

The Democracy Center presents 'Breaking the Frame: Two Solo Shows on Art and Identity' from August 21–23

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Japanese American National Museum

(Democracy Center) at the [Japanese American National Museum](#) (JANM) presents [Breaking the Frame: Two Solo Shows on Art and Identity](#) from Thursday, August 21, through Saturday, August 23, 2025, in the Tateuchi Democracy Forum. A post-show Q&A panel with the artists will follow the matinee performance on August 23. Tickets are \$20 and are available at [janm.org/democracy](#).

Breaking the Frame: Two Solo Shows on Art and Identity explores what happens when two Asian American solo performers fall deeply in love with Western mediums—movies and opera—only to discover that they

both may be in too deep. In the wake of recent “yellowface” accusations on Broadway, Hmong-American actor Bee Vang of Clint Eastwood’s Gran Torino and local-born actor and opera singer Kurt Kanazawa deliver emotionally charged and satirical indictments of two Western art forms that continue to harm Asian Americans and BIPOCs, today. The performance is directed by Jeff Liu (East West Players) and co-directed by Kalina Ko (Hedgerow Theatre Company), with lighting design and assistant direction by Josh Bennett.

Opening the program is Vang’s solo show, *Your Movie Guide to Life* (2025), where the actor and lifelong cinephile delves into the shaping power of cinema, Hmong history, his anti-war activism, and his leading role in Gran Torino. This forty-five-minute solo performance weaves together existential horror in films with Bee’s inherited histories—both personal and geopolitical.

Closing the program is Kanazawa’s solo show, *L’OPERA!* (2024), about a fun-loving, Japanese and Filipino-American opera singer who gets into The Juilliard School...then loses his voice. A funny,

multilingual fifty-two-minute solo performance that travels through the streets of New York City, Southern Italy, Hollywood, and Beijing and features live performances of songs, including originals, L'OPERA! is anything but Euro-centric classical.

About the Japanese American National Museum (JANM)

Established in 1985, JANM promotes understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience. Located in the historic Little Tokyo district of downtown Los Angeles, JANM is a center for civil

rights, ensuring that the hard-fought lessons of the World War II incarceration are not forgotten. A Smithsonian Affiliate and one of America's Cultural Treasures, JANM is a hybrid institution that straddles traditional museum categories. JANM is a center for the arts as well as history. It provides a voice for Japanese Americans and a forum that enables all people to explore their own heritage and culture. Since opening to the public in 1992, JANM has presented over one hundred exhibitions onsite while traveling forty exhibits to venues such as the Smithsonian Institution and the Ellis Island Museum in the United States, and to several leading cultural museums in Japan and South America. JANM's Pavilion is closed for renovation; programs will continue on the JANM campus, throughout Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, and Southern California, and beyond from early January 2025 through late 2026. For more information, visit janm.org/OnTheGo or follow us on social media @jamuseum.



Solo Performers Kurt Kanazawa and Bee Vang

About the Daniel K. Inouye National Center for the Preservation of Democracy (Democracy Center)

The Democracy Center is a place where visitors can examine the Asian American experience, past and present, and talk about race, identity, social justice, and the shaping of democracy. It convenes and educates people of all ages about democracy to transform attitudes, celebrate culture, and promote civic engagement; educates and informs the public and public officials about important issues; creates strength within and among communities to advocate for positive change; and explores the values that shape American democracy. The Democracy Center looks for solutions that engage communities in self-advocacy, explore the evolving idea of what it means to be an American, and result in actions that bring everyone together. JANM's Pavilion is closed for renovation; Democracy Center programs will continue on the JANM campus, throughout Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, and Southern California, and beyond from early

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Kurt Kanazawa
Japanese American National Museum
kurtkanazawa@me.com

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