

The Golden Dragon STUDY GUIDE



TARRAGON THEATRE, 30 BRIDGMAN AVENUE, TORONTO, ON, CANADA, M5R 1X3

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The Golden Dragon

by Roland Schimmelpfennig | Translated by David Tushingham
directed by Ross Manson

Cast

David Fox	A Man Over Sixty
Lili Francks	A Woman Over Sixty
Tony Nappo	A Man
Anusree Roy	A Young Woman
David Yee	A Young Man

Creative Team

assistant director	Leora Morris
set & costume design	Teresa Przybylski
lighting design	Rebecca Picherack
composition & sound design	Thomas Ryder Payne
choreography	Heidi Strauss

STUDY GUIDE CONTRIBUTORS

For Tarragon: Erin Brubacher, Director of Education and Outreach; Amanda Lee, Publicist and Communications Coordinator; Andrea Romaldi, Literary Manager; Rashida Shaw, Co-op Student; and Ross Manson, Director for *The Golden Dragon*. Production photographs by Cylla von Tiedemann. All materials generated outside of Tarragon are cited within.

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PLAY GUIDE

*Other people find a golden ring in the stomach of a fish.
Other people find a diamond in long grass.*

A young Chinese man is beside himself with a toothache in the kitchen of The Golden Dragon Restaurant. His four fellow cooks try to soothe him as the diners stream in and the kitchen bustles.

Rising above this friendly neighbourhood haunt are the buildings where most of its diners live. They look down on its welcoming red lanterns and muse about the goings-on in the kitchen – the one place in the restaurant they never see. The kitchen staff, however, don't have the time (at least not now) to look up and wonder at the world above them. Their hands are full:

THE MAN:

In the kitchen of the Thai/Chinese/Vietnamese restaurant THE GOLDEN DRAGON: it's cramped, it's very cramped, there's no room, but there are still five Asian cooks working here. One of them's got a toothache: the boy, the one who's looking for his sister. The new one.

THE MAN OVER SIXTY:

Don't scream, don't scream

THE MAN:

Screaming will use up all your energy.

THE YOUNG MAN:

We call him the boy because he's new.

THE WOMAN OVER SIXTY:

Because he's not been here so long. He's still new. And he's got no money. And he's got no papers. So a dentist is out of the question.

As the orders fly in, some of the cooks work frantically to fill them while the others decide to relieve the young man's toothache themselves: after all, his family back home is counting on him to find his sister, and they're determined that that a rotten tooth won't stop him!

Two stewardesses order warm bowls of soup at The Golden Dragon after (literally) a world tour. As they eat, and as the cooks scavenge the kitchen for something – anything – to cure the young man's toothache, a host of quiet and unseen dramas unfold in the highrise above them. A grandfather contemplates his young granddaughter and the promise of youth. The man in the striped shirt wonders where it all went wrong. A young woman redecorates her apartment for an impending arrival. The shopkeeper next door stashes his greatest prize deep in his tightly-packed apartment to the horror and delight of his company.

Each is on the cusp of a life-altering moment like the young man with the toothache in the restaurant below. And each is somehow intimately tied to that restaurant. They could never know this in their secret worlds stacked on top of each other, the same way the young man could never know that the key to his quest is much closer than he could possibly imagine.

ABOUT the playwright and translator



ROLAND SCHIMMELPFENNIG (playwright) Roland is Germany's most produced playwright. His plays have been translated into over 20 languages and performed in 40 countries. His plays include *Hier und Jetzt* (*Here and Now*), *Die Frau von früher* (*The Woman from the Past*), *Vorher/Nachher* (*Before/Afterwards*), *Die arabische Nacht* (*The Arabian Night*), *Push up 1-3*, *Peggy Pickit sieht das Gesicht Gottes* (*Peggy Pickit Sees the Face of God*), and *Der goldene Drache* (*The Golden Dragon*). His writing has won most of the prestigious prizes in Germany, including the 1997 Else-Lasker-Schüler-Preis for *Fisch um Fisch* (*Fish for Fish*), the Nestroy Prize for best young author in 2002, and

the Nestroy Prize for the best play for *Besuch bei dem Vater* (*Visit at the Father*) in 2009. *The Golden Dragon* was awarded the Mühlheimer Dramatists Award and was chosen as Theater Heute's Play of the Year. In 2010, Schimmelpfennig received the highest playwriting award in Germany, the Else-Lasker-Schüler-Preis, to honor his body of work.

DAVID TUSHINGHAM (translator) David has translated numerous plays by Roland Schimmelpfennig including *Arabian Night* (ATC) and *The Woman Before* (Royal Court). Other translations include: *Jeff Koons* (ATC); *Karate Billy Comes Home*, *Waiting Room Germany*, *Stranger's House*, *Mr Kolpert* (all Royal Court Theatre); *State of Emergency* (Gate); *Innocence* (Arcola). He has worked as a dramaturg for numerous high-profile European institutions including LINZ09 European Capital of Culture, the Wiener Festwochen, National Theatre London, Theater der Welt and the Ruhrtriennale, for whom he has commissioned and collaborated with remarkable artists on new works across a wide range of performance disciplines. He is the author of numerous books, articles and workshops and currently lectures at the London College of Fashion. From Autumn 2011 he will be artistic advisor to Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus and the theatre programme of the Salzburger Festspiele.

ABOUT the director Ross Manson



As founding artistic director of Volcano (www.volcano.ca), Manson has partnered with many theatres, including Traverse theatre, Scotland, Tarragon, Canadian Stage Co., Factory theatre, Theatre Centre, PuSh Festival, Luminato Festival, Magnetic North Festival, Festival Arts Azimuts Rwanda, Literaturfest Berlin, Dublin International Fringe; recipient of KM Hunter Award in Theatre, recipient of a Harold award, recipient of four Dora awards (as Producer, Director and Play-maker); directed over 20 shows for Volcano which have played on three continents and have won or been nominated for over fifty local, national or international awards; actor at

over 20 theatres across Canada, the USA and Europe; trained in Canada (Mount Allison, BSc), England (U of London, MA) and Germany (directing apprenticeship).

At Tarragon: as director, Goodness (a co-production with Volcano), Best of Edinburgh Award, Scotsman Fringe First Award; as actor, In the Lobster Capital of the World, Faust.

Other directing credits include: Volcano/Canadian Stage/Luminato (Another Africa - director of Shine Your Eye); Volcano (The Four Horsemen Project – with Kate Alton, Hedda Gabler, Mortality, Weather, Two Words for Snow, Building Jerusalem, and many more); Svenska Theatre, Helsinki (Goodness); Blyth Festival (Corker); Canada Dance Festival (Nerd, with Kate Alton). Upcoming: directing/creating four new projects with Volcano. The soonest being A Synonym for Love – a Handel opera with a site-specific staging at the Gladstone hotel in August 2012.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Bright moonshine beside the bed.

At first I think it's frost.

I look up and see the moon.

I lower my head. I think of home.

Li Po - written 1300 years ago

Translation by Ross Manson

There are 6.8 billion of us now. One thing we all share is Home. We all have one. We have all always had one. It may be a place, or even the memory or idea of a place – or a longing for something lost. Whatever the case, this is one thing we have in common.

We have also always made divisions among ourselves. We create others, and keep them other. But what happens if we begin to internalize otherness? Absorb it? Shift our ideas of what makes otherness? And – what happens if we don't? In an era when so many billions have moved from their homes to somewhere else, somewhere new, somewhere next door, these are important questions.

I first met Roland Schimmelpfennig over twenty years ago, before he was a writer, and before I was a director. We became friends, and later, collaborators. In the time since then, he became what he is now: currently the most produced living playwright in Europe– translated into 20 languages. *The Golden Dragon* is one of his finest. Welcome. Make yourself at home.

- Ross Manson

PREPARING FOR ISSUES RAISED BY THE GOLDEN DRAGON

The Golden Dragon addresses some difficult and mature content areas including sexual violence, exploitation and the challenges of illegal immigration, including lack of access to health care. The play is not specifically *about* these matters, but these troubling situations are raised through encounters of human stories. These stories are woven together through the circumstance of a particular place and time, in a contemporary city, in a globalized world. The play is more about the possibilities for compassion, indifference, ignorance, connection, cruelty and kindness between strangers turned acquaintances because of day-to-day proximity. Students will need to be prepared for all of these human conditions.

If you have any questions about the mature subject matter in this play, please contact our Education and Outreach department. We would be happy to have a conversation that helps you to both prepare and debrief with your students.

PRE-SHOW EXPLORATIONS

As director Ross Manson has written:

There are 6.8 billion of us now. One thing we all share is Home. We all have one. We have all always had one. It may be a place, or even the memory or idea of a place – or a longing for something lost. Whatever the case, this is one thing we have in common.

The central character of *The Golden Dragon* is a young man, referred to as 'the boy', who has recently come from China to an unnamed city in a foreign western country. This 'boy' is without papers and so does not have access to health care or other social services. He also faces other emotional challenges: he is far from home and trying to find a new one where he is without familiar surroundings or an established community.

THE YOUNG MAN:

We call him the boy because he's new.

THE WOMAN OVER SIXTY:

Because he's not been here so long. He's still new. And he's got no money. And he's got no papers. So a dentist is out of the question...

RESEARCH and DISCUSSION

One third of new immigrants to Canada leave within a year of arriving. Most say that freedom, rights, safety, security and prospects for the future are among the things they liked most about Canada, while lack of employment opportunities is one of the things that they dislike the most...

Have your students do some investigation around immigration. Here are some questions and suggestions to explore:

1. How does a person immigrate to Canada? What are the rules and procedures?
2. How are the rules for immigration in Canada different from those in the United States or in European countries such as Germany or France?
3. What associations, centres or programs are available to new immigrants in your community? Are there programs for young people of your own age in your community?
4. Is anyone in your family or anyone else you know a recent immigrant to Canada? Conduct an informal interview with this person about what it was like to arrive here and create a new home.
5. In small groups discuss what home means for you. If you arrived in a new city or country, what do you think you would need to feel at home?

BRETT GUNDLOCK, a photojournalist on *HOME*...

Brett Gundlock is a Toronto-based photojournalist and artist. One of his current projects is *Home*. The following text and images are part of this work-in-progress:



Immigration is generally looked at as numbers, stats and dates on a timeline. Between 15,000 and 11,000 BC the first people crossed the Bering Strait to Canada. In 1982 the Canada Act is passed, which includes the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Immigration is essentially relocation from one home with the hope of creating a new one. These diptychs document old homes and new homes, past memories and new lives. Pairing collected family photos with photographs inside each subject's living space, they are meant to examine the process of balancing a new culture and lifestyle with a traditional style of life. What is home? A building, room or an area of land? The definition changes depending on the person or context, but the root of home is essentially a metaphysical idea- "Home is where your heart is."

- Brett Gundlock



What's Cooking in the Melting Pot?

Food and Cultural Assimilation

By Sarah Wallace

"Italian, Mexican, and Chinese (Cantonese) cuisines have indeed joined the mainstream. More than nine out of ten consumers are familiar with and have tried these foods, and about half report eating them frequently. The research also indicates that Italian, Mexican, and Chinese cuisines have become so adapted to such an extent that "authenticity" is no longer a concern to customers."

—Sue Hensley, American National Restaurant Association

*Set in and around a "Thai/Chinese/Vietnamese fast food restaurant," *The Golden Dragon* explores the effects of globalization on a personal level. Written by a German playwright, set in an unnamed Western city, and centered on a dining establishment that serves the food of various Asian cultures, this play examines the relationship between food, the culture it comes from, and the context it's served in.*

In fact, many so-called "ethnic" foods were actually adapted—and occasionally created—to fit American palettes at a particular time. Nachos originated in the city of Piedras Negras, Mexico, just over the border from Eagle Pass, Texas. One day in 1943, the wives of a number of US soldiers stationed in Eagle Pass were in Piedras Negras on a shopping trip and arrived at the Victory Club restaurant after it had closed for the day. The maître d', Ignacio "Nacho" Anaya, invented a new snack for them with what he had available in the kitchen: tortillas and cheese. Anaya cut the tortillas into triangles, added cheddar cheese, quickly heated them, and added sliced jalapeño peppers. He served the dish, calling it Nachos Especiales. The name stuck.

Likewise, the "Chinese" fortune cookie is also an American invention. One competing legend of the fortune cookie suggests it was introduced in the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, only to be pirated and popularized by a local Chinese restaurateur. Another version also gives the cookie a Japanese-American heritage, and contends the cookie is a descendent of the sembet, a flat, round, rice cracker.

The food people eat carries—and sometimes magnifies—the contradictions of its larger context. The evolution of food in the United States exemplifies any country where cultures collide. Food is a snapshot of an ever-changing culture, and colonization can work both ways: Indian tikka masala has become Great Britain's unofficial national dish. As the world's population continues to emigrate from one country to the next, a country's national cuisine will continue to merge, evolve, and inform each other.

source: <http://www.studiotheatre.org/calendar/view.aspx?id=2646>

CHARACTERS

In the Golden Dragon, each actor plays multiple characters as indicated below:



A YOUNG MAN (The Grandfather, Asian Cook, The Waitress, The Cricket)



A WOMAN OVER SIXTY (The Granddaughter, Asian Cook, The Ant, The Storekeeper)



A YOUNG WOMAN

(The Man with the Striped Shirt, Asian Cook with Toothache or 'The Boy', The Barbie-Fucker)



A MAN OVER SIXTY (A Young Man, Asian Man, Second Flight Attendant)



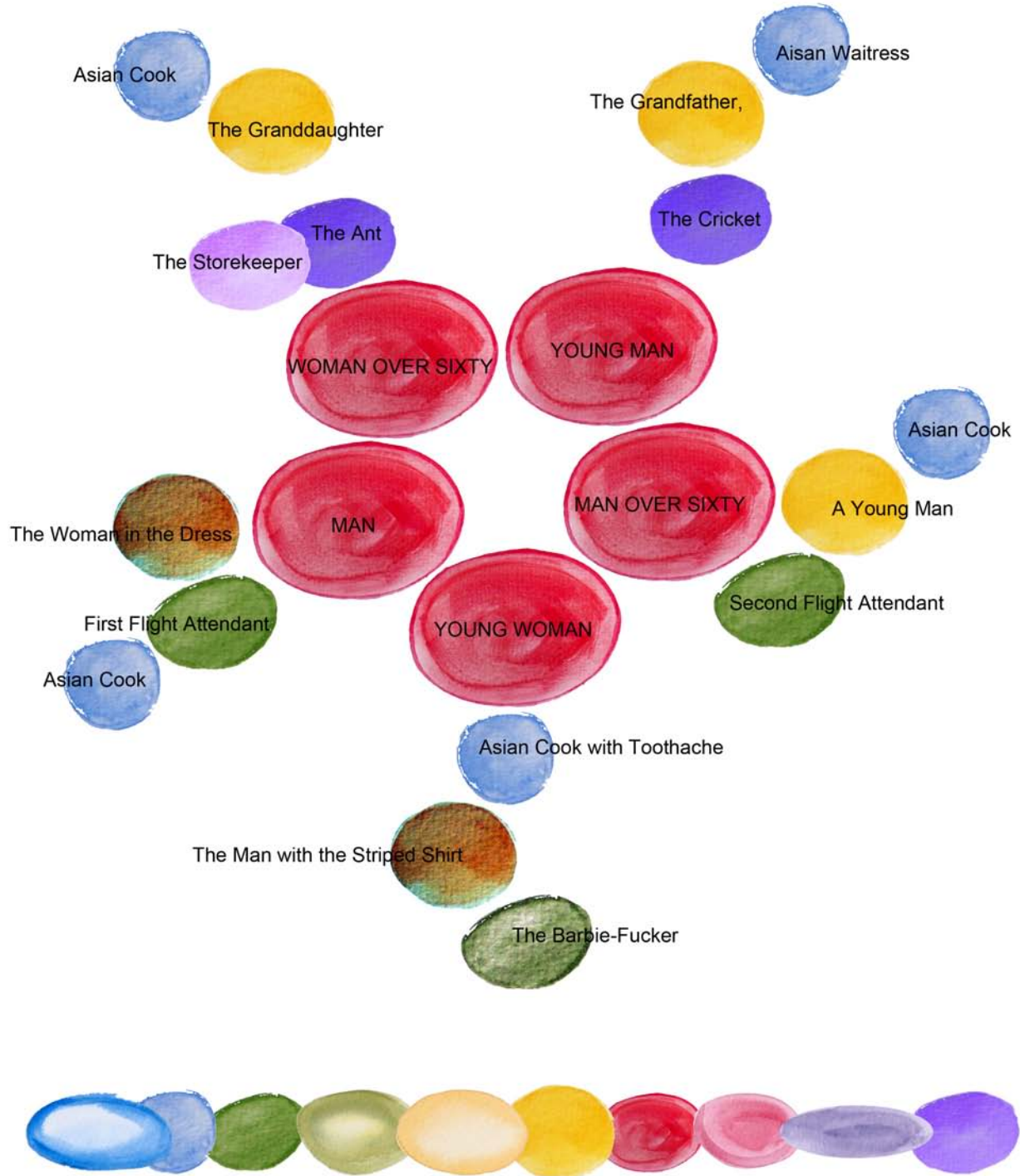
A MAN (The Woman in the Dress, Asian Man, First Flight Attendant)

The Young Man, Woman Over Sixty, Young Woman, Man Over Sixty and *Man* are the narrators of *The Golden Dragon's* stories and the actors of the play are cast to fill each of these narration roles accordingly: A young woman plays the *Young Woman*, a man over sixty plays the *Man Over Sixty*, and so on. Each of the *other* characters played by the five actors is a role that the actor is overtly not. For example, the young woman actor plays the man in the striped shirt as well as the boy with the toothache.

Discussion Questions:

How does the structure of the play, which very purposefully casts actors in the roles of 'others,' call our attention to the nature of theatre? What does this have to do with *the suspension of disbelief*--when the audience willingly agrees to accept a premise that they know is not 'real' off stage? For example when we agree to receive the Actor Tony Nappo ("A Man") as a woman carrying the sadness and guilt of having left her husband...? How would/ wouldn't this play work as a film as opposed to a live production?

CHARACTER MAP



Post-Show CHARACTER CONNECTIONS ACTIVITY

The 'map' on the previous page is one visual way of describing the connections between the characters of *The Golden Dragon*. Use this 'map' as a jumping off point to discuss the interwoven stories within the play. Students could also create their own character maps and story diagrams:

1. Using the 'character map' provided, discuss the connections, encounters and missed encounters between all of the characters in the play. Take a copy of the 'character map' and draw lines to indicate links between each role.
2. Create your own character 'map' or diagram.
3. Which characters meet without really *seeing* each other? What are the stories that go untold? Discuss.
4. Who never meets but could meet? What would those encounters look like? In pairs or on your own, write a scene of your own creation between any two characters that never happens in *The Golden Dragon*.
5. Think of someone you see regularly in your neighbourhood to whom you have never spoken. This could be someone you often see on the TTC, someone who works in a neighbourhood store or someone who lives in your apartment building etc. Imagine what a conversation between you and that person might be like. Write a short script of under two minutes of this imaginary encounter.

Excerpt from *The Golden Dragon*

In this scene, the actors are both the narrators (*The Man, The Woman Over Sixty, The Young Man, The Young Woman and The Man Over Sixty*) as well as the Asian cooks in the "Thai/Chinese/Vietnamese restaurant THE GOLDEN DRAGON."

Scene 3. "We call him the boy"

THE MAN

In the kitchen of the Thai/Chinese/Vietnamese restaurant THE GOLDEN DRAGON: it's cramped, it's very cramped, there's no room, but there are still five Asian cooks working here. One of them's got a toothache: the boy, the one who's looking for his sister. The new one.

The Young Woman screams in pain.

THE MAN OVER SIXTY

We call him the boy.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

It hurts -

THE WOMAN OVER SIXTY

Toothache.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Oh it hurts, oh it hurts.

THE MAN OVER SIXTY

Don't scream, don't scream.

THE MAN

Screaming will use up your energy.

THE YOUNG MAN

We call him the boy because he's new.

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THE WOMAN OVER SIXTY

Because he's not been here so long. He's still new. And he's got no money.
And he's got no papers. So a dentist is out of the question.
Don't scream, don't scream so loud.

THE MAN

An apple juice. And a glass of white wine.
The drinks for the flight attendants.

THE MAN OVER SIXTY

That tooth's got to come out.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

How - how?

THE MAN

Get it out,

THE WOMAN OVER SIXTY

get it out,

THE YOUNG MAN

there's no other way.

THE WOMAN OVER SIXTY

Get it out, out -