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ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

CANADIAN BROADCASTER AND WRITER BRINGS SMASH HIT SOLO SHOW TO HIGH PERFORMANCE RODEO

In Empire of the Son, Shigematsu captivates audiences with his affecting father-son story.

CALGARY, ALBERTA – [Alberta Theatre Projects](#) and [One Yellow Rabbit](#) welcome former writer for *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, columnist for the *Huffington Post*, and former host of CBC's Radio's *The Roundup* Tetsuro Shigematsu and his wildly successful west coast production [Empire of the Son](#) to Calgary for the 32nd [High Performance Rodeo](#) in the Martha Cohen Theatre from January 16 to 28. A Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre (VACT) production, [Empire of the Son](#) is Shigematsu's one-man, autobiographical account of his rocky relationship with his emotionally reserved father, Akira. Both funny and poignant, Shigematsu re-enacts moments from his father's incredible personal history, from the ashes of Hiroshima to swinging 1960's London through visually striking live, cinematic vignettes, real audio recordings and photographs to paint an intimate portrait of their evolving connection and the deep-seated love for each other that they both struggle to express.

Charming Canadians across the country, [Empire of the Son](#) sold out its entire 2015 world premiere run in Vancouver and 2016 remount prior to opening, unprecedented for a new Canadian play. Named the 'Best Theatre Show of 2015' by the Vancouver Sun, the production has since received further critical acclaim touring Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa's National Arts Centre.

Described by Shigematsu as a Forrest-Gump-like character who lead a life that "followed the contours of the 20th century," the humble and stoic Akira lived through the aftermath of Hiroshima, was witness to Marilyn Monroe famously singing Happy Birthday to United States President John F. Kennedy, and even had tea with the Queen of England. After leaving Japan, Akira began his own broadcasting career with the BBC in London, continuing on to settle in Canada and host the CBC's *Canada No Wadai*. Later in his career, budget cuts took a toll at the CBC, leading Akira to spend the winter of his professional years in the CBC mailroom. With his magnetic radio voice and theatrical mustache, Shigematsu depicts defining moments from his life and how they shaped his relationship with his father.

Akira's story was one Shigematsu felt compelled to bring to the stage: "Moving from one country to another, especially decades ago when the world was much bigger than it is today, was such an act of imagination," said Shigematsu. "You have to imagine a life you can scarcely envision. I hope Empire of the Son captures this imagination."

The show is a collaboration between Shigematsu, Artistic Producer of VACT Donna Yamamoto and Artistic Director of Pi Theatre Richard Wolfe. With a remarkable list of stage, film and television credits to her name, Yamamoto was awarded an International Women's Day 2016 Honouree from the UBCP/ACTRA Women's Committee. A multi-award-winning director with a specialization in contemporary theatre and performance, Wolfe has premiered an extensive number of Canadian plays and has received over 65 Jessie Award nominations.

"[Empire of the Son](#) is an entertaining and intimate theatre experience," said Vicki Stroich, Executive Director of ATP. "Shigematsu's story about his immigrant father and his own experience as a first generation Canadian is one that has resonated as the show has toured across Canada. We couldn't be happier to partner with One Yellow Rabbit to have this beloved show here in Calgary for this season's High Performance Rodeo."

"Our goal is always to present the absolute top quality of creative work from Canada and beyond, and a huge part of that is bringing untold tales of minorities to the foreground," said Kelly Reay, Festival Producer for the 32nd Annual High Performance Rodeo. "The work of Tetsuro and Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre in this regard is paramount, and will captivate audiences of all walks of life."

[Empire of the Son](#) runs from **January 16** to **January 28** at the **Martha Cohen Theatre** at Arts Commons (215 8 Ave. SE). Tickets are available at www.atplive.com or 403-294-7402.

Follow the hashtag **#EmpireoftheSon** on Twitter and Instagram for the latest news about this production.

Company

Writer/Performer (*Tetsuro Shigematsu)
Artistic Producer (Donna Yamamoto)
Director/Original Concept Dramaturgy (*Richard Wolfe)
Dramaturg (Heidi Taylor)
Set Design (Pam Johnson)
Lighting Design (Gerald King)
Costume Design (Barbara Clayden)
Sound Design (Steve Charles)
Audio Dramaturg (Yvonne Gall)
Video Design Consultant (Remy Siu)
Props Master (Carol Macdonald)
Stage Manager (*Susan Miyagishima)
Technical Director/Lighting Director (Jeff Harrison)
Production Manager (Adrian Muir)
Documentary Audio (Yoshiko & Akira Shigematsu)

**With the generous support of Canadian Actors' Equity Association*

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Media kit, high-resolution images and video recordings available at www.atplive.com/media

ABOUT ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

Alberta Theatre Projects is a Calgary-based, not-for-profit, professional theatre company that celebrates the art of live theatre. From its home in The Martha Cohen Theatre at Arts Commons, the company produces world-calibre shows with a focus on idea-driven new works, plays by Canadian playwrights, and contemporary theatre from around the world. It is also a national leader in new play development and dramaturgy.

www.ATPlive.com

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