

# *Tiger of Malaya*

By Hiro Kanagawa

## Study Guide

Researched, written and compiled by Camilla Holland,  
Leanne Squire and Deborah James  
October 2003

**This document may be used for educational purposes only.**

*Tiger of Malaya* is an NAC English Theatre / Factory Theatre Co-production



## About This Guide

This study guide is formatted in easy-to-copy single pages. They can be used separately or in any combination that works for you and your classes. Each section is listed below, along with suggestions for its use.

<b>The Section Called:</b>	<b>May Be Used To:</b>
<b>A Note from Playwright Hiro Kanagawa</b>	Provide insight into the playwright's process
<b>Character Sketches</b>	Introduce the characters
<b>Plot Synopsis</b>	Give a quick overview of the play
<b>Interview with Set Designer David Boechler</b>	Teach about the work of the set designer
<b>Context: <i>Tiger of Malaya</i> --An Annotated Timeline</b>	Help students understand the play's historical background
<b>Context: Terms from Japanese Military History</b>	Define important terms used in the play
<b>Context: The Trial</b>	Offer historical background on the play's central event
<b>A Production Who's Who</b>	Aid students writing reviews or discussing the production
<b>Suggested Activities 1: Before You See the Show</b>	Prepare students for the show
<b>Scenes from <i>Tiger of Malaya</i></b>	Foster hands-on appreciation of the play text
<b>Suggested Activities 2: After You See the Show</b>	Guide student reflection on the play

## A Note from Playwright Hiro Kanagawa

*I first came across the historical background for Tiger of Malaya ten or twelve years ago while researching an unrelated project about the Pacific War. The Yamashita case, like all trials, struck me as being classically theatrical: it came seemingly ready-made with a troubled protagonist, a cast of conflicted characters, and a chaotic universe in need of moral order. Even the redoubtable gods were present in the person of MacArthur and the Emperor.*

*The idea, then, to write a play about Yamashita more or less suggested itself. But while I had an immediate idea of the shape of the play, the weight of it, and how it would feel, putting these impressions to paper was another matter. At the time, at age 28 or so, I simply did not feel up to the task. And so the outline for the play sat in the back of my desk until the summer of 2001 when, approaching age 40, my ambitions finally got the best of me.*

*Of course, if ten people each wrote a play entitled Tiger of Malaya, they would produce ten very different works. Mine, I suppose, is the lay humanist version; while I feel a responsibility to make my play plausible and relevant in the context of historic and academic discourse about Yamashita, my main interest in this or any other story is the personal element. I was halfway through the first draft of Tiger of Malaya when the events of 9/11 made the themes and events of the play seem suddenly immediate and urgent. But even in this context--global war, atrocities beyond number, crimes against humanity--it is the actions and decisions of individuals that interest me above all else. Despite the seeming insignificance of individual action in the face of global events, despite the elaborate behavioral codes and social systems which define for us what is legal, what is moral, what is right, or what is just, in any given situation it is still the individual human soul which must decide for itself what must be done and what is permissible under the circumstances. This is what interests me. Hence, my Yamashita, my Hilroy and Lederman, my Okamura and Rosario.*

*It has been a great challenge-and pleasure-to imagine these characters and reconcile them both with history and the prevailing concerns of our present day. Tiger of Malaya remains a fiction, but I hope it succeeds as a useful and informative mirror of our world.*

## Character Sketches

**General Tomoyuki Yamashita** (1885-1946) was a brilliant Japanese Army general in WWII. His rapid, against-the-odds defeat of American and British forces in the early days of the war in the Pacific earned him the nickname "Tiger of Malaya". The action of the play is closely tied to the historical facts of his trial for war crimes in Manila at the end of the war. The other characters in the play are fictional creations of the playwright.

In the play, General Yamashita is portrayed as a complex, sensitive and intelligent man with a guilty conscience and a terrible secret. His complete dedication to the ideals of military service, and the loyalty he shows the men under his command, become a kind of tragic flaw. Yamashita is around 60.

**Rosario Abas Ocampo** is the name of the young female figure who appears in many different aspects throughout the play. On a literal level she is a Filipina in her 20s, the last survivor from her village in northern Luzon and sole witness to the atrocities committed there by Japanese troops from General Yamashita's regiment. The General's refusal to give her shelter in his camp during his last days of the war leads to her death.

The Rosario figure also plays an important symbolic role in the play. When the play opens, and in several subsequent scenes, she appears to Yamashita as a kind of ghostly antagonist, a demonic representation of his own self-lacerating sense of guilt, weakness and failure. She also comes to embody all the forgotten victims of war, testifying as one of the victims in Manila, commenting on the trial, and confronting the audience in the final moments of the play.

**Colonel Franklin Hilroy** is a military lawyer in his 60s from the American south. He heads the defense counsel for General Yamashita. On the surface Hilroy is hard-bitten, insensitive and even bigoted. But as the play unfolds he reveals his more positive traits: a courageous commitment to justice, a capacity to admit his mistakes and learn from them, and an ability to temper his idealism with compassion.

**Captain Nathan Lederman** is a military lawyer of Jewish ancestry in his 30s who grew up in New York. He is a member of Yamashita's defense team working under Colonel Hilroy. He is open-minded, highly educated, well-mannered and intensely idealistic.

**Fumiko (Daisy) Okamura** is a Nisei (second-generation Japanese) Californian woman in her 20s and the interpreter working alongside Colonel Hilroy and Captain Lederman on General Yamashita's defense. She is a patriotic American who served in the Women's Army Corps even as her family and Japanese American friends were being treated as "dangerous enemy aliens" by an American government that forced them into internment camps. Her involvement with Yamashita forces her to confront the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese part of her heritage.

## **Plot Synopsis: *Tiger of Malaya***

**Setting:** Time and place are fluid and constantly shifting in *Tiger of Malaya*. The major locales of the action are: the U.S. Army Legal Corps offices and the Philippine Supreme Court in Manila at various times from September of 1945 to February of 1946 during the Manila War Crimes Trial; real and imagined details of Yamashita's encounter with Rosario at his final army encampment in Northern Luzon shortly before he surrenders in September of 1945; Yamashita's cell and the chapel in New Bilibad Prison in Manila; the U.S. High Commissioner's residence in Manila; and Los Banos Prison, where Yamashita is hanged in February, 1946.

### **Act 1**

In a flashback from his jungle camp in the final days of the war, Yamashita, feverish and confused, is confronted by the Rosario figure. The scene changes to the U.S. Army Legal Corps Office, where Hilroy and Lederman meet. Hilroy has been assigned the Yamashita defense and is unhappy to be defending, in his words, "a Jap". Hilroy assigns Lederman to the defense as well. There is tension between the two men – Hilroy is "old school" and mocks the Ivy League-educated Lederman. Fumiko Okamura enters – she has been assigned as interpreter to the case. Hilroy reveals his prejudices in his dealings with both Lederman and Okamura.

In his prison cell in Manila, Yamashita is trying to eat, but the Rosario figure appears and taunts him. His fevered fantasies give way to a flashback from his army camp and the first moment of his meeting with the young Japanese-speaking Filipino girl who was the flesh and blood Rosario. The scene shifts to Yamashita's first meeting with his defense counsel in the chapel. He astonishes them by refusing their help. He explains that he has no need for a defense because he has surrendered and is innocent. Hilroy misinterprets this – he thinks Yamashita wants to avoid a trial because he wants to keep certain barbaric events a secret, but Yamashita (through Okamura's translation) explains that he is innocent of the crimes he is accused of. In his questioning Hilroy reveals his preconceptions about the Japanese military - he accuses him of being a Samurai, fanatically devoted to the Emperor and the warrior code of Bushido. [See **Terms from Japanese Military History**] Okamura and Yamashita meet in private and establish a rapport. Hilroy questions Okamura about her life in California and her past in the service.

Rosario appears and reads the charges against Yamashita as he reflects on the circumstances that have brought him to such a point. Some days later, Hilroy and Lederman are frustrated by the roadblocks in their defense. Hilroy knows the trial is being railroaded because General MacArthur wants to see quick punishment meted out to Yamashita. They resolve to ask for a continuance so they will have more time to prepare their defense. Rosario's ghost appears to Yamashita in his prison cell and taunts him.

Tension continues between Hilroy and Okamura – he accuses her of being a spy for MacArthur. He fires her, despite Lederman's strong objections to his racist attitudes. Back at the prison chapel, Yamashita refuses to speak to Hilroy and Lederman without Okamura to translate. Lederman presents a summary of his research into Yamashita's life to Hilroy. Yamashita appears to be a much different man than they had expected. Rosario's ghost appears to Yamashita to contradict the positive portrait Lederman and Hilroy present. Back in the Army Corps Offices, Hilroy apologizes to Okamura. She agrees to stay on the case.

Rosario describes the setting of the first day of the Manila War Crimes Trial. Yamashita and Okamura wait outside the courtroom and discuss the proceedings, the differences in their cultures and his happier days spent in Europe. When Lederman appears and announces that the prosecution has added 59 new charges, Yamashita immediately rejects his suggestion that they appeal. His defense team believes his life can be spared if he will concede to having had some knowledge of the atrocities committed by the Japanese. Yamashita adamantly refuses; his only request is that he die by firing squad, as a military man, not by hanging. Rosario appears as Yamashita's agitation increases until he eventually collapses.

In a flashback, Yamashita returns to his meeting with Rosario. His troops have sent her to comfort him in his darkest hour. She brings him rice and encourages him to accept that the war is over and surrender to save himself and his men. She asks for his protection, promising in return not to reveal the terrible secret of what his Japanese soldiers did to her village. Enraged, he sends her away.

### **End of Act 1**

## Act II

In the darkness we hear Rosario's desperate attempt to escape from unseen assailants. She pleads with them to show her mercy, but to no avail. The scene ends with her screaming.

In the Philippine Supreme Court, Hilroy is making his opening arguments. His passionate speech is interrupted and he eventually loses his temper at the judges. Lederman attacks him for this lack of professionalism.

Hilroy and Yamashita speak in his prison cell; Hilroy is elated at the press the trial is getting, Yamashita less so. Hilroy talks about his military career. He's known for defending unpopular cases, including African-American troops against the United States Army. The two men find they have unusual things in common.

At the U.S. High Commissioner's Residence, the trial is fast becoming a mockery –the charge that Yamashita stole MacArthur's silverware has been added to the list of atrocities. Hilroy and Lederman ask Yamashita about the destruction of Manila, the focal point for the prosecution. Yamashita explains that he had only 1800 troops in the city; the Navy had an additional 20,000 men, who were not withdrawn as he had ordered. Simultaneously, the Rosario figure appears in the guise of a victim of the sack of Manila and gives her testimony. She tells how the looting and pillaging Japanese soldiers soon turned to rape and wanton murder of civilians. Her testimony is punctuated by Yamashita's account of details from his personal life.

After the testimony Okamura is very upset. She talks to Lederman about how little the trial really has to do with justice and about the injustices of her life as a Japanese-American in California during the war. Her family's property was taken away and they were sent to internment camps. Her Nisei (second-generation Japanese-American) friend Billy joined the U.S. army, and is now in a hospital in Italy. Okamura also had a Caucasian American fiancée but their engagement was broken after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour. Lederman tells her that many of his relatives in Europe and Russia have been killed simply because they were Jewish.

Rosario renders the verdict: Yamashita is found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. Yamashita thanks his defense team, who are still working on his behalf, appealing the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. As a treat, the defense team prepares to serve Yamashita an American-style Christmas dinner but he is unwell and unable to eat. Rosario's ghost appears to him; her presence finally compels him to confess about the one atrocity he does have personal knowledge of: Japanese soldiers in his regiment murdered Filipino women and children in Rosario's village and then ate their bodies to save themselves from death by starvation. Lederman and Okamura are appalled and condemn the General for keeping the truth from them. Hilroy is surprisingly understanding of Yamashita's guilt and repentance.

In the Army Corps Offices, Hilroy prepares to leave for the U.S. where he will appeal the case to the Supreme Court; Lederman refuses to go with him now and argues with Hilroy about Yamashita's guilt.

Okamura visits Yamashita in February at the prison where he is to be hanged, telling him that the Supreme Court appeal was unsuccessful. He accepts the news stoically. Yamashita asks her to deliver his personal effects to his wife in Japan after his death. She agrees. In a voice over, we hear General MacArthur announcing that Yamashita will be hanged. As Okamura recounts her meeting with Yamashita's widow and speaks about her own plans to return home after the war, Yamashita remembers those who meant the most to him and Rosario reminds the audience that for the nameless victims of war, nothing changes.

## End of Act II

## An Interview with Set Designer David Boechler

**What is the greatest challenge you face as a designer on this show?**

*The hardest thing here is how to present a multi-scene play in a simple environment, one that can evoke dense jungle, a magnificent city in ruins, a dank jail cell, etc. Whatever we came up with, it had to serve many functions. Above all, it had to be evocative and mysterious, and still allow us to tell the story simply and directly; it's a play about these characters, not about the room they're in.*

**Designers and directors normally work very closely together. Could you summarize the process you've been through together?**

*Ken and I decided from the outset that we needed a simple, flexible theatrical space from which to tell a complex and difficult story. I really wanted to design this play because even as I read it the first time I got a very clear sense of what the theatrical world needed to be. Ken and I agreed that realism was not the way to go, that a sense of ritual was important. We developed the design very quickly because we both got excited about the possibilities of the world we had created. Once Ken saw the 3-D renderings, he was very clear about how he saw the space being used, i.e., in a theatrical, abstract way, without a lot of fumbly scene changes. It has been a very rewarding process so far.*

**How realistic will the set be?**

*Not at all in terms of walls and trees and all that. The script moves so much, and is so dense, that the best way to serve the story visually is to pare it down, to evoke locations as simply and effectively as possible. I was interested in creating a ritual space that made reference (in a very subtle way) to the harmony of Japanese architecture that evoked the sense of age and wear, of weathered calm. I wanted to provide as many staging possibilities as possible and create a versatile space that could be used in continually surprising ways.*

**How will the set design work in conjunction with the costumes, lighting and sound/music? What overall mood will be created by these elements?**

*Again I wanted to provide as many opportunities as possible for all collaborators to roam freely over the space and add their imagination to the creation of a time and place that no longer exist. The lighting designer will be most responsible for helping define the space and for evoking the disparate locations and moods. The play ranges from cold, logical, light-of-day scenes to feverish, tormented scenes in the mind of Yamashita; from sun-dappled street scenes to horrific scenes on the dank jungle floor. The soundscape will certainly help create the emotional reality in these scenes in a way that a set or lighting cannot. Ultimately, we provide the pigments for the audience: it's up to them to blend the colours in their own imaginations. Hopefully, we provide them with the right elements.*

**What's the most rewarding part of your job?**

*I would say the collaboration with other theatre artists is the best bit. Working with smart, talented people always makes you better at your own job.*

## **CONTEXT: Tiger of Malaya--An Annotated Timeline**

*This timeline is a highly selective chronicle of historical events that shaped General Yamashita's career and/or contributed to the treatment he ultimately received from General Douglas MacArthur and the American military.*

**1931**--Japan invades Manchuria, a region in northeastern China, in a successful attempt to expand its territory.

**1937**--Continued Japanese aggression leads to the outbreak of war with China. The Japanese rapidly gain the upper hand, taking Nanking, the Chinese capital, on December 13th. The infamous Rape of Nanking follows, with Japanese troops slaughtering somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 captured Chinese soldiers and civilians. An estimated 80,000 women and girls of all ages are raped and murdered by the Japanese during their three-month occupation of the fallen city. A few journalists carry news of these atrocities back to the U.S., negatively influencing American public opinion of the Japanese.

**1939**--German military aggression in Poland leads England and France to fight back; WWII begins.

**1938**--By November Japan controls about a third of China.

**1940**--Japan joins forces with Axis Alliance countries Germany and Italy, who are waging war against the Allied forces in Europe. General Yamashita is sent to Germany to report on the strength of the Nazi forces. He counsels Japanese officials not to get involved in the war.

### **1941**

-----In October General Hideki Tojo, a right-wing military extremist and Yamashita's bitter political enemy, rises from being Japan's Minister of War to its Prime Minister. Tojo effectively neutralizes Yamashita's anti-war views by sending him to head up the campaign in Manchuria but recalls him later in the year.

-----Early on the morning of December 7th the Japanese attempt to cripple America's Pacific naval forces in a surprise attack against the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbour on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Over 2,700 Americans are killed; another 1,100 are wounded. Eighteen major U.S. warships are sunk or seriously damaged and 180 military aircraft are destroyed on the ground. Damage to the U.S. Pacific fleet would have been even more devastating if half of the fleet hadn't been out to sea on that morning.

-----At the same time Japan attacks several other U.S. and British colonies in the Pacific, including Malaya. General Yamashita leads Japan's 25th Army in the campaign on Malaya, defeating British forces that outnumbered his own troops more than two to one in a swift advance through jungle terrain formerly considered impassable. Yamashita pushes on to take Singapore by February 15th. The campaign was a magnificent victory for Japan, marking the end of British rule in the Far East and earning Yamashita the nickname the "Tiger of Malaya". Tojo prevents Yamashita returning to Japan as a hero, sending him back to Manchuria, where he will remain until 1944.

-----On December 8th the U.S. declares war on Japan. Axis members Germany and Italy honour their alliance with Japan and declare war on the U.S. a few days later.

### **1942**

-----In February President Roosevelt orders Pacific Coast Japanese-Americans relocated to internment camps due to widespread fears that they pose a threat to national security. The decision will uproot over 120,000 people, many of whom are Nisei, second generation Japanese-Americans and U.S. citizens by birth. In the entire course of the war 10 people will be convicted of spying for Japan; all are Caucasian. Over 17,000 Japanese Americans volunteer and fight for the U.S. in Europe, including the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated unit in U.S. history.

-----By March Japan has inflicted a humiliating defeat on U.S. forces in the Philippines, which are under the direct command of General Douglas MacArthur, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army and America's most famous military leader. After retreating to the Bataan Peninsula, 26,000 civilian refugees and 80,000 Allied troops are trapped by the Japanese. With surrender inevitable, the U.S. President orders General MacArthur to leave his men behind and escape to Australia so as to avoid capture by Japan. He does so, but vows to return. Liberation of the Philippines from Japanese control becomes his personal mission.



-----The Bataan Death March begins on April 10th. Japanese troops force about 76,000 American and Filipino prisoners to march in the blazing sun to distant camps with almost no water or food; those too weak to march are killed. Upwards of 20,000 die on route, including 5,200 hundred of the American soldiers MacArthur had left behind.

-----Japan's string of victories over the Allies comes to an end in May. American naval forces successfully defend New Guinea, Australia, and the Midway Islands. In August, just eight months after Pearl Harbour, U.S. Marines launch the first American land offensive in the Pacific, attacking the Japanese at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. The Japanese are never to regain the upper hand in the Pacific.

### 1943

-----The American strategy of island hopping results in victories at New Georgia and Vella Lavella in the Solomon Islands, where a major base is established. But these victories often came with a heavy cost. Japanese soldiers, like those defending the Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands, were often committed to a fight to the death. The 76-hour battle for an island in the atoll smaller than New York City's Central Park results in 3,000 American deaths; of the 2,800 Japanese troops defending it, only 17 are left to surrender. Americans are shocked and deeply disturbed by the photos of the carnage at Tarawa appearing in U.S. newspapers.

-----By the end of October Japanese Emperor Hirohito proclaims that his country's situation is "truly grave".

### 1944

-----A series of American victories in the Pacific are capped off in October when MacArthur dramatically returns to the Philippines, wading ashore at Leyte with his troops to begin the liberation. General Yamashita is recalled from China to lead the Japanese defense of the Philippines just one week before the U.S. invasion begins. During this battle, Japan's air force first uses the kamikaze, or suicide, attack; Japanese pilots crash their bomb-laden planes into Allied ships. An estimated 2, 257 kamikaze attacks will occur before the war's end.

-----By December the U.S. military begins training pilots to operate the B-29's that will drop the first atomic bombs.

### 1945

-----In February historic Manila, the "Pearl of the Orient", becomes the only city where Japanese and Allied forces face each other directly. As MacArthur's forces close in, Yamashita orders troops to move 13,000 tons of desperately needed supplies out of Manila and evacuate the city while they still can, but 20,000 men from the Naval Defense Force obey the orders of their own officers instead and stay behind. Surrounded by their enemies, with no hope of escape, the Japanese turn their rage against the civilian population in Manila, brutally murdering more than 8,000 Filipino men, women and children in two weeks. Over 500 Filipino women are raped, sometimes repeatedly in makeshift brothels set up by the soldiers. To weaken the Japanese defenses, the Americans begin bombarding the city on February 23rd, further contributing to the civilian death toll. U.S. and Filipino troops liberate Manila on March 3rd but the city has been utterly destroyed. Over 100,000 civilians are dead: only the battles of Berlin and Stalingrad resulted in more casualties.

-----MacArthur's headquarters declares the liberation of the Philippines on July 5th as bombing raids begin on Japan. Yamashita and his men are pushed further into the mountains on the island of Luzon where many die in battle, through ambush by Filipino guerrillas, and from starvation and disease.

-----On August 6th the U.S. drops the first atomic bomb used in war on the Japanese city of Hiroshima in an effort to compel Japan to surrender. Over 80,000 men, women and children are killed immediately; thousands of others will later die from radiation sickness. Another atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki three days later; again the civilian death toll is staggeringly high.

-----Emperor Hirohito addresses Japan by radio to announce an end to the war on August 10th. Japan unconditionally surrenders four days later.

-----On September 2nd, 1945, MacArthur presides over the Japanese surrender on board the U.S.S. Missouri, bringing an end to World War II. He will stay on as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan to oversee the occupation.

-----From his isolated mountain encampment General Yamashita is unable to confirm the first radio reports of a Japanese surrender. He holds out with the remainder of his troops for three more weeks until he personally receives the order to surrender. He is taken prisoner by General Wainwright at Baguio on September 3rd. Just a third of the men in Yamashita's Shobu regiment survive to surrender with him; 100,000 have been lost defending the Philippines.

-----A few weeks later General Yamashita is put on trial as a war criminal by the U.S. Many of the 123 charges make Yamashita personally responsible for the atrocities committed by the Japanese in Manila, despite a complete lack of evidence that he had ordered them or even knew they had taken place. MacArthur intervenes to rush through the legal proceedings; the Military Tribunal renders a guilty verdict against Yamashita on the fourth anniversary of Pearl Harbour--December 7th, 1945. The verdict is immediately appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Despite the objections of two Supreme Court justices and widespread criticism of the unprecedented trial as "victor's justice", the verdict is upheld. General Yamashita is hanged in Manila on February 23rd, 1946.

## CONTEXT: Terms from Japanese Military History

*Here is a brief description of a few aspects of the Japanese culture that shaped General Yamashita's world.*

The **Samurai** were members of a class of professional warriors in feudal Japan. They fought to defend the interests of the wealthy landowners who employed them. The values of this privileged warrior class exerted a strong influence on Japanese society for generations, especially the Samurai code of **Bushido**, "the warrior-knight-way."

The Bushido code presented a system of behavior to help individual warriors acquire and maintain honour. It strongly emphasized loyalty to one's superiors and absolute devotion to achieving one's objectives. Defeat in battle was the ultimate disgrace; *seppuku*, or ritual suicide, was the only honourable way for a samurai warrior to respond to military failure. Key values of "the warrior-knight-way" are expressed in the following extract from the Japanese Army Field book used in WWII:

*The Army looks up in awe to His Majesty (Emperor Hirohito) as its august head; it must be united in compliance with the Imperial Will, as one in spirit and in body and in single-hearted loyalty....The destiny of the Empire rests upon victory or defeat in battle. Do not give up under any circumstances, keeping in mind your responsibility not to tarnish the glorious history of the Imperial Army with its tradition of invincibility. (Japanese Army Fieldbook; full text at <http://www.danford.net/bushido.htm>)*

The last Japanese soldier to surrender held his post on Lubang Island in the Philippines for 30 years. Hiroo Onada finally surrendered in 1974 when his former commanding officer succeeded in persuading him that the war was over.

Belief in the divinity of the Emperor was a part of **Shinto**, the native religion of Japan, which also included elements of nature and ancestor worship. Beginning in the 1920s, the traditional religious patriotism of Shintoism was exploited by Japanese imperialists to create a culture of fanatical obedience within the military that often devalued the life of the individual soldier.

The **kamikaze** attacks, where Japanese pilots willingly gave up their lives to become human bombs, demonstrated this ethic of extreme self-sacrifice. Captured enemies utterly disgraced themselves in the eyes of Japanese soldiers schooled in a "never surrender" code and were often subjected to brutal and degrading treatment. Of the 12,000 American POWs captured by the Japanese on the Bataan Peninsula, for example, only 4,000 were alive by the end of the war.

## CONTEXT: The Trial

Yamashita, known as the “Tiger of Malaya” for his lightning capture of Singapore from the rear, was one of a very few Japanese senior officers well known in the United States. He was in U.S. custody after having surrendered on the main Philippine island of Luzon on Sept. 3, 1945 and was therefore on hand for a quick, high-profile indictment designed to punish someone for the horrific atrocities committed by Japanese forces during the war. The entire process of his trial was marked by pressure from Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan and the liberator of the Philippines, who intervened repeatedly to urge a speedy conviction. The actual trial began less than eight weeks after Japan’s surrender and well before organization of the more formal Tokyo War Trials Commission.

Yamashita was charged with violations of “the laws of war” by failing “to control ... members of his command ... permitting them to commit brutal atrocities”. Hundreds of witnesses described beatings, rapes and group killings, mainly of Filipino civilians, but without evidence of Yamashita’s approval or even knowledge. In fact, Yamashita’s name was rarely mentioned during most of the trial.

The court’s effort to finish quickly was clear from the start. Yamashita’s appointed American lawyers had only three weeks from presentation of the charges against him to consult with their client and prepare for a trial in which the prosecution offered hundreds of witnesses. The defense had no access to the Army’s investigative reports, which might have revealed exculpatory materials. On the Friday preceding the Monday opening of trial, the court permitted the prosecutors to add 59 new specifications to the 64 that had been filed only three weeks before, but with no time extension for the defense to investigate them.

“The Yamashita case remains a milestone both in international law and American constitutional law. Yamashita was accused of violating the laws of war for failing to control his troops for permitting them to commit atrocities. He was convicted by an American military commission and was sentenced to death ... A generation later the Yamashita case proved relevant to debates over the responsibility of the American command for atrocities committed in Vietnam.”

(Excerpts from *Vengeance Did Not Deliver Justice* by Stephen B. Ives, Jr., *Washington Post*)

## **A Production Who's Who**

*A production of a play in the professional theatre represents the collaborative efforts of many, many people, each with a specific job to do. The combined talents of the following people made this production of Tiger of Malaya possible:*

### **CREATIVE TEAM**

Playwright	Hiro Kanagawa
Director	Ken Gass
Set Design	David Boechler
Lighting Design	Bonnie Beecher
Sound Design	Todd Charlton
Costume Design	Julia Tribe

### **CAST**

General Tomoyuki Yamashita	Denis Akiyama
Fumiko (Daisy) Okamura	Ginger Ruriko Busch
Rosario Abas Ocampo	Aura Carcueva
Colonel Franklin Hilroy	Ken James
Captain Nathan Lederman	Jordan Pettle

### **STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM**

Stage Manager	Fiona Jones
Apprentice Stage Manager	Sandy Plunkett

### **NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE (Ottawa, Ontario)**

Artistic Director, English Theatre - Marti Maraden  
 Managing Director, English Theatre - Victoria Steele  
 Production Director - Alex Gazalé  
 Publicist & Media Relations Coordinator - Laura Denker

### **FACTORY THEATRE (Toronto, Ontario)**

Artistic Director - Ken Gass  
 Managing Director - Nancy Webster  
 Production Manager - Doug Morum  
 Publicity and Marketing Manager - Leanne Squire

## Suggested Pre-Show Activities

1. **Provide Background.** *Tiger of Malaya* is inspired by real people and events. Reading through the background materials provided in this guide, like the **Annotated Timeline** and the **Terms from Japanese Military History**, will help familiarize students with the historical context of the play.

*(Addresses the Ontario Arts Curriculum Expectation for Gr. 11 University/College Preparation in the category of Dramatic Forms: describe the social and historical contexts of the play.)*

2. **Who is Responsible?** Both legal and moral issues surrounding the process of determining guilt are examined in *Tiger of Malaya*. To help students appreciate the complexity of this process, have them read the story below and answer the questions that follow, working in pairs or groups of three. Take up their responses in a whole class discussion.

A girl in high school is looking after her little brother and baby sister while her parents are away for the night. A boy she likes invites himself over and brings a lot of his friends. Things get out of hand and all the teens have too much to drink. There's a fire in the house that night and five people die, including the young children.

Who is responsible for the deaths of the children--the older sister, her boyfriend or the absent parents? Who should bear the most guilt for these deaths?

In law, a state of mind that is careless, inattentive, neglectful, wilfully blind, or reckless can be the basis for charges of criminal negligence. Who should be charged with criminal negligence in this case? Is the terrible emotional impact these deaths are likely to have on the survivors punishment enough? Justify your responses.

*(Addresses Gr. 11 University/College Preparation in the category of Analysis and Evaluation: analyse connections between the theatre, themselves, and society.)*

3. **Scene Study.** You can use the two scenes from *Tiger of Malaya* in this Guide for work in the classroom. Reading through the scenes together is a good way to pique students' interest in the play's characters and themes. If time allows you may want to consider having your students work in small groups to stage the scenes for informal presentation and critique.

*(Addresses Gr. 12 University/College Preparation in the category of Specific Expectations--Creating: convey character through the effective use of voice and movement techniques.)*

4. **What to Watch For.** Challenge your students to keep tabs on these two specific aspects of staging in *Tiger of Malaya*:

a) Beyond their obvious functions, **props** can be used to represent concepts and aspects of a character's psychological make up. In *Tiger of Malaya*, watch for how Yamashita's samurai sword and the mirrored vanity case he owns take on symbolic functions.

b) Formality and ritual have traditionally played a much greater role in Japanese culture than in Canadian culture. This production of *Tiger of Malaya* will draw on the highly formalized and ornate Japanese theatre tradition known as Kabuki, especially in its soundscape. Kabuki theatre became popular in Japan over four hundred years ago. Along with elaborate costumes, scenery, acting, and makeup, Kabuki makes abundant use of music. To hear some of the instruments used in the Kabuki theatre, students can go to <http://www.fix.co.jp/kabuki/sound.html>. During the performance, have your students listen for Kabuki influences in Todd Charlton's sound design.

*(Addresses Gr. 12 Open in the category of Specific Expectations--Role/Character: describe how dramatic elements (in this case, props and sound design) are used to develop character and theme.)*

## Scenes from *Tiger of Malaya* for Study In Class

**NB:** The information in the Character Sketches and Plot Synopsis sections will help prepare your students for work on these scenes. Both scenes contain strong language and themes.

### Scene One: Yamashita and Rosario

[This scene takes place in General Yamashita's Japanese Army encampment on the Philippine island of Luzon shortly after August 10th, 1945.]

*YAMASHITA kneels on the ground, weakened by hunger and illness. ROSARIO approaches and presents him with his samurai sword. He takes it and tries to prop himself up.*

ROSARIO: *(attending to him)* General...? Your men worry for you. Please, here... I have food and water for you. *(From the near periphery, she retrieves a canteen and the bowl of rice. She offers the canteen.)* Here. It's clean. I've boiled it.

*She helps him drink. He can't keep it down. Doubled over, he retches and coughs. When his heaves have quieted, he reaches for the canteen and drinks again, willing himself to keep the water down.*

YAMASHITA: *(Recovering himself.)* Food, you said. What is it?

ROSARIO: Rice.

YAMASHITA: *Rice?* Bring it to me. Bring it now.

*ROSARIO brings YAMASHITA the bowl which contains, at most, a mouthful or two of rice. He tastes it tentatively, then devours it, shovelling most of what is there into his mouth. Unexpectedly, ROSARIO grabs his arm.*

YAMASHITA: *(recoils)* *Nanisurunda!*

ROSARIO: Slowly. You'll waste it.

*YAMASHITA regards ROSARIO, as if seeing her for the first time. He begins eating again, carefully now, chewing slowly, savouring the last few grains.*

YAMASHITA: Where did you get this?

ROSARIO: *(indicating the stitching of her dress)* It's mine. I have been saving it.

YAMASHITA: Who are you? *(Suddenly realizes.)* You're the one...from this village...?

ROSARIO: Yes.

*YAMASHITA fights a wave of nausea.*

YAMASHITA: You... Leave me now... *Go...*

ROSARIO: I have nowhere--

YAMASHITA: It's not my concern where you go.

ROSARIO: I won't. I can't.

YAMASHITA: *Leave.* We will be relocating as soon as--

ROSARIO: I will come with you.

*Silence. YAMASHITA struggles to collect his thoughts.*

YAMASHITA: My men are mistaken. You...you can't be here...

YAMASHITA: Who are you? Why do you speak *Nippongo*?

ROSARIO: Many *Nippon-jin* farmers lived near my home. My sister married one who could not afford a picture bride. I worked for them.

YAMASHITA: *Here?* In this village?

ROSARIO: This...was my husband's village. My home village is far away.

YAMASHITA: So they are safe--your family. You can return--

ROSARIO: *Nippon-jin* and their families were killed by guerrillas. My sister, too.

YAMASHITA: *Senso*. War.

*Silence. YAMASHITA drinks from the canteen. ROSARIO gathers her courage. Then:*

ROSARIO: I heard the war is over.

YAMASHITA: Is that so? Look around you.

ROSARIO: The Americans can make pieces of the sun fall where they choose.

YAMASHITA: You know nothing.

ROSARIO: The Emperor went on the radio. He surrendered.

YAMASHITA: Lies. Propaganda.

ROSARIO: All the soldiers are talking. They're waiting.

YAMASHITA: Waiting.

ROSARIO: For you. To surrender--

*YAMASHITA stands abruptly, his back to ROSARIO.*

YAMASHITA: I could kill you for speaking to me in this way. Coming in here, trying to curry favour. Don't think because you speak *Nippongo* you will be spared a second time.

ROSARIO: Your men brought me to you!

YAMASHITA: They are mistaken.

ROSARIO: They are desperate. Starving! They would kill each other for the rice you just--(*ROSARIO realizes too late what she has done.*)

YAMASHITA: Get out of here.

ROSARIO: *Sumimasen*. I... I didn't mean--

YAMASHITA: I said leave.

ROSARIO: But...I can help you. You're ill. Please. I'll do what you ask--

*YAMASHITA flings water from the canteen in her face.*

YAMASHITA: I don't allow whores in my camp.

ROSARIO: I was brought here to help you! For your comfort--

*YAMASHITA grabs ROSARIO and starts dragging her off.*



ROSARIO: They thought you'd kill yourself, you see? They thought I could--

YAMASHITA: Sentry!

ROSARIO: Maria I want to live I want to live I want to live--

*YAMASHITA releases ROSARIO. She lies at his feet, weeping.*

YAMASHITA: This is a military camp. I do not allow civilians--

ROSARIO: Look what your soldiers have done... Look what they are doing... *Please...* The war is over. I've come this far. Let me stay here. Save me, General. I beg you...

YAMASHITA: Sentry!

ROSARIO: I'll tell the Americans! I'll tell them what happened here! Let me stay and I'll tell them the truth. The truth of your kindness...

YAMASHITA: Return to your home village. I can provide you with travel documents. I assure you the war will be over soon.

*Lights out on YAMASHITA. ROSARIO speaks directly to the audience.*

ROSARIO: I moved in darkness. I lay on the forest floor as still as the dead. I prayed for American voices. The G.I. laughter. The war is over, Rosario. Don't move. Wait. Wait...

## Scene Two--Hilroy, Okamura and Lederman

[This scene takes place in a U.S. Army Legal Corps Office in Manila in the fall of 1945. The characters are involved in preparing General Yamashita's legal defence against charges of war crimes.]

OKAMURA stands at attention, a satchel full of papers at her feet. HILROY stands behind her, consulting a file.

OKAMURA: I don't know what you're talking about.

HILROY: Come clean, Okinawa.

OKAMURA: I am an American. *An American.* I was discharged from the Women's Army Corps and retained as a federal civil servant--

LEDERMAN enters, excitedly waving papers.

LEDERMAN: Continuance denied! Continuance denied, Colonel! They're digging their own graves... (*He notices something is amiss.*) What's going on?

HILROY: I have some news of my own, Lederman. According to your Colonel Stenner, MacArthur is kicking up a shit-storm. He's threatening to pull the press privileges of any reporters who talk to us, and he's also threatening court martial if we file that *habeas* petition with the Philippine Supreme Court.

LEDERMAN: He's blowing hot air. He can't court martial us for doing our job.

HILROY: You wouldn't happen to know anything about this, would you, Okimota?

OKAMURA: I don't even know what a *habeas* petition is.

HILROY: You heard us talking about it the other night.

LEDERMAN: What? Colonel--

HILROY: (*to Lederman*) She spied on us.

OKAMURA: I was just listening in. You knew I was there.

LEDERMAN: That's right, we did. (*To Hilroy.*) Anyway, what evidence do you--

HILROY: What are you--blind? Look at her! (*To Okamura*) You lied, Okimota. You told us you were *assigned* to the defence. (*Re: his file.*) Says here you volunteered.

OKAMURA: Same as you.

HILROY: You said MacArthur gave you a choice. He gave you a choice all right--go home or come to Manila and spy on us.

OKAMURA: Spy? I told you--I was just--

HILROY: You're working for MacArthur.

OKAMURA: I do my job. I do as I'm told.

HILROY: By ratting out our strategies to MacArthur and the prosecution.

LEDERMAN: Please, Colonel, let's just get to the bottom of this in a rational--

HILROY: Search her.

LEDERMAN: *What?*

HILROY: You heard me.

LEDERMAN: Colonel Hilroy, this is a misunder--

HILROY: Open that bag, Lederman, that's an order! (*Silence.*) Do it!

*With an apologetic look, LEDERMAN reaches for OKAMURA's bag. Abruptly, OKAMURA grabs it and upends its contents on the floor.*

OKAMURA: Affidavits from Tokyo, Japanese documents *you* asked me to translate--

*HILROY reaches for an envelope among the other papers. OKAMURA snatches it away.*

HILROY: (*lunging for it*) What in God's name do you think you're doing?

OKAMURA: I am serving my country! (*Brandishes the envelope.*) We are *all...* Oh, what's the use--I may as well have gone home! I may as well have stayed in the camps!

*OKAMURA tosses the envelope at HILROY and runs out.*

HILROY: That's right--run on home! You're not the only one around here who can speak Jap! (*Silence. HILROY indicates the envelope on the ground.*) Read it.

*LEDERMAN retrieves several sheets of paper from the envelope and scans them.*

LEDERMAN: This is a letter. From an American soldier. From a G.I. hospital in Italy.

HILROY: Don't you sulk at me, Captain Lederman. That don't prove nothin'. Now when Okamori's in here I want you on her like a goddamn hawk. You get me?

LEDERMAN: Sir, her name is Daisy Okamura. You could take--

HILROY: I know what her goddamn name is--

LEDERMAN: You could take ten seconds to learn it.

HILROY: You're walking a fine line, Harvard boy--

LEDERMAN: And another thing--she's an American, and I don't appreciate you calling her a Jap every other--

HILROY: I know what her name is and I'll call a Jap a Jap if I want to. And I don't need you sticking your big Hebrew nose into it every time I contravene your high-fallutin' Ivy League worldview. What are you, an only child?

LEDERMAN: I knew you were old school, Colonel, but you, sir, are also a bigot and a bully.

*LEDERMAN stalks off with barely contained rage.*

HILROY: Stand firm, Lederman. Lederman! You will stand firm goddammit!

*LEDERMAN stops but does not turn to face HILROY.*

LEDERMAN: I have work to do, if you don't mind. And might I suggest that you have some work of your own. You owe Daisy an apology.

HILROY: You're giving me a rash, Lederman. I'm warning you.

LEDERMAN: Colonel, I must insist that we negotiate some ground rules for--

HILROY: Lederman!

LEDERMAN: When I agreed to join the defence--

HILROY: I had to twist your arm, Harvard boy!

LEDERMAN: When I *agreed*, sir, this was precisely the kind of situation--

HILROY: What--this here? This has nothing to do with rank. I'm just a bigger man than you. You're Stenner's little lap dog, after all. Maybe *you're* the rat, is that it? You still answer to Colonel Stenner?

LEDERMAN: You weren't even going to mount a defence. And you still resent the fact that, not only are you obliged to provide one, but in the General's case plain decency demands that you do so. (*Silence. HILROY abruptly*

HILROY: You don't know me, son. MacArthur wants to play dirty, I'll play dirty. I've already lined up some more interviews with newsmen, and I am personally petitioning the Philippine Supreme Court to show some backbone and halt these proceedings. I'll go all the way—know what I mean? Now it's time to fish or cut bait. Let's get us a transport. I want to hear first-hand how the Tiger got his stripes.

*He hands Okamura's bag and papers to LEDERMAN and starts off. LEDERMAN reluctantly follows.*

## Suggested Post-Show Activities

1. *Tiger of Malaya* explores the theme of anti-Japanese racism in its juxtaposition of the legal injustices suffered by Yamashita (denial of his right to a fair trial) and Okamura (the internment of Japanese-Americans whose only “crime” was being Japanese). Your students may not realize that Canada, too, forced its Japanese citizens into camps during WWII. To help your students learn more about this, links to two excellent websites detailing the Japanese Canadian experience of racism are given below.

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation site:  
[www.crr.ca/en/MediaCentre/FactSheets/eMedCen\\_FacShtFromRacismToRedress.htm](http://www.crr.ca/en/MediaCentre/FactSheets/eMedCen_FacShtFromRacismToRedress.htm)

The HopeSite:  
[www.hopesite.ca/remember/history/racism\\_canada\\_1.html#japanese](http://www.hopesite.ca/remember/history/racism_canada_1.html#japanese)

2. In *Tiger of Malaya* the figure of Rosario challenges us to recognize the enormity of the suffering caused by war. You and your students may want to devise an activity to help you reflect on and commemorate the forgotten victims of global conflict. Responses could take many forms: sketches; poems (model on Yamashita’s death poem, Psalm 131, Japanese haiku, paper prayers); songs (ballads, laments, dirges); group tableaux (with music and/or voice-over poetry); videos; or personal essays. In the drama classroom, small group or whole class work on ritual may be particularly pertinent in relation to de-briefing *Tiger of Malaya*.

3. The quotes below can be used to open up a post-mortem discussion of *Tiger of Malaya*. Assign different quotes to several small groups and ask them to explain how they relate to the themes and ideas in the play.

*We first kill people with our minds, before we kill them with weapons. Whatever their conflict, the enemy is always the destroyer. We're on God's side; they're barbaric. We're good, they're evil. War gives us a feeling of moral clarity that we lack at other times.*  
 Sam Keen

*He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty he establishes a precedent that will reach himself.*  
 Tom Paine

*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.*  
 Edmund Burke

*The social psychology of this century reveals a major lesson: often it is not so much the kind of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he finds himself that determines how he will act.*  
 Stanley Milgram

*What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy?*  
 Mahatma Gandhi

*National Arts Centre (NAC) study guides are supported by  
the National Youth and Education Trust  
with special thanks to TELUS, Founding Partner of the Trust,  
SunLife Financial and CGI Group Inc.*

*Factory Theatre gratefully acknowledges the support of its  
Tiger of Malaya production sponsor, BMO Financial Group.*

