

ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

KIM'S CONVENIENCE

EDUCATOR RESOURCES



Image description: Yellow Text reads *Kim's Convenience*. It is overlaid on a photo of a Korean-Canadian shopkeeper. He is wearing a green vest and brown button up, standing in a convenience store and looking out of the corner of his eye at something out of frame.

Resource Guide Written by Sydney Marino and Mikenzie Page, Theatre Instructors at The Arts Club of Vancouver

Revised (with permission) by Vicki Trask, Youth Engagement & Artist Liaison at Alberta Theatre Projects, in collaboration with The Calgary Korean Cultural Centre for the purposes of enhancing the learning experience of the Student Matinee Series

KIM'S CONVENIENCE

By Ins Choi

DIRECTION BY KAITLIN WILLIAMS

ASSISTANT DIRECTION BY SORAN NAKAI

STUDENT MATINEE: 11:30AM; APRIL 20TH & 27TH 2022

Running Time: 70 Minutes

Recommended for Grades: 8+

Content Warnings: racism/racial profiling, mentions of domestic violence

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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS



Our Youth Engagement Programming aims to deepen the theatre experience for young audiences and emerging artists through our plays, varied practical learning opportunities, and professional mentorship. These programs foster community, engage the inquisitive mind, and bring young audiences and artists together in an exchange around our work.

We believe that early exposure to theatre is essential to learning and development, and positively impacts the creativity and overall performance of the young people in our community. It is this belief that fuels our dedication to making ATP, and the contemporary live theatre we create, accessible to ALL youth – no matter their economic status, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, disability or sexual orientation. The plays on our stage include a wide range of stories and perspectives, reflecting our community in all its diversity and are in sync with what it means to be alive right now.

Driven by an attitude of curiosity in all we do, we encourage a sense of discovery in the young people who engage with us. We delight in seeing young minds and hearts opened through the life-changing experience of theatre.

YOUth belong here at ATP!

Alberta Theatre Projects takes great pride in fostering young and emerging artists in the community, particularly our playwrights and new works creators. We do this through a number of programs:

Backstage Tours: Go behind the scenes to meet the makers and marvellous technicians who bring the plays on our stage to life. Alberta Theatre Projects provides information-packed, interactive guided tours of our entire theatre facility.

Job Shadowing: Spend some time with us at ATP shadowing professional artists. Job shadows are set up on a show by show basis pending production schedules and artist availability. Job Shadowing opportunities include: Artistic Direction, Play Development, Directing, Acting, Design, and much more.

For More Information about all of our Youth Engagement Programs Contact:

Vicki Trask vtrask@atplive.com
Youth Engagement & Artist Liaison

ALBERTATHEATREPROJECTS.COM

Kim's Convenience

By Ins Choi

CAST

Rich, Mr. Lee, Mike, Alex – *Devon Alexander*

Janet – *Brianna Kim*

Jung – *Howie Lai*

Appa – *James Yi*

Umma – *Maki Yi*

CREATIVE TEAM

Playwright – *Ins Choi*

Director – *Kaitlin Williams*

Assistant Director – *Soran Nakai*

Set Designer – *Carolyn Rapanos*

Costume Designer – *Jessica Oostergo*

Sound Designer – *Chengyan Boon*

Fight Director *Mike Kovac*

Lighting Designer – *Jonathan Kim*

Stage Manager – *Peter Jotkus*

Assistant Stage Manager – *Kennedy Green*

SYNOPSIS

The play opens with Appa, the owner of Kim's Convenience Store opening up the shop for the day. In the afternoon, Rich, a young black man enters the store. As Appa rings him up, they argue over whether an energy drink is made from ginseng or insam. Appa explains that in 1904, Japan attacked Korea, and it is important for him to call it insam because it is the Korean name, while ginseng is the Japanese name.

Appa's adult daughter Janet enters, and Appa tells her to call the police because there is a car parked in the no parking zone. She pushes back, but he insists, pointing out that it is a Japanese car. Janet tries to reason with him, citing Japanese products, people, and food he likes, but Appa insists again, and Janet calls the police.

Lee, a successful real estate agent, enters the store as Janet leaves. He tells Appa about a Walmart that is moving into Regent Park, threatening Appa's business. Lee gives Appa a business card with an offer to buy the store, but Appa rejects it. Lee asks Appa about his exit plan, inquiring if he plans on working at the store until he dies. He leaves his card on the counter and exits, revealing that he was the one parked in a no parking zone. Janet enters, looking for her daytimer.

Appa tells Janet to "call police again and cancel order," and she tells him to do it himself. Janet's mother, Umma, enters, and puts an end to their arguing. Umma notices the offer from Lee, and she tells Appa that with it, he could retire. She then leaves for church.

Appa asks Janet if she has a life plan. He asks her to take over the store, but she explains that she's already a photographer, and that is what she wants to do with her life. Then, Mike, a man with a thick Jamaican accent, enters. As he shops, Appa pulls Janet to the front of the store, and tells her to watch Mike, because he is going to steal. When Janet asks how he knows, Appa claims that it's because he is a black man wearing a jean jacket, which according to him is a "steal combo." He then tries to train Janet, taking her through various "steal combos."

When Appa rings Mike up, he accuses him of stealing. Janet tries to apologize, but Appa keeps at it, threatening to use Hapkido, a Korean fighting style, against him if he doesn't pay. Mike tries to run and Appa puts him in a Hapkido hold, forcing Mike to empty his pockets. Mike takes some stolen razors out of his pocket. Instead of calling the police, Appa makes Mike repeat an apology that turns into a prayer, before kicking him out. When he leaves, Janet scolds Appa for acting so stupidly, claiming that Mike could have had a gun, and his reaction wasn't worth it. They get into an argument that devolves into repeating each other back and forth.

Alex, a police officer, enters. Appa tells him to leave as there is no emergency anymore, since the parked car has moved. When Alex tells Appa not to call the police for that, he blames it on Janet. Alex sees Janet, and they realize they recognize each other as friends from childhood. They catch up, and Alex asks about Jung, Appa's estranged son. Appa changes the subject, insisting on giving

Alex snacks. Janet keeps giving Alex food until Appa stops her. Alex asks for Jung's number, but Appa says they don't have it. Alex exits, and Appa goes to the back.

Alex re-enters the store. He leaves his number with Janet for Jung. Janet uncomfortably explains that Jung left the store and family long ago. She explains how Jung left home at sixteen, after Appa hit him during an argument, leaving him hospitalized for a few days. Soon after, Jung took all the money in the safe and left. She tells Alex that she doesn't know where Jung is now, but that he meets Umma at church sometimes. The conversation shifts to their current careers, and Janet takes pictures of Alex as they talk. They have a moment and Alex asks Janet out to lunch. They decide that he'll pick her up in ten minutes, and Alex leaves.

Appa enters with Janet's daytimer, and tries to finish training Janet to take over the shop. Appa expresses that he and Umma have made sacrifices to help their children have a better life. He wants Janet to take over the store because he sees it as his life story, and if he sells it his story will be over, but if Janet takes it over, his story keeps going. Janet argues that she has to live her own life, and that he can't expect her to make his life meaningful. Appa argues that since he chose to give up so much for Janet, she should now return the favour. Janet explains that she's spent hours working for free in the store and starts tallying up how much Appa would owe her if she charged for those hours. Appa retaliates by counting up everything he has provided her with in life to show how much he has given her. He says he's given her his whole life and asks "what I still owe to you"? Janet exits as Umma enters. She takes an envelope from underneath the cash register and leaves.

Umma meets up with Jung at her church sanctuary at night. They speak about how the church has been bought by a condo company, and Umma reveals that they'll be closing the church. Jung gives Umma a photo of his two-month-old son. She's enamoured by the image and says that Appa should know. She gives Jung the envelope of money for the baby. Jung expresses that he's not happy with his life. He recently connected with some old friends from his soccer team who are now more successful than him, making him feel inadequate with his job, living situation, and rocky relationship. He wants to leave and start over. Umma tells him that she and Appa had a good life in Korea, and when they moved to Canada, they had to work very hard to provide a good life for their children. Now Jung can choose to do that for his son. Before parting ways, Umma tells Jung about the offer Mr. Lee has put in on the store.

The scene shifts to Umma's memory, with her and Appa standing in front of their new store. They list off possible names for their store, never landing on the right one. Finally, Umma rubs her pregnant belly, and suggests that if they have a boy, they could call him Jung.

Back in the present, Umma and Appa chat in the store. Appa senses that Umma has something to say, but she declines to tell him and exits. Appa looks at Lee's offer and picks up the phone.

Janet comes back from her date, and Appa asks who she went out with. When she tells him it was Alex, he says “Alex is not Korean but if you want to marry him, that’s fine with me,” but Janet thinks Appa is jumping to conclusions. Alex enters, wanting to speak to Janet in private, but Appa encourages Alex to speak in front of him, too. Alex stumbles over his words and Appa eventually cuts him off, forcing him to get to the point. He asks Alex if he thinks Janet is sexy. When Alex is too uncomfortable to answer, Appa pulls a Hapkido move on him, and he says yes. Appa insists that Alex kiss Janet, and after a moment, he kisses her. When he goes to kiss her again, Appa pulls another Hapkido move on Alex for kissing Janet too many times. He then asks Alex to do step two: ask Janet to marry him. Appa has them both in Hapkido holds, forcing them to ask and answer the question until Alex does a reversal and gets Appa in a hold. Appa finally lets him speak regularly to Janet, and Alex confesses his feelings for Janet. She reciprocates, and they decide to go on a date the next day, Janet makes Appa apologize. They reconcile. Appa confesses that he doesn’t want her to take over the store, he just wants her to live her life in the best way that she chooses. Janet exits.

The bell rings, and Jung enters. They make small talk, and Appa gives Jung an insam energy drink. Jung notes that Appa could charge more for the drinks. Jung fondly recounts a time that Appa let him run the store by himself as a child, because he passed Appa’s Korean history test. They go through the test again, and Jung still knows all the answers. Eventually, Jung tells Appa that he has a son, and shows him a photo. Appa asks about his job, and Jung tells him that he hates it. Appa tells Jung that although he had big dreams for Jung, those were his dreams, not Jung’s—if Jung’s son doesn’t become a superstar, he can still be proud of him. Jung asks if he can work at the store. Appa considers this and tells him to take over the store. When Jung asks why Appa is giving it to him, he responds that his story is not the store, but his family. He gives the price gun to Jung and tells him that the price change is a good idea. Appa exits, and Jung begins repricing the drinks.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Ins Choi is a Korean Canadian actor, playwright, and poet best known for his award winning 2011 play *Kim's Convenience* and its sitcom counterpart. Choi was born in South Korea and was raised in Scarborough, Ontario. *Kim's Convenience* is inspired by Choi's own experiences growing up in a Korean family in Toronto. It debuted at the Toronto Fringe Festival and has since been performed off-Broadway and had productions at notable theatre companies such as Soulpepper and The Arts Club. Choi has performed with many theatre companies such as Fu-GEN Asian Canadian Theatre Company, Canadian Stage, the Stratford Festival, and Soulpepper, and now resides in Toronto.

ABOUT THE TV SHOW

Kim's Convenience is a Canadian sitcom based on the award-winning play of the same name and premiered on CBC television in October 2016. The show was developed by Ins Choi, the original playwright, and Kevin White and ran for five seasons before ending in March 2021. The show follows the Korean-Canadian Kim family and their convenience store in Toronto, Canada. The main characters are Appa (Paul Sun-Hyung Lee), Umma (Jean Yoon), their daughter Janet (Andrea Bang), their estranged son Jung (Simu Liu), Jung's friend and co-worker Kimchee (Andrew Phung), and Jung's manager Shannon (Nicole Power). The show was released to an overwhelmingly positive reception and garnered numerous awards and nominations over its five seasons.

CHARACTER LIST

Appa: (Dad), a 59-year-old 1st generation Korean-Canadian man. The owner of *Kim's Convenience* store. Speaks with a thick Korean-Canadian accent.

Umma: (Mom), a 56-year old 1st generation Korean-Canadian woman. Married to Appa. Speaks with a thick Korean-Canadian accent.

Janet: a 30-year-old 2nd generation Korean-Canadian woman. Daughter of Appa and Umma.

Jung: a 32-year-old 2nd generation Korean-Canadian man. Son of Appa and Umma.

Rich: a young black man.

Mr. Lee: a successful black real estate agent who is a friend of Appa.

Mike: a black man with a thick Jamaican accent.

Alex: a black police officer who is a childhood friend of Jung and Janet.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pre-show discussion questions:

- Have you ever seen any shows focusing on stories of immigrant families? How does this affect your expectations for this show?
- Are you familiar with the TV show *Kim's Convenience*? How does that affect your expectations for this show?
- Looking at the poster for the show, what sorts of themes and ideas do you think this play will discuss?

Post-show discussion questions:

- What did this play make you think about in relation to topics like immigration and family? What struggles did they portray?
- If you have seen the TV show, is there anything that surprised you about the stage play? What do you think about the different ways to tell a story through different mediums (stage or screen)?
- What is the impact of sharing diverse stories onstage? How do you think Asian representation onstage can be empowering?
- What similarities did you find between the Kim family and your family?
- Which character did you relate to the most and why?

- What defines a person's identity? Why does identity matter?
- What is the difference between legacy and tradition?
- Have you ever been somewhere where you didn't know the language? How did you adjust?
- Have you ever stood up to your parents?
- Place yourself in your parents' shoes – invite them to do the same for you – how do you see things differently?
- Have you ever felt disgrace or shame? How did you overcome those feelings?
- Have you ever forgiven someone when you didn't think you could?
- Identify the five things you value most in society (eg. Honesty, Kindness, Money, Respect, etc.). Where did those values come from?

ACTIVITY 1: FAMILY MEETING (*INTENDED FOR DRAMA CLASSES GRADES 8-12*)

Rationale: A lot of the comedy in this play comes from the big comedic characters, and the relationship between those characters. Some of the scenes between Appa and Janet are funny because we can see how different their characters/goals are, but we know they must try to find common ground.

Explanation:

- Students will be divided into groups of four. This will be their “family.” Within their groups, they can choose their family roles.
 - Ex. Parent, Grandparent, Child, Aunt, Nephew etc.
- Once they have their roles, students will try to flesh out this character. They will walk around the room, trying to embody the character through their physicality and walk.
 - When they have found their walk, they can experiment with finding their character’s voice. Does it sit low? High?
 - Encourage students to make distinct choices about their walks and voices. The more specific the better.
 - Students can imagine they are walking around as their character in the family’s living room. How does this character act? Do they tidy up? Do they relax?
- Once students have an idea of their own character, they can start interacting with their other “family members” in their living room.
 - They can inhabit this living room space together and through improvisation, they can explore what their relationship to the other family members is.
 - Who do they get along with? Are they closer with one specific family member?
- Once students have had the chance to explore their characters and relationships, they will have the chance to present an improvisation exercise. One family group will stay onstage, and the others will form an audience
- The family will sit around the dining room table for a family meeting. The audience can decide what topic they will be discussing
 - Ex. Should the family adopt a pet? How should the family divide up chores? Who has been secretly eating all the snacks?
 - Each family member should choose a strong stance on the subject. They cannot all have the same opinion.
- The family will have a few minutes to discuss this topic in an improvised scene, keeping in mind their strong character and relationship choices.
- The scene will end when they reach a decision, or when they decide to table the discussion for another day

Post Activity Discussion:

- Which parts of this activity did you enjoy? Which parts were challenging?
- How do you think making strong character choices affected the scene?
- As an audience member, which choices were the most entertaining to watch? Why?

ACTIVITY 2: LEGACY—WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND? (INTENDED FOR DRAMA, VISUAL ARTS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, AND SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES 10-12)

“What is my story? What is story of Mr. Kim? My whole life I doing store. This store is my story? No. My story is not Kim’s Convenience. My story is you. And Janet. And Umma. And Sonam. You understand?”

- Appa, *Kim’s Convenience*

Rationale: Throughout the play, *Kim’s Convenience*, Appa attempts to have Janet take over the store. He pushes the idea of having a dynasty and leaving his mark on the world until he realizes his family was the legacy that really mattered to him. In this activity students will discover and reflect on what they want to leave behind and how they want to be remembered.

Explanation:

- As a class, look up the definition of “legacy”. Students can then discuss the following questions.
 - What does it mean to leave a legacy behind you?
 - What kind of legacy do you want to leave?
 - Why do people want to be remembered?
 - Can a legacy generate a negative impact?
- Once you feel your students have a grasp on the concept of legacy, divide them into groups of three or four. Explain to the students that they will be creating “a legacy project” to be given to the classes that come after them. Within their legacy project, they must introduce themselves and give advice, words of wisdom, or tips and tricks they wish they knew before entering this class/their current stage of life.
- This project has a multitude of options. Groups can create a collage, a printed puzzle piece mural with advice written on it, a video diary, a video tour, a video collage, a letter, a filmed interview, a mockumentary (e.g., *The Office*) about the class/the school, a survival kit, a interview with a teacher, a map, a handbook, children’s novel, etc.
- Once the project has been completed, come together as a class and place all the items into a box. Together the class will come up with a quote to write on the outside of the box that they feel encapsulates the advice they have given.
- Seal the box and either give it to next year’s class OR give them their projects back at the end of the semester so students can reflect on how much they’ve grown.

Post Activity Discussion:

- Which parts of this activity did you enjoy? Which parts were challenging?
- What kind of a legacy do you want to leave on the world?
- Why are legacies important? Why not?

FURTHER READING

Korean Cultural Centre Canada introduces Korean culture to Canadians including music, art and performances, food, and a Korean language program.

Website: <https://canada.korean-culture.org/>

YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmmpfFNh3NCled90L1N1zKw>

Korea Tourism Organization: <https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/index.kto>

Kcon: covers concerts of Korean pop singers held overseas: <https://www.youtube.com/c/KCON>

Korea Now: official youtube channel of YonHap Agency, a broadcasting station in Korea. Covers Korean news, culture (entertainment, travel, people, etc), North Korea and many more: <https://www.youtube.com/c/KOREANOWyna>

Arirang TV: a Korean broadcasting agency for non-Korean speakers: <https://www.youtube.com/c/ArirangCoKrTV>

In Calgary

Korean Calgary Scholarship Foundation offers various scholarships to Grade 11 & 12 to undergraduate students: <https://www.calgaryksf.org/>

The Calgary Korean Cultural Centre runs a Korean library: <https://tckcc.ca>

Calgary Korean Association holds Korean Day Festival, K-pop Festival and more (website under construction)

Calgary Korean School: <https://www.calgarykoreanschool.com/>

Korean Conversation Club Korean/English language and culture exchange: <https://calgarykcc.wordpress.com/>

Calgary Korean Women's Association offers various programs, webinars, networking opportunities and more: <https://calgarykoreanwomen.com/>

SOURCES

Biography

https://performancewiki.ca/Ins_Choi

<https://library.ryerson.ca/asianheritage/authors/ins-choi/>

About the TV Show

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kim%27s_Convenience

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0925074/>