

EMK PRESENTS

Frida

THE LAST NIGHT SHOW

PERFORMANCE AND PANEL



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2024

7 P.M. • BING THEATRE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

About EMK



Introducing quintessential European musicals to the Korean domestic market, EMK with its aim of diversifying and globalizing the musical industry has invigorated the Korean musical theatre landscape that has previously been dominated by Broadway and West End productions. Beginning with the musical *Mozart!*, and followed by *Monte Cristo*, *Hamlet*, *Elisabeth*, *Rebecca*, *The Last Kiss*, *Marie Antoinette*, *Phantom*, *Mata Hari*, *The Man Who Laughs*, *X-Calibur*, and *Beethoven: Beethoven Secret*, EMK has earned critical acclaim from both audiences and the media, leading to a series of successful box office hits.

EMK's musicals are distinct from existing licensed productions introduced in Korea, as they incorporate EMK's unique production expertise. While preserving the original music and script, EMK reimagines all other aspects of the musical, including direction, stage design, costumes, and lighting, to resonate with Korean audiences' sensibilities. This innovative approach has not only captivated local theatregoers but also earned accolades from the original creators, positioning EMK's adaptations among the world's most notable productions.

EMK has established itself as Korea's leading musical production company with the most original copyrights, leveraging expertise gained through non-replica productions. Starting with the spectacular world premiere of *Mata Hari* in 2016, which took four years to produce and required 15 billion KRW (11 million USD) in production costs and the following success of *The Man Who Laughs*, which took five years and 17.5 billion KRW (13 million USD) to create and became the first musical to sweep three major awards of excellence upon debut in 2018, EMK's reputation as a creator of unique original content was solidified.

X-Calibur, the culmination of EMK's original musical production, debuted in 2019, and *Beethoven*, EMK's latest premiere in 2023, reinforced EMK's commitment to original content with global appeal, extending its influence beyond Korea to the international stage.

In addition, EMK secured a licensing agreement for *Mata Hari* with Japan's Umeda Arts Theatre and successfully completed its first licensed performance in Japan in 2018. Following this achievement, EMK's second original musical, *The Man Who Laughs*, also signed a licensing contract with Japan's top production company, Toho Co., Ltd., and concluded its licensed run in Japan to widespread acclaim in 2019. These milestones marked EMK's pivotal entry into the global musical theatre market. Furthermore, EMK introduced a new paradigm to the Korean creative musical market through its enhancement deals, forging a collaborative production between a commercial producer and a Swiss nonprofit organization for the musical, *X-Calibur*, and set new standards for creating and disseminating original musicals by transforming the licensed production of *Monte Cristo* into a work with global performance distribution rights, shaking up the rigid theatre industry in Korea.

Representing their fourth original work following *Mata Hari*, *The Man Who Laughs*, and *X-Calibur*, *Frida* marks EMK's new venture in small musical theatre production. With this strategic shift, EMK aims to expand the influence of Korean musicals into more intimate venues, broadening their appeal and accessibility.

EMK was founded in 2009 and is currently based in Seoul, South Korea.

Program

NUMBERS

1. La Vida
2. Crush
3. Aguantar
4. Chinga Tu Madre la Vida
5. Corset
6. Hummingbird
7. Martirio
8. Be Strong
9. Diego
10. Aguantar Reprise
11. Corset Reprise
12. Self-portrait
13. Curtain Call



CREDITS

Producer: Sophy Jiwon KIM

Book / Lyrics / Director: Jung Hwa CHOO

Composer / Musical Arranger / Music Director:
Soo Hyun HEO

Choreographer: Byung Jin KIM

Set Designer: Eom Ji LEE

Costume Designer: Yu Gyeong OH

Lighting Designer: Soo Yeon LEE

Sound Designers: Young Ok KIM, Mun Gyu HAN

Video Designer: Soo Gyeong LEE

Props Designer: Yoon Hyeong JO

Stage Manager: Yongsu PARK

Assistant Director: So Young RYU

Assistant Music Director: Hyun Ji KIM

Production Manager: Min Gyeong SONG

Company Managers: Seun JEONG, Ji Yoon CHANG

CAST

FRIDA: Sohyang Sophie KIM

REFLEJAR: Su Mi JEON

MEMORIA: Si In PARK

DESTINO: Sun Young PARK

The performance will be followed by a discussion on transnational creativity and cross-cultural representation in musical theatre with actress **Sohyang Sophie Kim**, writer/director **Jung Hwa Choo**, producer **Sophy Jiwon Kim**, and USC faculty members **David Román** (English and American Studies and Ethnicity), **Esther K. Chae** (Dramatic Arts), and **Luis Alfaro** (moderator, Dramatic Arts).

THE MUSICAL

Frida

THE LAST NIGHT SHOW

*Even if pain stalks you,
pour a full glass of champagne!*

FRIDA KAHLO— MEXICAN PAINTER AND REVOLUTIONARY

Despite enduring the ravages of polio and a devastating car accident that shattered her body, Frida Kahlo transformed her pain into profound and evocative art. This show invites you to delve into the extraordinary life of a woman who refused to be defined by her suffering.

Though her life was filled with teardrops of pain, she rejected a pessimistic view of life.

¡Viva la vida!

SYNOPSIS

What is life? What is death?

This show begins at the boundary between living and dying.

The Last Night Show!

Today, the legendary Mexican painter Frida Kahlo takes the center stage. Accompanied by three crew members, she shares her remarkable life story. As we follow the story of the choices she made at pivotal moments in her life, we realize this is no ordinary show.

On the final day of her life, the moment Frida realizes that the panorama unfolding before her closing eyes is the real show, her heart stops.

And that's when it truly begins. The real show where her physical anguish and emotional turmoil are transcended through her paintings, art, and wit.

CHARACTERS

FRIDA (1907–1954)

Polio at 6, accident at 18.

The girl who dreamed of becoming a doctor survived a devastating accident that left her whole body shattered. Trading the scalpel for a brush, she painted for the rest of her life. She, who candidly portrays herself and her pain, rises to become one of Mexico's most celebrated artists and icons.

One day, as her life nears its conclusion, she finds herself the honored on *The Last Night Show*. While recounting her past, she abruptly halts the rehearsal.

Although life treated her with much misfortune and sorrow, she loved life passionately and lived fiercely, leaving no room for regret. Was her life the real show, or is the show beginning only as her life ends? In the end, does the answer truly matter?

REFLEJAR

Host and Crew of *The Last Night Show*

Reflejar embodies Frida's lover, Diego Rivera. Is love an illusion as people claim?

Diego, who brought Frida both her greatest joy and deepest pain, was her other self and alter-ego. Her love for him remained unwavering until her final breath.

DESTINO

Crew of *The Last Night Show*

Frida said that after the accident, death danced at her bedside. Destino urges Frida to sign the death oath, while approaching her like death. As Frida takes her final breath, Destino tells her to begin the real show.

MEMORIA

Host and Crew of *The Last Night Show*

She plays Frida's childhood self and Frida from an alternative world. In loneliness, Frida described crossing over to a parallel universe where she encountered another version of herself during her battle with polio when she was six. This alternate Frida represents an idealized version of herself, everything the artist aspired to become: a surgeon who operates on Frida.



BIOS

CREATIVES

Sophy Jiwon KIM, Producer

EMK Musical Company Vice CEO
EMK Entertainment CEO
International Production Musical International Producer
of *Sister Act*

MUSICALS

The Rose of Versailles, *Sister Act* (International Tour),
Frida: The Last Night Show, *Mozart!*, *Beethoven Secret*,
Elisabeth, *The Man Who Laughs*, *MATA HARI*, *X-Calibur*,
Your Lie in April, *The Last Kiss*, *Phantom*, *Marie*
Antoinette, *REBECCA*, *Monte Cristo*, *Hamlet*

Jung Hwa Choo, Book/Lyrics/Director

MUSICALS

Sisyphus, *Your Lie in April*, *Frida: The Last Night Show*,
Smoke, *Interview*, *Ludwig: Beethoven the Piano*, *Blue*
Rain, *Once Upon a Time in Haeundae*, *Chemistory*,
Remember, *Graffiti*, *Secretly and Greatly*, *Every Moment*
Was You, *Oh! My Haeyoung*

PLAYS

Inside, *Love in Buenos Aires*

Soo Hyun Heo, Composer/ Musical Arrangement/ Music Director

MUSICALS

Sisyphus, *The Finger of God*, *Woyzeck in the Dark*, *Frida:*
The Last Night Show, *Blue Rain*, *Ludwig: Beethoven the*
Piano, *Smoke*, *Interview*, *Chil Chil*, *Oh! My Haeyoung*,
Romeo and Juliet, *The Castle*, *Agatha*, *Secretly and*
Greatly, *Every Moment was You*, *Once Upon a Time in*
Haeundae, *Radio Star*

DRAMA

About Time

Byung Jin Kim, Choreographer

MUSICALS

Your Lie in April, *Frida: The Last Night Show*, *Smoke*,
Interview, *Ludwig: Beethoven the Piano*, *Blue Rain*,
Graffiti, *Oh! My Haeyoung*, *Secretly and Greatly*, *Every*
Moment Was You, *Once Upon a Time in Haeundae*,
Remember



CAST



Sohyang Sophie KIM (FRIDA)

Sohyang Kim made her official debut in 2001, captivating audiences as the lead in the musical *Gospel*. Since then, she has carved out an impressive career, showcasing her remarkable versatility by embodying characters across diverse social strata and age groups. Her exceptional range extends beyond character portrayals to her ability to command stages of all sizes, from grand theatres to intimate venues.

Sohyang's uncanny talent for fully inhabiting each role she takes on has earned her the esteemed title of "all-time legend" in the Korean musical theatre scene. This reputation, coupled with her consistent excellence, has firmly established her as one of Korea's preeminent musical actresses. Her dedicated fan base and widespread industry recognition have made her a highly sought-after talent, with production companies vying for her involvement in their projects.

Sohyang has earned the moniker "Marie specialist" for her remarkable portrayals of characters named Marie across multiple productions. Her nuanced performances as Marie Curie (in *Marie Curie*) and Marie Antoinette (in *Marie Antoinette*) have showcased her ability to breathe life into complex historical figures, each with their own unique challenges and triumphs. Sohyang has also masterfully embodied other influential women from history, including Frida Kahlo (in *Frida: The Last Night Show*) and Mata Hari (in *Mata Hari*), further adding to her already impressive repertoire of biographical roles. In each of these portrayals, Sohyang has demonstrated her extraordinary talent for delving deep into the tumultuous lives of these figures, bringing their struggles, passions, and complexities to vivid life on stage.

Already having a successful career in Korea, Sohyang embarked on a new challenge in 2010 by enrolling in the Musical Theatre Conservatory program at the New York Film Academy, setting her sights on Broadway. Determined to make her mark, she auditioned for hundreds of American musicals, eventually securing significant roles such as Gigi in *Miss Saigon* at the Paramount Theatre and Tuptim in *The King and I* at the Harbor Lights Theatre.

However, after facing numerous rejections in the competitive American musical scene, Sohyang's perseverance paid off. Her unwavering dedication and tireless efforts culminated in landing the role of Sister Mary Robert, the quiet novice nun, in the U.S. production of the hit Broadway musical *Sister Act*. Sohyang was the only Asian candidate auditioning for main character roles. Although she initially tried out for an ensemble role and as an understudy for Sister Mary Robert, her emotional depth and vocal prowess caught the attention of the production team, who ultimately cast her as the lead. By playing Sister Mary Robert, a role traditionally seen as reserved for "pretty white women" in the U.S. in the 2017–2018 Asian tour production, Sohyang became the first Asian actress to join the cast of *Sister Act*.

Sohyang is the first Korean theatre actress who has joined the Actors' Equity Association (AEA), a labor union representing American actors and stage managers in the theatre industry. Sohyang envisions a career path that challenges conventions and breaks new ground in the theatre industry. Rather than solely pursuing high-profile roles, she aspires to tackle characters that others have hesitated to approach, embracing the unique challenges they present. Her ambition extends beyond personal achievement; she aims to broaden opportunities for Asian actors in the industry, advocating for their consideration in roles traditionally reserved for white performers. Through her pioneering spirit and dedication to pushing boundaries, Sohyang hopes to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse theatrical landscape, inspiring future generations of actors to transcend racial barriers and redefine casting norms.

The musical *Frida: The Last Night Show* holds a special place in Sohyang's career, as it was created specifically with her in mind by director Jung Hwa Choo, who has previously collaborated with her on productions such as *Smoke* and *Ludwig: Beethoven the Piano*. This tailor-made role of Frida not only showcases Sohyang's exceptional talent but also reflects the high regard in which she is held by industry professionals.

Sohyang hopes to convey a profound message through her portrayal of Frida: that life, despite its hardships, is fundamentally a celebration. She wants the audience to know that *Frida: The Last Night Show* is not merely a catalogue of life's struggles, but rather an affirmation of the beauty inherent in every individual's journey. By

embodying Frida's spirited cry of "Viva la Vida" (Long Live Life), Sohyang aims to inspire audiences to embrace their own experiences with similar passion and resilience. Her wish is that spectators leave the theatre with a renewed appreciation for life's vibrancy, finding joy and meaning even in the face of adversity, just as Frida did.



Su Mi JEON (REFLEJAR)

A veteran with an illustrious 24-year career in the Korean musical scene, Su Mi Jeon is celebrated for both the seasoned expertise that comes from years on stage and an unwavering passion for the craft. Since her debut in 2000 with *Guys and Dolls*, Su Mi has consistently captivated musical fans with performances that transcend expectations, regardless of the role or scale of production.

Su Mi's remarkable versatility shines through a diverse repertoire spanning intimate small-theatre shows to grand large-scale musicals, excelling in both original and licensed works. Her career is punctuated by standout performances in productions such as *The Last Kiss* as Crown Princess Stéphanie, *Mozart!* as Nannerl, and *Monte Cristo* as Luisa, where her nuanced and stable portrayals in these supporting roles garnered critical acclaim, cementing her reputation as a consummate professional.

However, it is in the role of Diego Rivera in *Frida* that truly showcases Su Mi's irreplaceable presence in the industry. Since participating in the Daegu International Musical Festival (DIME) tryouts in 2020 and continuing through the official premiere and beyond, Su Mi not only embodies Rivera but also serves as the show's host, Refleja, bringing an innovative dimension to the performance. Notably, Su Mi incorporates tap dance to symbolize Diego's "footsteps of an elephant," a skill

honed since her performances in a tap dance musical, *Mannequin* (2003) and *Broadway 42nd Street* (2004), demonstrating her commitments to continuous growth and artistic expression.

Through her role in *Frida*, Su Mi hopes the audience can find solace in their own struggles and leave the theatre with renewed resilience to face life's challenges. This sentiment echoes Frida Kahlo's own proclamation of "Viva la Vida" in the face of adversity, a message Su Mi passionately conveys through her performance, inviting audiences to embrace life with similar courage and zest.



Si In PARK (MEMORIA)

Affectionately dubbed "Poet Park" due to the phonetic resemblance of her name to the Korean word for "poet," Si In Park made her debut in musical theatre in 2015 by appearing in *Cat Zorba*. A graduate of the prestigious Guildford School of Acting at the University of Surrey, Si In has cultivated a diverse and impressive portfolio spanning multiple performance mediums. Her international experience includes acting roles in BBC (*Killing Eve*) and ABC dramas, as well as active involvement in performance planning and modeling agencies in London, establishing herself as a multifaceted performer.

In Korea, Si In has made significant strides in musical theatre, taking on key roles in productions such as *Sister Act*, *Who Lives in the Black Mansion?*, and *Your Lie in April*, which have highlighted her exceptional abilities in dancing, singing, and acting, cementing her status as a rising star in the industry. In 2023, Si In was cast as Memoria and joined the team of *Frida: The Last Night Show*. She reprises her role in the current production, allowing audiences to witness her remarkable character

portrayals, powerful vocals, and boundless energy firsthand. With her rapidly ascending trajectory and multifaceted talents, Si In has established herself as a compelling presence in the Korean musical theatre scene and a talent to watch closely in the coming years.



Sun Young PARK (DESTINO)

Sunyoung Park, a rising talent in the musical theatre scene, has been steadily honing her craft through ensemble roles in acclaimed productions. Her musical journey includes notable appearances in *Les Misérables*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Aida*, and *Midnight: Actor-Musician*, each role contributing to her growing expertise and stage presence. Sunyoung's breakout moment arrived earlier this year with a compelling performance as Emi Igawa in *Your Lie in April*, leaving a lasting impression on audiences and critics alike. This role marked a significant milestone in Sunyoung's career showcasing her ability to captivate musical fans with her nuanced portrayal and vocal prowess.

Now, Sunyoung is poised for another career-defining moment as she prepares to take on the character of Destino in the upcoming performances of *Frida: The Last Night Show*. Set to take place in Goyang and Hwaseong, Korea, at the end of September and early October 2024, this production will mark her debut in this role. Audiences at the USC Bing Theatre stage will have the unique opportunity to witness Sunyoung's fresh interpretation of Destino, adding an extra layer of excitement to the performance.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ⦿ EMK is one of the top musical theatre companies in Korea.
- ⦿ This performance will be in Korean with English supertitles.
- ⦿ After the performance, a panel of artists and scholars will discuss transnational creativity and the ethics of cross-cultural representations in musical theatre.

KOREAN MUSICAL THEATRE

Musical theatre is thriving in South Korea.

The contemporary Korean theatre industry is about two decades old. EMK—one of the leading Korean musical theatre companies—was founded in 2010.

Korean musicals tend to be lavish productions, including adaptations of Broadway musicals as well as original Korean musicals. The productions are hugely popular with young audiences—a notable difference from the aging audiences of theatre in America. In late 2023, *Korea JoongAng Daily* reported that 10 musicals have sold a cumulative million tickets each in Korea.

Korean musicals often feature actors and idols from K-dramas or K-pop alongside performers whose focus is musical theatre. Already very popular in Korea, Korean musicals have begun to build an international fan base.

While contemporary Korean musical theatre is a relatively new industry, cross-cultural musical theatre has a longer history in Asia. For example, the all-female musical troupe Takarazuka Revue—which has exchanged productions with EMK—was founded in Japan more than a century ago. The company began staging Broadway-style musicals in Japan in the mid-20th-century, and today they perform both Western musicals and Broadway-style productions of stories adapted from Japanese folktales, manga, and more.

The South Korean performing arts market was valued at USD \$432.8 million in 2022 and is expected to keep growing, according to the Korea Performing Arts Box Office Information System and the U.S. International Trade Administration. Musicals account for more than three-fourths of the nation's performing arts market.



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FRIDA KAHLO

Frida Kahlo was born in Coyoacán, Mexico, in 1907, and died there in 1954. She is one of the most popular and iconic painters of the 20th century, known for her striking self-portraits as well as her vibrant clothing and floral headdresses.

Kahlo was left with a limp after a polio infection as a child, and then was seriously injured in a bus accident in 1925; these injuries would require numerous medical procedures throughout her life and resulted in chronic pain. Kahlo began teaching herself to paint while recovering from the bus accident.

Kahlo's art is sometimes described as surrealist or magical realist, though she resisted the surrealism label, saying, "I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality." Kahlo's art also was influenced by Mexican folk art. Her paintings deal with multiple aspects of identity, including disability, gender and sexuality, and the two sides of her ancestry: Kahlo's father was German and of Hungarian descent, and her mother was Mexican, of Spanish and Indigenous descent.

From the 1970s to now, Kahlo's art and legacy have been embraced and amplified especially by feminist, LGBTQ+, and disabled communities and art historians.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- 🕒 In musicals such as *Hamilton*, *SIX*, and *Frida*, actors perform identities from other cultures. What are the impacts and implications of cross-cultural performance?
- 🕒 As the entertainment industry becomes increasingly globalized and cultural texts travel beyond national borders, how do local identity politics become legible in different contexts?
- 🕒 How are art forms or genres translated across languages, cultures, and geographies?
- 🕒 Why do you think musical theatre is so popular in Korea right now, while theatre is struggling to maintain and grow audiences in the U.S.?

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- 🕒 Classes and performances at the USC Thornton School of Music | music.usc.edu
- 🕒 East West Players | eastwestplayers.org
- 🕒 Musicals at Center Theatre Group | centertheatregroup.org
- 🕒 9/19 at Visions and Voices: *Ghostly Labor* by Vanessa Sanchez and La Mezcla
https://visionsandvoices.usc.edu/eventdetails/?event_id=46666959399363&s_type=&s_genre=



Frida Kahlo seated next to an agave plant, during a photo shoot for *Vogue* magazine, "Señoras of Mexico". Photo by Toni Frissell, 1937.



Frida Kahlo, *Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940.



Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939.

- 9/24 at Visions and Voices: Reimagining Disability Narratives through Artistic Practice—A Lecture by A. Laura Brody
https://visionsandvoices.usc.edu/eventdetails/?event_id=46675946693784&s_type=&s_genre=
- 10/18 at Visions and Voices: Behind the Scenes of K-pop
https://visionsandvoices.usc.edu/eventdetails/?event_id=46694801807723&s_type=&s_genre=

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Christina Snider of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS

- Siyuan Liu, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Asian Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2016).
- Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998).
- Gerry Souter, *Frida Kahlo: Beneath the Mirror* (New York: Parkstone International, 2010).
- Jessica Sternfeld and Elizabeth L. Wollman, eds., *The Routledge Companion to the Contemporary Musical* (New York: Routledge, 2019).
- Makiko Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue since 1914: Modernity, Girls' Culture, Japan Pop* (Boston: Global Oriental, 2012).

DATABASES

- [Digital Culture Art Course](#)
- [Korea A2Z](#)
- [Korea History & Culture Research Database](#)

JOURNALS

- [Asian Theater Journal](#)
- [Contemporary Theatre Review](#)
- [TheatreForum](#)

STREAMING MEDIA

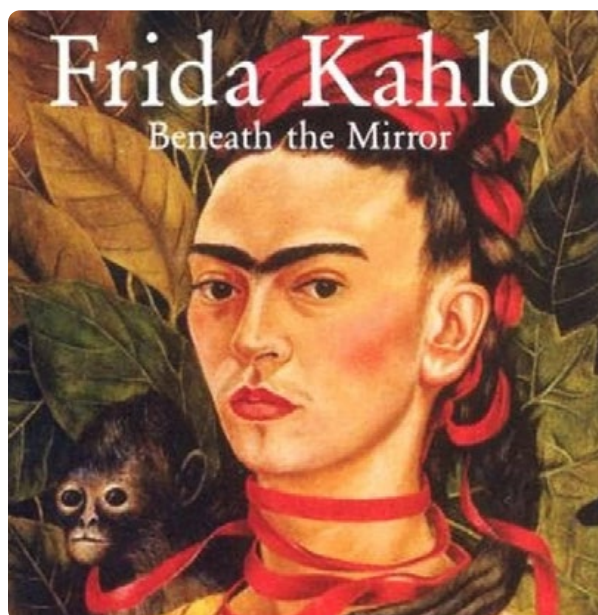
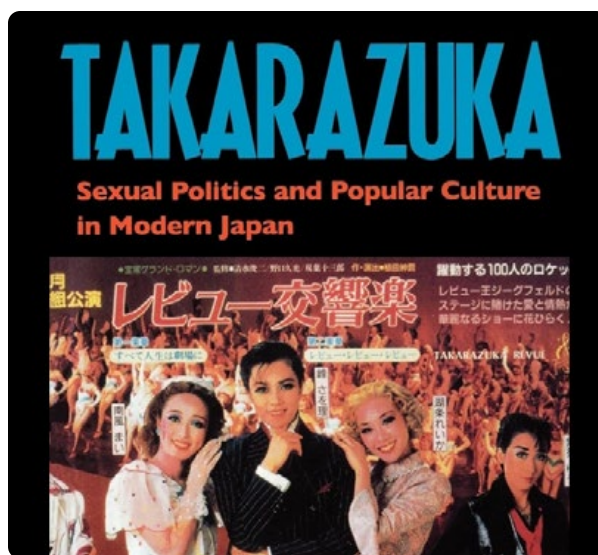
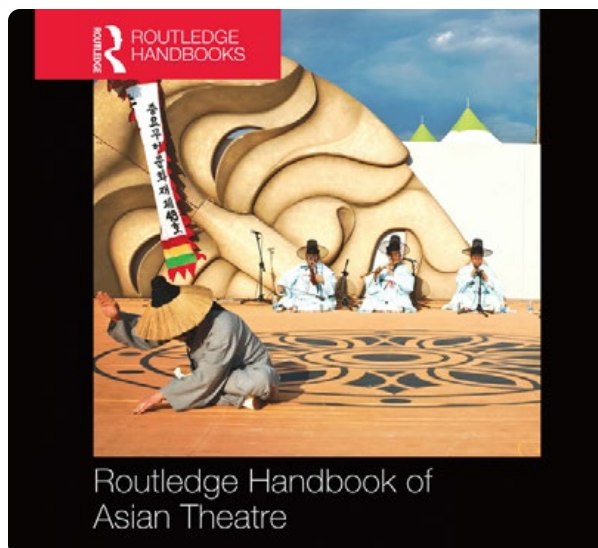
- [The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo](#) (Infobase, 2011).

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- [Korean Studies](#)

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- [Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles](#)



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