



**UMS PRESENTS PING CHONG + COMPANY'S
BEYOND SACRED: VOICES OF MUSLIM IDENTITY
Residency to Include Free Community Events**

ANN ARBOR, MI (January 30, 2017) — The **University Musical Society** (UMS) will present **Ping Chong + Company's** production *Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity* on Saturday, February 18 at 8 pm in Arbor's Power Center (121 Fletcher St, Ann Arbor, MI 48109). In addition to the performance, which will also be livestreamed, UMS will host a number of related community events; full details listed below. *Beyond Sacred*, part of Chong's 25-year series entitled *Undesirable Elements*, intends to illuminate daily experiences of Muslims, and work toward greater communication and understanding among Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

The interview-based theater production explores the diverse experiences of five young Muslim New Yorkers who share the common experience of coming of age in a post-9/11 New York City, at a time of increasing Islamophobia. Participants come from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and include men and women that reflect a wide range of Muslim identities, including those who have converted to Islam; those who were raised Muslim, but have since left the faith; those who identify as “secular” or “culturally” Muslim; and those who are observant on a daily basis.

“We initially programmed Ping Chong’s work for our 2016-17 season over a year ago. But with recent events and protests, it is especially timely now,” said UMS President Ken Fischer. “We are proud to be presenting *Beyond Sacred*, which spotlights five different Muslim voices at a time of rising Islamophobia. And we believe so strongly in this work, especially at this time, that we are going to livestream the performance, to make it more broadly accessible to a larger population, even outside of Southeast Michigan. Our staff has worked hard to put together a series of additional events, including a day-long immersion into understanding Islam, class visits to four different University of Michigan schools that are including the performance in their curriculum, in-depth residencies with local high school students, and a free community forum on Islam held the day before the performance, to help provide additional context to the urgent conversation on these issues.”

For more information about the performance, livestream, and related events please visit ums.org/beyondsacred.

This performance will be American Sign Language interpreted.

PERFORMANCE & RELATED COMMUNITY EVENTS

Note to Journalists: *In addition to the below public events, UMS will host a school-day performance for high school students on Friday, February 17 from 11 am - 12 noon, along with pre- and post-show workshops. For more information, or to attend the performance and/or workshops (which are not open to the public), contact Mallory Shea at mschirr@umich.edu or 734.647.4020.*

WORKSHOP: UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Saturday, February 11 // 9 am – 5 pm

Multiple Venues

Registration Fee: \$50

Since September 11, 2001, Islam has been at the center of many debates on religious freedom and cultural diversity. Tensions around religious identity make the need for dialogue and understanding more important than ever.

This workshop will explore the people, history, traditions, and art of Islam. UMS will partner with community leaders, artists, and scholars to guide participants in understanding the diverse societies of the Islamic world. Participants will explore the rich culture of Islam in Dearborn as well as right here in Ann Arbor. Workshops will feature artistic demonstrations and provide learning resources. Transportation between the various workshop venues will be provided. Limited space available, advanced reservation required.

PENNY STAMPS LECTURE SERIES: PING CHONG

Thursday, February 16 // 5-6:30 pm

Michigan Theater (603 E Liberty St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104)

Free and open to the public

Ping Chong is an American contemporary theater director, playwright, choreographer, and video and installation artist whose multimedia productions examine cultural and ethnic differences and pressing social issues of the moment. He is best known for his series *Undesirable Elements*, an ongoing exploration of the experience of outsiders that is recrafted for each city in which it is performed. Drawing on documentary and interview-based materials, over 40 different versions have been performed in communities all over the United States, Europe, and in Japan. Chong has been the recipient of numerous honors, including an Obie Award for Sustained Achievement (2000), the Doris Duke Artist Award for Theatre (2013), and the National Medal of Arts (2014), presented by President Barack Obama.

Established with the generous support of alumna Penny W. Stamps, the Speaker Series brings respected innovators from a broad spectrum of fields to the School to conduct a public lecture and engage with students, faculty, and the larger U-M and Ann Arbor communities.

INVESTIGATING ISLAM: A COMMUNITY FORUM

Friday, February 17 // 2-4 pm

Hatcher Graduate Library Gallery (913 S University Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48109)

Free and open to the public

Moderator Pauline Jones (director of the U-M Digital Islamic Studies Curriculum and professor of political science) will lead panelists in a town hall style meeting that explores the regional and global impact of Islamic cultures, and examines ways to counteract Islamophobia in our community. Panelists include *Beyond Sacred* cast members Kadin Herring and Amir Khafagy, and U-M associate professor of history Butch Ware.

In collaboration with the U-M Digital Islamic Studies Curriculum and the U-M International Institute.

LOCAL MUSLIM VOICES BLOG AT UMS.ORG

A series of posts and interviews exploring Muslim identity on the University of Michigan campus, featuring posts by Nama Khalil ([Muslim Voices: Raising a Muslim Child Today](#)), Ann Soliman ([Muslim Identity on U-M Campus](#)), Abraham Ahmed Mustafa Achachi Matsui ([Muslim Identity on U-M Campus, part 2](#)), and Ayah Issa ([Muslim Identity on U-M Campus, part 3](#))

PERFORMANCE & LIVESTREAM: *Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity*

Saturday, February 18 // 8 pm

Power Center

The interview-based theater production explores the diverse experiences of five young Muslim New Yorkers who share the common experience of coming of age in a post-9/11 New York City, at a time of increasing Islamophobia. Participants come from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and include men and women that reflect a wide range of Muslim identities, including those who have converted to Islam; those who were raised Muslim, but have since left the faith; those who identify as “secular” or “culturally” Muslim; and those who are observant on a daily basis.

POST-PERFORMANCE ARTIST Q&A (will also be livestreamed)

Saturday, February 18

Power Center (121 Fletcher St, Ann Arbor, MI 48109)

Audience members are invited to remain after the performance for a Q & A with the artists performing *Beyond Sacred*.

ABOUT PING CHONG + COMPANY

Ping Chong + Company produces theatrical works addressing the important cultural and civic issues of our times, striving to reach the widest audiences with the greatest level of artistic innovation and social integrity. The company was founded in 1975 by leading theatrical innovator Ping Chong with a mission to create works of theater and art that explore the intersections of race, culture, history, art, media, and technology in the modern world. Today, Ping Chong + Company produces original works by a close-knit ensemble of affiliated artists, under the artistic leadership of Ping Chong. Productions range from intimate oral history projects to grand scale cinematic multidisciplinary productions featuring puppets, performers, and full music and projection scores. The art reveals beauty, precision, and a commitment to social justice. Ping Chong was awarded a 2014 National Medal of Arts.

ABOUT UMS

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from

around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan, presenting over 70 music, theater, and dance performances by professional touring artists each season, along with over 100 free educational activities. UMS is part of the University of Michigan's "Victors for Michigan" campaign, reinforcing its commitment to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness.

MEDIA CONTACT

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