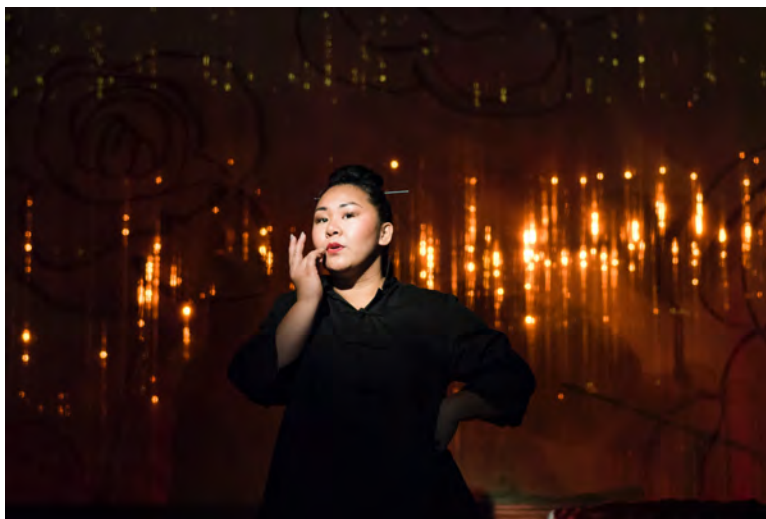


**Electronic Press Kit:**

## ***Dragon Cycle***



### **Dragon Lady**

**March 20 – April 6, 2019**

### **Dragon Mama**

**March 28 – April 6, 2019**

*Production photos available at  
<https://amrep.org/2Hyrb3g>.*

**Contact:**

Rebecca Curtiss  
Public Relations Director  
617.496.2000 x8841 | 617.872.8254  
[Rebecca\\_Curtiss@harvard.edu](mailto:Rebecca_Curtiss@harvard.edu)



## American Repertory Theater

OBER DRAMA CENTER  
64 brattle street,  
cambridge, ma 02138

[americanrepertorytheater.org](http://americanrepertorytheater.org)

OBERON  
2 arrow street  
cambridge, ma 02138

617•495•2658 TEL  
617•495•1705 FAX  
617•547•8300 TICKETS

**For Immediate Release:** March 6, 2019

**Contact:** Rebecca Curtiss 617.496.2000 x8841 | 617.872.8254

[rebecca\\_curtiss@harvard.edu](mailto:rebecca_curtiss@harvard.edu)

### **“Irresistible” Writer/Performer Sara Porkalob Returns to A.R.T. March 20 – April 6 With Reprise of Hit *Dragon Lady* and World Premiere of *Dragon Mama***

#### **A.R.T. Commissions *Dragon Baby* to Complete *Dragon Cycle* Trilogy of Generational Stories**

[Download image here.](#)

**Cambridge, MA**—American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at Harvard University, under the leadership of Terrie and Bradley Bloom Artistic Director Diane Paulus and Executive Producer Diane Borger, is pleased to announce that award-winning storyteller, playwright, and activist **Sara Porkalob** will return to OBERON (2 Arrow Street, Cambridge) this month. After an acclaimed run at OBERON in spring 2018, the virtuosic performer named “Theatremaker to Watch” by *American Theatre* magazine and called “commanding and irresistible” by *The Seattle Times* returns to perform the first two chapters of her ***Dragon Cycle*** honoring Porkalob’s family: three generations of Filipino Americans descended from gangsters and karaoke singers fighting to survive, thrive, and love.

Porkalob will perform her musical ***Dragon Lady*** (featuring new songs by Peter Irving) in repertory with the world premiere of ***Dragon Mama*** as part of the **A.R.T. Breakout** series from March 20 through April 6, 2019. **A.R.T. Breakout** presents cutting-edge performances that push theatrical boundaries at OBERON and beyond.

Discounted package tickets for ***Dragon Cycle*** are currently available, as are single tickets from \$25 for ***Dragon Lady*** and ***Dragon Mama***. Tickets are available online at [americanrepertorytheater.org](http://americanrepertorytheater.org), by phone at 617.547.8300, in person at the Loeb Drama Center Ticket Services Office (64 Brattle Street, Cambridge), and 30 minutes before doors open at OBERON. Discounts are available to Subscribers, Members, groups, students, seniors, Blue Star families, EBT card holders, and others

The A.R.T. recently commissioned Porkalob to write ***Dragon Baby***, a new musical about Sara herself that will complete the ***Dragon Cycle***.

## **ABOUT DRAGON CYCLE**

### ***Dragon Cycle***

Created and Performed by **Sara Porkalob**

Directed by **Andrew Russell**

### ***Dragon Lady – Return Engagement***

It is the year of the Water Dragon and the eve of Sara's Grandma Maria's 60th birthday. By the light of the karaoke machine, fueled by pork dumplings and Diet Pepsi, she shares a dark secret from her Filipino gangster past with one lucky grandchild. Traversing 50 years of faulty family memories and dark secrets from a fantastical life, this timely new musical is about discovering the possibility of healing and what it means to come to America. *Winner of the 2018 Gregory Awards for Outstanding Musical and Outstanding Actress in a Musical.*

### ***Dragon Mama – World Premiere***

How does a Dragon earn her wings? Maria Porkalob, Jr., yearns for a gayer, more POC-filled life than Bremerton, WA, can offer. When presented with an opportunity to make a quick fortune, Maria must make an important decision: leave her debt-ridden mother, four young siblings, and newborn daughter Sara for the wild unknown of Alaska, or stay close to home, family, and intergenerational trauma. Traversing 25 years filled with queer love in a barren land, ***Dragon Mama*** features ghosts, Filipino gangsters, and a dope 90s R&B soundtrack.

"My family wouldn't be the same without music—it's in our bloodstream," says Porkalob. "In ***Dragon Lady***, we see music as a place where my grandmother could be her full self when she couldn't be in other ways, even with her family. ***Dragon Mama*** builds on that legacy, and in that piece, music is a vehicle for the love story between my two moms, and the vehicle for how these two women express love for each other. The first time I performed ***Dragon Lady*** outside of Seattle was last spring at OBERON, and I could not have asked for a better experience—it changed me. Magic exists in certain places, and I really feel it at the A.R.T. I am so thankful for the A.R.T.'s investment in me and my work, and I look forward to returning with ***Dragon Lady*** and ***Dragon Mama*** to make more magic."

The creative team for ***Dragon Cycle*** also includes **Amith Chandrashaker** (Lighting design) and **Erin Bednarz** (Sound Design). **Kate Hausler** is the production stage manager.

## **PRESS TICKETS**

A limited number are available to the 7:30PM performances of ***Dragon Lady*** on Thursday, March 21 and ***Dragon Mama*** on Thursday, March 28. Contact ([rebecca\\_curtiss@harvard.edu](mailto:rebecca_curtiss@harvard.edu)) with requests.

## PERFORMANCE DATES

A.R.T. BREAKOUT — DRAGON CYCLE						
OBERON - Starts March 20, 2019						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			3/20 7:30PM	3/21 7:30PM	3/22 7:30PM	3/23 7PM
				3/28 7:30PM	3/29 7:30PM	3/30 7PM
		4/2 7:30PM	4/3 7:30PM	4/4 7:30PM	4/5 7:30PM	4/6 2PM 7PM

### ***Dragon Lady***

Wednesday, March 20 at 7:30PM  
Thursday, March 21 at 7:30PM  
Friday, March 22 at 7:30PM  
Saturday, March 23 at 7PM  
Tuesday, April 2 at 7:30PM  
Thursday, April 4 at 7:30PM  
Saturday, April 6 at 7PM

### ***Dragon Mama***

Thursday, March 28 at 7:30PM  
Friday, March 29 at 7:30PM  
Saturday, March 30 at 7PM  
Wednesday, April 3 at 7:30PM  
Friday, April 5 at 7:30PM  
Saturday, April 6 at 2PM

## ABOUT SARA PORKALOB

**Sara Porkalob** is an award-winning storyteller and activist based in Seattle. She has been featured in *Seattle Magazine's* Most Influential People of 2018, *City Art's* 2017 Futures List, and served as Intiman Theatre's 2017 Co-Curator. She is a co-founder of *DeConstruct*, an online journal of intersectional performance critique. In 2019, Nordo's Culinarium will produce her new play, *7th and Jackson*, a historical fiction with music and immersive dining, inspired by the rich history of Seattle's International District. She is also collaborating with the City of Seattle and their new Creative Strategies Initiative (CSI), a new City effort that uses arts- and culture-based approaches to build racial equity in non-arts policy areas like the environment, housing, workforce, and community development. More information: [www.saraporkalob.com](http://www.saraporkalob.com), @sporkalob.

## ABOUT AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER

**American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.)** at Harvard University is a leading force in the American theater, producing groundbreaking work in Cambridge and beyond. A.R.T. was founded in 1980 by Robert Brustein, who served as Artistic Director until 2002, when he was succeeded by Robert Woodruff. Diane Paulus began her tenure as Artistic Director in 2008. Under the leadership of Paulus as the Terrie and Bradley Bloom Artistic Director and Executive Producer Diane Borger, A.R.T. seeks to expand the boundaries of theater by producing transformative theatrical experiences, always including the audience as a central partner.

Throughout its history, A.R.T. has been honored with many distinguished awards including the Tony Award for Best New Play for *All the Way* (2014); consecutive Tony Awards for Best Revival of a Musical for *Pippin* (2013) and *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* (2012), both of which Paulus directed, and sixteen other Tony Awards since 2012; a Pulitzer Prize; a Jujamcyn Prize for outstanding contribution to the development of creative talent; the Regional Theater Tony Award; and more than 100 Elliot Norton and IRNE Awards. A.R.T. collaborates with artists around the world to develop and create work in new ways. It is currently engaged in a number of multi-year projects, including a collaboration with Harvard's Center for the Environment that will result in the development of new work over several years. Under Paulus' leadership, the A.R.T.'s club theater, OBERON, has been an incubator for local and emerging artists and has attracted

national attention for its innovative programming and business models.

As the professional theater on the campus of Harvard University, A.R.T. catalyzes discourse, interdisciplinary collaboration, and creative exchange among a wide range of academic departments, institutions, students, and faculty members, acting as a conduit between its community of artists and the university. A.R.T. mentors students in the Harvard Radcliffe Dramatic Club working at the Loeb Drama Center and OBERON, and plays a central role in Harvard's undergraduate Theater, Dance & Media concentration, teaching courses in directing, dramatic literature, acting, voice, design, and dramaturgy.

Dedicated to making theater accessible, the A.R.T. actively engages more than 5,000 local students and a network of community members in project-based partnerships, workshops, conversations with artists, and other enrichment activities, both at the theater and across Greater Boston.

Through all of these initiatives, A.R.T. is dedicated to producing world-class performances in which the audience is central to the theatrical experience.

**@americanrep**

**#ARTBreakout**

**@ClubOBERON**

**###**

A.R.T. Breakout

# **DRAGON LADY**

Creator & Performer  
**SARA PORKALOB\***

Lighting Design  
**AMITH CHANDRASHAKER**

Sound Design  
**ERIN BEDNARZ**

Assistant Director  
**MICHAEL ROSEGRANT**

Production Stage Manager  
**KATE HAUSLER**

Original Music  
**PETER IRVING**

Band  
**HOT DAMN SCANDAL**

Director  
**ANDREW RUSSELL**

**Special Thanks**

Jennifer Zeyl, Matt Starritt, Mara Elissa Palma, Maile Wong,  
Theatre Off Jackson, Anna Porkalob, Meme Garcia, Tosten Haugerud

\*member of Actors' Equity Association

**March 20 - April 6, 2019**



# A Note from Creator & Performer Sara Porkalob

Our nation is experiencing a social paradigm shift that some people call 'identity politics' and others call 'justice'. Semantics aside, where we are today as a nation is the result of our history and our choices: if we choose to, we can look backwards in time, pinpoint why something happened the way it did, then identify what happened after as a result of the thing that came before. If we wanted to, we could also create systems to either perpetuate the thing that came before, or keep it in check, or destroy it and make something new.

I spend time every day time thinking about my choices, my history, my privilege born into this world as an able-bodied, cis woman of color, and how everything I do/say/think has an effect on everyone around me because I know I don't exist in a vacuum. Neither do you.

I get to choose every day how I'm going to live my life, thanks to the people who made me who I am. What a gift, this inheritance. My work is about sharing that gift with others and maybe, if wielded correctly, I can create new choices and change for the people around me.

Thanks for choosing to be here. Hold onto your butts.

**Don't miss the second production of  
Sara Porkalob's Dragon Cycle:**

**DRAGON MAMA**  
**MARCH 28 - APRIL 6**

How does a Dragon earn her wings? Maria Porkalob, Jr., yearns for a gayer, more POC-filled life than Bremerton, WA, can offer. When presented with an opportunity to make a quick fortune, Maria must make an important decision: leave her debt-ridden mother, four young siblings, and newborn daughter Sara for the wild unknown of Alaska, or stay close to home, family, and intergenerational trauma. Traversing 25 years filled with queer love in a barren land, Dragon Mama features ghosts, Filipino gangsters, and a dope 80s and 90s soundtrack.

# Character List

Maria Porkalob Sr.	F, Filipina	Plays ages 8-60
Ronald Porkalob Sr.	M, White	Plays ages 23-28
Maria Porkalob Jr.	F, Filipina	Plays Ages 11-40
Ronald Porkalob Jr.	M, Filipino	Age 9
Charles Porkalob	M, Filipino Mixed	Age 7
Anna Porkalob	F, Filipina Mixed	Plays ages 5-30
Lilly Porkalob	F, Filipina Mixed	Plays age 26
Sara Porkalob	F, Filipina	
Dixie Bodie	F, White	Age 40
Susan Bodie	F, White	Age 13
Ate Lola	F, Filipina	Age 35
Gang Boss	M, Filipino	Age 30
Tatai	M, Filipino	Age 35
Rose	F, Filipina	Age 20
Mrs. Little John	F, White	Age 45
Kelly	M, White	Age 9
Old Man	M, White	Age 71
Old Woman	F, Black	Age 80
Olga	F, White	Age 55
Meredith	F, Black	Age 50
Nurse	F, Black	Age 34
Gang Members	M, Filipino	30's



March 20 - April 6, 2019

OBERON

## DRAGON CYCLE

Created and Performed by  
**SARA PORKALOB**

Directed by  
**ANDREW RUSSELL**

After a sold-out run in the spring of 2018, virtuosic performer Sara Porkalob returns with new songs in **Dragon Lady**, and also turns her attention to another chapter of her family's history with **Dragon Mama**, the second piece in her **Dragon Cycle**.

**Dragon Lady—Return Engagement**  
It is the year of the Water Dragon and the eve of Grandma Maria's sixtieth birthday. By the light of the karaoke machine, fueled by pork dumplings and Diet Pepsi, she shares a dark secret from her Filipino gangster past with one lucky grandchild. Traversing 50 years of faulty family memories, Seattle-based performer Sara Porkalob returns to share this timely musical about what it means to come to America.

### Dragon Mama

How does a Dragon earn her wings? Maria Porkalob, Jr. yearns for a gayer, more POC-filled life than Bremerton, WA can offer. When presented with an opportunity to make a quick fortune, Maria must make an important decision: leave her debt-ridden mother, four young siblings, and newborn daughter for the wild unknown of Alaska, or stay close to home, family, and intergenerational trauma. The second play in her **Dragon Cycle**, Sara Porkalob's new solo show traverses twenty-five years of her mother's life filled with queer love in a barren land, a dope 90s R&B soundtrack, and Filipino gangsters. This is **Dragon Mama**.

April 24 - 28, 2019

OBERON

## CLAIRVOYANCE

Created and Performed by  
**DIANA OH**

Diana Oh is a witch. She knows it. So do her closest friends. Clairvoyance runs in her family. She went to a spiritual counselor in the jungle in Thailand, and the spiritual counselor told her to sing and go wild in Boston. Everything else the spiritual counselor said came true, so Diana is doing it. **Clairvoyance** is an exchange of energy designed to bypass the bullshit and celebrate the knowledge of our bodies. It's a concert, it's a party, with moments of divination. Diana Oh performs her original soul, pop, rock, and punk music from journal entries and the beyond.

# A.R.T. Breakout

## FAMILY IN THE FRONT ROW

An interview with Diana Oh and Sara Porkalob

*Performing in the 2018/19 A.R.T. Breakout Series this spring are Diana Oh and Sara Porkalob. This spring, Diana Oh's yearlong series of performance installations across Boston culminates in **Clairvoyance**, a concert celebrating queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) power, while Sara Porkalob returns to OBERON with **Dragon Lady** and the premiere of **Dragon Mama**—music-filled one-woman shows following the artist's grandmother and mother, respectively. Sara and Diana sat down with Kareem Khubchandani, Assistant Professor at Tufts University, to discuss these upcoming works.*

**Diana, I have seen some of your work, specifically the 10-part {my lingerie play}, in which you stage interventions around questions of consent, sexual violence, queerphobia, and pleasure. One thing I've noticed in that performance is that the audience really matters to you—when they're reading something you've written, or when you invite them onstage. What are you planning for audiences here?**

**Diana Oh:** I'm doing monthly installations [including last fall's **Chosen Family Portraits** and **White**

**People Read**, as well as the upcoming **Infinite Love Party** (March 22 in the Ex) and **Artist in Their Element** (April 20 at the ICA)] that are going to culminate in a concert called **Clairvoyance**, which is about queer magic and QTPOC power. It's similar to {my lingerie play} because these installations happen out in the street, and then people are brought into a theater to digest, talk, and do the real thing. Then, maybe, we'll plant some trees—literally. Being able to have an exchange of love and energy with a single person is magic in itself, but when you can do that in live performance, with as many people as you possibly can, that's it. That's my drug. That is what I love to do. I love being a machine for empathy, joy, fun, and spontaneity, and taking people on a pleasure ride—and, also, confronting things when I need to.

**Sara, *Dragon Lady* is the stunning story of your grandmother's migration to the US from the Philippines, incorporating both her history as a cabaret singer and your own virtuosic singing abilities. That piece uses music to look at how an art form migrates along with trauma, family, and pleasure. I know you're premiering the sequel,**

**Dragon Mama**, alongside **Dragon Lady** this spring, and I'm wondering if the sequel also takes up questions of family alongside music.

**Sara Porkalob:** I think that all art forms are modes of cultural documentation—documentation that's different from history. Here in America, the history that is widely available, the story often taught in public schools, was written by colonizers, people who won the wars, people who want to control the narrative. And those narratives are limited, problematic, and built on a lot of lies. I think that in art, storytelling, and music, we can find different forms of history that are more true.

My family wouldn't be the same without music—it's in our bloodstream. In **Dragon Lady**, we see music as a place where my grandmother could be her full self when she couldn't be in other ways, even with her family. **Dragon Mama** builds on that legacy, and in that piece, music is a vehicle for the love story between my two moms. After my mother gave birth to me, she realized that she was queer. And she knew that, as a mother, she didn't want to make the same choices that my grandmother had to make in the face of survival; she knew that she had to strike her own path. Then she met my other mom, Tina, who is a singer. My mother met Tina as she was singing in the only gay bar in Anchorage, Alaska. Music in **Dragon Mama** is the vehicle for how these two women express love for each other. The piece focuses on late 80s to 90s hip hop and R&B—music I grew up with. SWV, En Vogue, Boyz II Men; that music has such a strong place of power in my heart, and I feel the politics of the music from that time very deeply, in my bones.

**When I started seventh grade, we had an "initiation," and I had to lip sync "End of**

**the Road."** It was supposed to be humiliating, but that's how I fell in love with Boyz II Men. [Laughter] Diana, you work with music as well. Who are your musical inspirations? Who are you drawing on?

**DO:** When people ask me, "What kind of music do you write?" I'm always like, "It's soulful." It comes from this lower place, this gut space. It literally feels like it comes up through my vagina, and then it arrives. I am always unpacking where I get my voice from, because sometimes it surprises me. My dad always used to sing opera, and my parents were always forcing my siblings and me to sing with each other. I guess that's where I developed my sound, at parties singing to my Korean parents. I'm really grateful for them. It takes some really brave immigrant parents to be the parents to artists.

**SP:** Amen.

**DO:** I'm also really inspired by my social scene, my nights out dancing and partying. I mean, that's our savior place. That's the pulse, that's what keeps us alive, that is our beating heart. And in terms of who I'm drawing on, I grew up hearing the voices of Aretha Franklin, Etta James, and Ella Fitzgerald. And yes, Boyz II Men and En Vogue. So, if you're reading this, come to our stuff, Boyz II Men!



Diana Oh's yearlong residency in the **A.R.T. Breakout** series continues this spring with **Infinite Love Party** and **Clairvoyance**.

Come check it out at OBERON.

**I'm wondering how much Asian American performance is actually indebted to Black sound, aesthetics, and music? There's this sharing of aesthetic practices across Black and Asian communities: I think about *Paris is Burning* and the use of fans, pharaonic sculptures, martial arts movements, and the House of Ninja. In debates about appropriation, it's often White/Other appropriation, but how do you think about Black/Asian borrowings, crossings, and sharings?**

**SP:** My other mom, Tina, she's Black. Having her as my mom from the age of four, I was proximal to Black culture. It felt like it was mine, when I was young. I knew that I wasn't Black, but I felt that I had access to Black expression and art forms. It was only in college I realized that though I was close to those forms, having a Black parent was not a signed permission form to access blackness. No matter what I did, I was not Black myself.

In that acknowledgement, I could hold a deep appreciation and respect for the historical importance of what Black cultural forms such as music, art, and dance have contributed to American culture. You can trace the roots of hip hop and jazz back to the African diaspora.



Sara Porkalob returns to OBERON this spring with **Dragon Lady** and the world premiere of **Dragon Mama**—the second piece in her three-part **Dragon Cycle**.