pat “Noriyuki” Morita, Tamlyn Tomita has become one of the most popular Asian-American actresses working today.

Tomita was born on a U.S. military base in Okinawa, Japan, to a Nisei father and a Okinawan-Filipina mother, and raised in Los Angeles’ San Fernando Valley.

Selected by *People* magazine in 1991 as one of that year’s “50 Most Beautiful People,” Tomita’s most notable starring roles to date include Wayne Wang’s “The Joy Luck Club” (as one of the daughters), Kayo Hatta’s “Picture Bride” (as a turn-of-the-century Hawaiian plantation worker), and Alan Parker’s “Come See the Paradise” (opposite Dennis Quaid in the story of a Japanese-American family interned during World War II).

Her extensive body of work to date includes the Robert Rodriguez-directed segment of “Four Rooms,” opposite Antonio Banderas; Richard La Gravenese’s “Living Out Loud,” opposite Holly Hunter; Greg Pak’s indie cult hit, “Robot Stories”; Roland Emmerich’s “The Day After Tomorrow,” reuniting her with Quaid; and the upcoming Brazilian-Japanese film, “Gaijin II.”

On television, Tomita has been a series regular on “Santa Barbara” and “The Burning Zone”; co-starred in recurring roles on such major series as “JAG,” “24,” “Babylon 5,” and “Crossing Jordan”; and starred in the movies, PBS’ “Storytime” and “Hiroshima Maiden,” NBC’s “To Heal a Nation”; and “Hiroshima: Out of the Ashes.”

The winner of a Drama-Logue Award for her performance in “Winter Crane” at the Fountain Theater in Los Angeles, Tomita has starred in a number of stage productions – including the world premiere of “A Distant Shore” at the Kirk Douglas Theatre; “Question 27, Question 28” for East West Players/Japanese American National Museum; “The Square” at the Mark Taper Forum, Too; “Summer Moon” for the A Contemporary Theatre in Seattle and South Coast Repertory; Philip Kan Gotanda’s “Day Standing on its Head” at the Manhattan Theatre Club; “Nagasaki Dust” for the Philadelphia Theatre Company; and “Don Juan: A Meditation” for the Mark Taper Forum’s Taper, Too.

Actor PAT MORITA

It was an honor for everyone involved with “ONLY THE BRAVE” to work with the legendary Noriyuki Pat Morita in one of his very last films.

More than just another role for this popular star and Academy Award-nominee, Morita actually lived aspects of the real-life story that inspired this new motion picture.

The son of migrant workers, Morita contracted spinal tuberculosis at the age of two and was taken away from his parents to spend the next nine years in a sanitarium confined in a body cast.

After extensive surgery, he was finally able to walk. But the day he left the hospital, at the age of 11, he was met by an armed FBI agent, who transported him from California to the Gila Internment Camp in Arizona, where his family was already confined. They were later moved to the Tule Lake Internment Camp in northern California.

Each week, when fresh newspapers arrived, Morita along with the other Japanese-American prisoners, early read the latest news of the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team’s battlefield triumphs. But there was also much to mourn as husbands and sons who had enlisted from the camp never returned.

So dedicated was Morita to honoring these men that he personally appealed to “Karate Kid” director John Avildsen to re-write his Miyagi character as a 442nd veteran who had received the Congressional Medal of Honor for valor under fire.

At the end of the war, the Morita family was released and settled in Sacramento, where his father opened a successful Chinese restaurant. His teenage son got his first taste of performing by entertaining the customers with jokes as the emcee for group dinners.

Following high school graduation, Morita worked his way up to head of computer operations for an aerospace company. Itching to perform, however, he quit and followed his passion to Los Angeles, where he became a member of The Groundlings.

After years of doing stand-up and guest appearances on television, Morita’s first big break came when he was cast by director Garry Marshall in the recurring role of the owner of the malt shop in “Happy Days.”

An even bigger break came in the early 1980s, when at the age of 53 he beat out stiff competition to win the role that would make him a household name – as the wise

teacher who mentors a young Ralph Macchio in “The Karate Kid.” The surprise hit spawned three sequels during the next decade.

Among other successes, Morita went on to star in ABC detective series, “Ohara,” and provided the voice of the Emperor of China in the animated motion picture, “Mulan.”

Actor

JEFF FAHEY

Born in Olean, New York, Jeff Fahey moved to Buffalo when he was 10 and attended Father Baker's High School. Following graduation in 1972, he traveled around the world doing odd jobs – including crewing on a fishing boat, driving an ambulance in Germany, living on a Kibbutz in Israel and spending time in India.

He then returned to Buffalo and joined the Studio Arena Theatre. From there, Fahey moved to New York City, where he studied with Myra Rastova and began performing in off-Broadway theatre and daytime television dramas. He is a co-founder of the American Road Production Workshop Series at the Raft Theater in New York.

Fahey first gained attention as a motion picture actor in Lawrence Kasdan's "Silverado," in which he played Brian Dennehy's deputy, a cold-blooded killer with a thirst for vengeance.

He went onto to star in the acclaimed live television play, "The Execution of Raymond Graham," and the TNT mini-series, "444 Days." He starred for over two years in the daytime serial, "One Life To Live." On stage, he has also appeared in the Broadway revival of "Brigadoon," toured with "Oklahoma," performed in Paris in "West Side Story," and in London in "Orphans" with Albert Finney.

Actor

GUY ECKER

Named by the Latin edition of *People* magazine (Latin Edition) as one of Latin America's most beautiful people, Guy Ecker has received "Best Leading Actor" awards from the Entertainment Critics Association in New York and the Association of Critics and Commentators of the Arts in Miami. He was also given two people's choice awards by "TV y Novelas" in Mexico City and Colombia.

Ecker was born in Brazil, raised in Latin America, and speaks three languages fluently. As a child, he acted in several plays and was cast in two commercials for the U.S. market.

After graduating from high school, Ecker moved to the U.S. for the first time, where he attended the University of Texas in Austin. At the same time, he trained horses and taught dance lessons at Arthur Murray Dance Studios.

He caught the acting bug while studying international business, then moved to Los Angeles after obtaining his degree. While waiting for his first acting break, he waited tables and ran a translation and dubbing company. Leads in two independent films followed.

After co-starring in a third, he accepted an acting job in Colombia in the mini-series, "La Otra Raya del Tigre" – which was so successful that the network cast him in "Café con aroma de mujer." "Café" was not only an overwhelming success, it opened the door to an international market. Ecker began receiving offers from all over Latin America, before signing a contract with the world's largest Spanish-speaking network, Televisa, in Mexico City.

He starred in two more highly-rated telenovelas for Televisa: "La Mentira" and "Salome," which made him a household name among Hispanic viewers in the U.S.

Now one of the most popular Spanish-speaking actors in the world, Ecker most recently spent the last two years in a recurring role on NBC's primetime series, "Las Vegas."

Actor GREG WATANABE

“I feel very connected to the stories of the men in ‘Only The Brave,’” says co-star Greg Watanabe. “Being Japanese American, I’m very proud to have been a part of this production. The more I learn about the experiences from the Nisei who were interned or those in the 100th or 442nd, the more I feel connected to my own history. I think an Asian American actor is very lucky to play a character for whom he has great empathy in a story that is important to himself and his community.”

Watanabe, whose career to date has been mostly on stage, was born in Los Angeles and raised in nearby Fullerton, CA.

It was while taking an acting class at the University of California in Berkeley that Watanabe discovered his passion for performing, and soon after switched his major from English literature to the Dramatic Arts. He later spent a summer studying at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco.

His professional debut came as a member of a touring theater production for the Imagination Company, which visited schools in the Bay Area and performed short interactive plays for students.

Through a twist of fate, Watanabe met “ONLY THE BRAVE” director-writer Lane Nishikawa and producer Eric Hayashi while both were running the Asian American Theater Company in San Francisco. During college, Watanabe became involved with an Asian American group called Wind and Water, then its spin-off, a sketch comedy group called Actors Anonymous, both of which performed at AATC.

Nishikawa subsequently cast him in a production of “Webster Street Blues” at AATC, which Watanabe calls one of his favorite theatrical experiences.

Later, Philip Kan Gotanda cast him in his play, “Fishhead Soup,” at AATC, and both him and Nishikawa in “Ballad of Yachiyo,” which was staged at the Berkeley Repertory Theater, Seattle Repertory Theater and the Public Theater in New York.

The highlight of Watanabe’s stage career to date, he says, was playing the central character of Naotake Fukushima in director Les Waters’ production of “Summer Moon” – both in a Sundance Playwrights Lab workshop and for the world premiere production at A Contemporary Theater in Seattle. The performance earned him an Annual Footlight Award from the *Seattle Times* for “stellar acting” in a stage play.

In the last several years, he's had guest appearances in such television series as "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Crossing Jordan," and "JAG."

"ONLY THE BRAVE" marks Watanabe's his first major film role.

Actor KEN NARASAKI

Actor and playwright Ken Narasaki is a founding member of the Asian Pacific American Media Coalition and the former literary manager and artistic associate at East West Players – the first Asian American Theater Company in the U.S.

Born in Seattle, he studied acting at the city's elite Cornish School of the Arts, as well as the famed American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco.

In 2002, he played the lead in a primetime German network series, "Zwei Profis," for which he spent two years shooting there. He has also been featured in a recurring role on "Chicago Hope," and in a number of independent films and television movies.

Narasaki's recent stage appearances include Chay Yew's "A Winter People" at the Boston Court Theatre and the international co-production of "The Theory of Everything" for the Singapore Repertory Theatre and East West Players of Los Angeles.

To date, he appeared in over 50 plays – including productions at the Asian American Theater Company of San Francisco (where he won the DramaLogue Award for his performance in "Yankee Dawg You Die"), Berkeley Repertory Theater, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, the Mark Taper Forum, the Sundance Institute, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Narasaki's play, "Ghosts and Baggage," had its world premiere at the Los Angeles Theater Center and readings at the Mark Taper Forum Asian Theater Workshop, ASK Theatre Projects, and the San Diego Asian American Repertory. Another Narasaki work, "Innocent When You Dream," had readings at the East West Players, the Japanese American National Museum, Theatre Mu (Minneapolis) and the Asian American Repertory Theatre (San Diego).

Actor EMILY LIU

Emily Liu began her career in front of the cameras as an L.A.-based entertainment reporter for Sun Movie Channel Taiwan. After deciding to pursue acting, she quickly earned a recurring role on ABC's daytime drama, "Port Charles," and the lead role in the independent film, "Rent to Own." She can currently be seen as a doctor in the ABC series, "What About Brian."

Liu studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London and the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, and continues to study her craft in Los Angeles.

A veteran in numerous theatre productions, Liu is a member of two award-winning theatre companies: Lodestone Theatre Ensemble and Theatre of NOTE. She has also worked with the award-winning Ziggurat Theatre Ensemble and performed in productions at The Theatre @ Boston Court and the 800-seat Japan America Theatre.

Born in Salt Lake City and raised in Los Angeles, Liu grew up speaking Mandarin and trained in many disciplines, including ballet, tap, jazz, piano, tennis, swimming, and horseback riding. Her talent for the arts was apparent when she won high school competitions for her oil paintings and regional/state competitions in ballroom dance.

Liu received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Notre Dame. While in college, she found time to act in student films and perform with the dance team. Her parents encouraged her to pursue business, and upon graduation, she worked in advertising for Saatchi & Saatchi. Soon after, she prepped to take over her family's business, traveling frequently to Asia, but after realizing that corporate life was not for her, Liu returned to her true passion: the performing arts.

She attributes her work ethic and drive to her parents, who came to this country as immigrants and built their successful business, Tireco, Inc. Liu is the granddaughter of General Liu Fang-Wu, a Chinese national war hero who won the Burma War in WWII.

She sat on the Asian Alumni Board of Directors at Notre Dame and was invited back to campus as a guest speaker on "Asians in the Media." Liu recently formed her production company, Sweet Violet Films, to bring strong, complex females of diverse backgrounds to the big screen.

Producer

KAREN CRISWELL

Independent producer Karen Criswell first met “ONLY THE BRAVE” director-writer Lane Nishikawa in 1987, while he was serving as the artistic director of the Asian American Theater Company in San Francisco.

Over the years, they stayed in touch, then met again in the late 1990s to discuss a film he wanted to make about the 442nd. Since she had just finished a trilogy of three Latino-themed short films, they decided to take the same approach – especially with the number of possible stories to dramatize and such an array of perspectives from which to honor these amazing men and their families.

Thus began their collaboration in which Criswell served as a producer on Nishikawa’s critically-acclaimed trilogy: the 35-minute “When We Were Warriors” in 1999, “Forgotten Valor” (which later won the award for Best Short Feature in the Hawaiian International Film Festival) in 2000, and the feature-length motion picture “Only the Brave” in 2005.

Criswell began her entertainment career in theater – first with the Nite Owl Players in Oklahoma of which she was a founding member, then for almost ten years in the Bay Area, where she directed and produced everything from political theater to opera for companies that included Teatro ng Tanan, The San Francisco Mime Troupe, West Bay Opera, Theatreworks, and Common Cultural Practice.

It was while working with the West Bay Opera Company, under the general direction of Maria Holt, that she gained experience in the multi-media world, which led to a creative relationship with Eaglevision Productions in Silicon Valley.

She was a founding partner in Ce Acatl Productions, an independent production company specializing in Latino and Native American themed films. For Ce Acatl, she served as the executive producer on their short film, “Libertad,” which won the award for Best Actress at the Wine Country Film Festival in 1998, and produced their shorts compilation, “Tapas,” which screened to standing room only at the first LA International Latino Film Festival (LALIFF) founded by Edward James Olmos.

She made her directorial debut with the short feature, “The Other Side,” in 2001, to coincide with the formation of Koncept Films, designed to specialize in productions by

promising first-time directors, writers and producers. She is currently in development on two feature films, both by first-time feature film writers.

Criswell served as the Short Film Jury Chairperson for the Taos Talking Pictures Festival for six consecutive years.

Since 1996, she has lived in Los Angeles, and worked as Facility Operations Manager in charge of production facility operations for Dreamworks SKG.

Producer

ERIC HAYASHI

“ONLY THE BRAVE” director-writer Lane Nishikawa and producer Eric Hayashi have been friends since college and professional collaborators for 20 years.

Hayashi was a founding member of the Asian American Theater Company in San Francisco and served as its first Executive Director.

In 1985, Nishikawa became the company’s Artistic Director, and in 1990 Hayashi began his tenure as Artistic Director with AATC. Together they were responsible for presenting and co-producing more than 30 theatrical runs annually – including performances by Culture Clash, Karina Epperlein, Chicano Secret Service, Thick Description and David Cohen; “The Project X Series” featuring Ernesto Sanchez; dialogues with writers David Henry Hwang & Luis Valdez; and “Tsunami,” a solo performance festival featuring Amy Hill, Canyon Sam and “Charlie” Chin, among others.

During that time, Hayashi also produced the national and European tours of Nishikawa’s critically-acclaimed one-man shows and helped adapt “I’m on a Mission From Buddha” for airing on PBS in 1991. He directed the theatrical version of that show.

In 2000, Hayashi served as the line producer on Nishikawa’s second film, “Forgotten Valor,” which won the award for Best Short Feature at the Hawaiian International Film Festival a year later.

In 1993, he left the Asian American Theater Company to join the national staff of the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C. as the Assistant Program Director of the Theater Program, where he was responsible for managing an \$8.3 million grant program budget with over 300 grantees annually.

Two years later, Hayashi was made the Executive Director of the Kansas Arts Commission, responsible for a full-time staff of seven and an annual budget of more than \$2 million. During his tenure, he also redesigned the state agency’s granting programs and created and formed the Arts Industry Partnerships program. While there, he was a board member of the Kansas Film Commission.

From there, he became the Interim Director of the accredited Institute for Teledramatic Arts & Technology at California State University, Monterey Bay, a school that integrates the disciplinary practices of film, television, video, radio and theater. He simultaneously served as the Director of Digital Stage and Screen Productions (which

produced such broadcast programs as the weekly television show, “Quest for Excellence”) and as the Interim Director of CSU’s state-of-the-art World Theater.

In 1999, Hayashi relocated to Los Angeles to serve as the Executive Director and chief executive officer of the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center and its 880-seat Japan America Theater, Isamu Noguchi designed Plaza, George J. Doizaki & Community Galleries, Franklin D. Murphy Library, Memorial Court and James Irvine Japanese Garden. The JACCC is a major presenter of international work from Asia, and is a core developer of domestic work by Asian American artists.

Most recently, he was the Arts Division Manager for the City of Walnut Creek’s Arts, Recreation & Community Services Department. In the position, he was responsible for a \$10.2 million biennial budget; oversight of a major regional performing arts facility with four theaters and a resident repertory company; the city’s Visual Arts Program, including the regional Bedford Gallery; and the city’s Civic Arts Education Program, which offers over 600 classes on two campuses.

Hayashi holds a B.A. in Film/Creative Arts from San Francisco State University. He is currently a member of the executive committee of the Board of Directors for the Western States Arts Federation, a funding and service organization covering the 12 western states.

Hayashi’s four uncles, the Yoshino Brothers, all served as members of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), U.S. Army or the Merchant Marines during World War II.

Producer

JAY KOIWAI

Of the more than 100 films, television shows and commercial productions that Jay Koiwai has worked on over the last 25 years, none has been as important to him personally as “ONLY THE BRAVE.”

Both his parents and grandparents were confined to the Minidoka, Idaho, internment camp during World War II, after losing everything. He also had two “uncles” (family friends) who served in Company I of the 442nd, which was the first to break through to the Texas “Lost Battalion.”

“I’m happy to have been able to share ‘Only The Brave’ with them and thank all veteran's I've met along this journey. I feel I have worked my whole life for this moment and proud to be a part of telling their story of sacrifice, bravery and endurance for generations to come, never to be forgotten,” he says.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Koiwai spent two years at Clarion State College, then traveled the entire Continental U.S., before settling in the Bay Area in 1973.

He was attending West Valley Community College, when he suddenly decided to pursue an acting career as a result of seeing the NBC television drama, "Farewell to Manzanar" – featuring a cast of Japanese-American actors (including Pat Morita) in the story of the notorious World War II internment camp.

Koiwai subsequently took master classes with Jerzy Grotowski at the Acting Conservatory of the Arts, and spent a summer performing with the world-renown San Francisco Mime troupe. He also transferred to California State University in Los Angeles, where he graduated with a B.A. in Theater Arts in 1979.

Meanwhile, he had joined the East West Players in L.A., and begun acting professionally with a guest starring role in Lee Major’s TV series, “The Fall Guy,” and an appearance in Francis Ford Coppola’s “One From the Heart.”

It was after producing over 40 theater productions and while studying for a master’s degree in stage direction that a fateful encounter with Danny DeVito diverted him into film and television. Koiwai had produced a musical at the Beverly Hills Playhouse and rewired the entire electrical system to accommodate the massive lighting design. Directly following the engagement, DeVito was scheduled to produce a play starring his then-girlfriend, Rhea Perlman. When an El Nino storm swamped the city,

knocking out utilities, DeVito couldn't get the lights on in the theater. So he phoned Koiwai, who thought it was a prank call and hung up. DeVito rang back, urging Koiwai to stay on the line: "What have you got to lose? I just may be him!" When Koiwai arrived at the theater, DeVito was waiting for him in the street holding a parking space, while the actors were inside rehearsing in the dark. Koiwai ended up being the Lighting Designer for the show.

DeVito subsequently introduced Koiwai to his associates in the technical side of the business, allowing the young man to network into the industry – where he gained invaluable experience in almost every aspect of production.

Soon after, Koiwai was hired by Roger Corman during the heyday of New World Pictures when Ron Howard had directed his first feature, "Grand Theft Auto," James Cameron ("Titanic") switched from truck driver to movie model maker, and Gale Anne Hurd (who later married Cameron and produced many of his films) went from PA to running the entire production office.

Koiwai also advised producer Michael Toshiyuki Uno on his Academy Award-nominated short film, "The Silence," a story of a young Vietnamese woman dedicated to the dead until a wounded American soldier lifts her back into life with the living.

And in 1983, he met Jackie Kong, then a 21-year-old female Chinese American filmmaker making her directorial debut with "The Being, starring Martin Landau for New World Pictures. It was the beginning of a long collaboration in which Koiwai would co-produce three cult hits directed by Kong for New World Pictures.

The first, "Night Patrol," in 1984, starred Murray Langston (the Unknown Comic), Pat Paulsen, Linda Blair, and Pat Morita in a cop caper comedy. The second, "The Underachievers," in 1987, starred Eddie Albert and Barbara Carrera in a slapstick comedy about adult education. And the third, also in 1987, was a splatter comedy called "Blood Diner," about two caterers with a secret ingredient.

When he's not working on productions, Koiwai serves as the president of DVF, Inc., producing live multi-media special event programs for convention associations, corporate clients and non-profit community organizations in Southern California.