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Friday, April 29, 2005

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## Experimental play mixes media, cultures, to find the myth of life

(14-04-2005)

HCM CITY — A new cross- cultural production called Huyen Thoai Cuoc Song (Myth of Life) will debut tonight in HCM City, aiming to stir the audience with its experimental form.

Huyen Thoai Cuoc Song is written and directed by Vietnamese-Australian Le Quy Duong, who has gained international fame for his experimental dramas. The production takes a panoramic view of the present world, where human beings are struggling with many challenging problems, such as spiritual crises, international conflicts, war, poverty, disease and natural disasters.

Maintaining peace, independence, freedom and human values in a rapidly changing world is the overarching theme of the play, according to the director. "It [the drama] was written and directed based on the philosophic premise: life is the myth. Life is a precious and sacred gift that needs to be protected and honoured," said Duong.

"Huyen Thoai Cuoc Song will take the audience on a journey to rediscover the first sparks of life. The resulting flame will connect humans with a brighter future filled with freedom, peace and happiness," he added.

After becoming an Australian citizen in 1999, Duong has directed three experimental dramas in Viet Nam—Luu Quang Vu’s Bong Cuc Xanh Tren Dam Lay (A Green Marigold in the Marsh), John Romeril’s Crowded House, and Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

A 1990 graduate of the Ha Noi College of Theatre and Cinema, Duong also received a diploma in directing from Australia’s National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). His first feature screenplay, Meat Party, won the 1999 Playbox Asialink Playwrighting Competition and the 2001 Queensland Premier’s Literary Award for Best Drama. He completed a Fulbright scholarship in Hollywood last year and now runs the Vietnamese Arts Culture Exchange Programme (VACEP).

Huyen Thoai Cuoc Song is Duong’s latest theatre production with the HCM City Drama Theatre, employing highly visual language and merging realism with symbolism.

"The play combines modern and traditional theatrical elements within the context of a cross cultural and hybrid performance," said Duong. Audiences will have the opportunity to enjoy a new mixture of body



**Reaching out:** Actress Mai Mai plays the Young Girl.



**Melodramatic:** Kim Khanh (centre) and Thanh Minh perform in a rehearsal of Myth of Life. — VNS Photos Thanh Vu

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<a href="#">Fashion</a>	drama, video work, installation, contemporary and folk dance, lighting and sound effects, abstract costumes and make-up techniques.
<a href="#">Festival</a>	
<a href="#">Film</a>	The drama's music will be an experimental combination of techno music, composed by Darrin Verhagen, a famous composer in Europe and Australia, and Vietnamese traditional drums, composed by musician Nhut Dung.
<a href="#">Interview</a>	
<a href="#">Music</a>	Vietnamese-French choreographer Viet Linh Rateau and Artist Thu Van will participate in the production's body drama and folk dance, respectively. The play also features costumes by well-known fashion designer Si Hoang. The dresses will highlight individual characteristics according to the colours of the five basic elements of Eastern philosophy: metal, wood, water, fire, earth. Make-up artist Xuan Chinh will also present his latest experiments in abstract make-up technique.
<a href="#">Photography</a>	
<a href="#">Theatre</a>	
<a href="#">In History</a>	The production features actors and actresses My Uyen, Kim Khanh, Minh Beo, Anh Tuan, Chanh Thuan, Tan Hung, Thanh Minh and Mai Mai, and their characters are given generic names like the Landlord, the Hero, and the Young Girl, in order to make them universal.
<a href="#">Kaleidoscope</a>	
<a href="#">Ong Tao's Kitchen</a>	Huyen Thoai Cuoc Song is HCM City Drama Theatre's first full-scale production this year, and the theatre aims to become a mainstream source of quality dramas.
<a href="#">Restaurant Review</a>	
<a href="#">Traditional Miscellany</a>	After two debut nights at the HCM City Opera House at 7 Cong Truong Lam Son, District 1, the drama will move to the HCM City Drama Theatre at 30 Tran Hung Dao Street, District 1, every Thursday.
SPORTS	
<a href="#">Teed Off</a>	The play will have English subtitles, and ticket prices range from VND100,000 to VND250,000. Call 9070723 (Vietnamese) or 0918514915 (English) for reservations. — VNS
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Publication Permit: 599/GP-INTER  
Granted by the Ministry of Culture and Information on April 9, 1998.