## MARIST CLS - THE POWER OF READERS THEATRE, VOL #4 FALL 2025 CLASS #4

## THE LANGUAGE ARCHIVE BY JULIA CHO

GEORGE IS CONSUMED WITH PRESERVING AND DOCUMENTING THE DYING LANGUAGES OF FAR-FLUNG CULTURES. CLOSER TO HOME, LANGUAGE IS FAILING HIM. HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO HIS WIFE, MARY, TO KEEP HER FROM LEAVING HIM.



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"LABELS ARE THE WAY WE MAKE THE WORLD CONVENIENT" SAYS PLAY WRIGHT JULIA CHO.

SOMEWHAT INCONVENIENTLY, SHE REJECTS "KOREAN AMERICAN" AND IDENTIFIES HERSELF AS SIMPLY AS "AMERICAN."

BORN IN 1975 TO KOREAN IMMIGRANT PARENTS, CHO EXPLAINS "IT WAS A VERY POROUS HOUSEHOLD. FOR ME TO SAY THAT BEING OF KOREAN ORIGIN INFLUENCES MY WORK IS THE SAME AS SAYING BEING A WOMAN OR BEING AMERICAN INFLUENCES MY WRITING."

CHO IS A GRADUATE OF AMHERST COLLEGE, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY AND THE JUILLIARD PLAYWRIGHTS. SHE TEACHES AT UC BERKELEY.

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JULIA CHO'S **THE LANGUAGE ARCHIVE** IS A GENTLY SENTIMENTAL TALE BUILT INSIDE A CONCEPT, SIMILAR TO THE WAY NESTING BIRDS INHABIT A HEDGE.

THE THEME IS THE FAILURE OF COMMUNICATION, AND THE METAPHOR IS A COLLECTION OF RECORDINGS AND DOCUMENTS DESCRIBING EXTINCT LANGUAGES CURATED BY A WHITE-COATED LINGUIST WHO IS TONGUE-TIED WHEN IT COMES TO EXPRESSING ANY PERSONAL SENTIMENT. "THIS ONE CAME OUT OF SOME READING I WAS DOING ON DYING LANGUAGES.

APPARENTLY, IT'S NOT JUST SPECIES THAT ARE GOING EXTINCT WITH BREATHTAKING RAPIDITY; LANGUAGES ARE DYING AS WELL.

IT SEEMS TO ME, WORDS DON'T JUST EXPRESS OUR THOUGHTS, THEY CREATE OUR THOUGHTS. LANGUAGES HAVE DIFFERENT WORLD VIEWS EMBEDDED IN THEM AND TO LOSE A LANGUAGE MEANS LOSING A WHOLE WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD.

ALL OF THIS THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGES LED ME TO REFLECT ON MY OWN LIFE: I DON'T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE MY PARENTS SPEAK (KOREAN). I FEEL THAT LOSS ACUTELY; IT'S A SOURCE OF SHAME AND GUILT.

AND SOMEHOW OUT OF ALL THIS CAME A PLAY." JULIA CHO MARIST CLS - THE POWER OF READERS THEATRE, VOL #4 SPRING 2025 CLASS #4



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The play gives us two contrasting marriages. The one between George and Mary is broken; it was never whole to begin with. The one between Alta and Resten, though full of sound and fury, is solid as a rock. George and Mary talk past each other; Alta and Resten yell at each other in English, but save the good stuff, the ongoing exchange of affection, for Ellowan, the dying language.



The play also draws a contrast between the kinds of lives led by Alta and Resten on the one hand, and George, Mary, and Emma on the other.

Alta and Resten are emissaries from what is essentially a pre-modern culture, the Ellowans being members of an imaginary tribe.

George, Mary, and Emma are members of a highly mobile, educated, urban, modern middle-class. MARIST CLS - THE POWER OF READERS THEATRE, VOL #4 SPRING 2025 CLASS #4 - MARIST CLS - THE POWER OF READERS THEATRE, VOL #4 SPRING 2025 CLASS #4

## UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL BY GLEN BERGER

AN ECCENTRIC LIBRARIAN DISCOVERS A WEATHER-BEATEN BOOK IN A RETURN BIN — I I 3 YEARS OVERDUE. SPARKED BY A MESSAGE LEFT IN ITS MARGINS, SHE EMBARKS ON A MAGICAL QUEST THAT TAKES HER AROUND THE WORLD AND 2,000 YEARS INTO THE PAST. WITH ASTONISHING TWISTS AND TURNS, THIS IS AN UNFORGETTABLE ODYSSEY.

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The Language Archive By Julia Cho

