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One Night Only  
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Playwrights

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Current Season  
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RSS Feed  
Podcasts

## LEE/GENDARY

Set in the inner landscape of Bruce Lee's mind the moment he died in 1973, *LEE/GENDARY* is a theatrical deconstruction of an icon; a spiritual and psychological examination of Lee's life from birth to death. This gender-bending theatre performance integrates text, live original music, video and an explosive hybrid of martial arts and dance. *LEE/GENDARY* was first presented at HERE's The American Living Room Festival 2006 as a work-in-progress, and then at the National Asian American Theater Festival held in New York City in June 2007, where it was [reviewed by nytheatre.com](#).



*Pictured: A scene from LEE/GENDARY*

#### nytheatre.com review

[Jason S. Grossman](#) · October 14, 2008

*LEE/GENDARY* soars on the heart and limbs of creator/martial artist Soomi Kim. It's an ambitious, respectful micro tour of Bruce Lee's meteoric life.

Lee's life is indeed legendary. Born in San Francisco and raised in Hong Kong with modest means, he eventually founded the **Jeet Kune Do** combat form and singlehandedly catapulted interest in Chinese martial arts to great popularity in the West in the early '70s. His films made him an international star until his sudden death at the age of 32.

The play takes the audience on a hypnotic journey, effectively touching upon key moments in Bruce Lee's life, from his

#### VENUE

**HERE Arts Center**

#### OPENED

October 14, 2008

#### CLOSED

October 30, 2008

#### PERFORMANCES

Tue - Thu at 7:30pm

#### RUNNING TIME

1 hour, 15 minutes  
No intermission

#### TICKETS

\$20  
212-352-3101  
[Order tickets online](#)

#### MORE INFO

[Show's official website](#)

#### CAST

Shing Ka, Walker Lewis, Constance Parng, Ariel J. Shepley, Pai Sen Wang

#### CREATED & PERFORMED BY

Soomi Kim

#### CO-WRITTEN BY

Derek Nguyen

#### DIRECTOR

Suzi Takhashi

#### LIGHTING

Lucrecia Briceno

#### MUSIC

Jen Shyu

#### VIDEO

Chris McClain

#### TABLA PLAYER

Dibyarka Chatterjee

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personal relationships to his popular film work. The moody production incorporates various disciplines to great effect.

Soomi Kim & Airon  
 Armstrong

What is ingenious here is that everything takes place in Bruce Lee's mind (the instant prior to his death). The creators have given themselves license to drift from conventional scenes to abstract representations of Lee's obsessions, desires and fears.

Derek Nguyen has written a smart, tight script with no excess. It's a well balanced psychological exploration and a touching homage. While this is clearly a nostalgic look at a cultural icon, it's strikingly objective. We see Lee's lust for fame and the fast life: his drug abuse, an extended extramarital affair. At the core is Lee's inner struggle between fame and enlightenment.

Director Suzi Takhashi has seamlessly interwoven various disciplines to create a dreamlike theatrical experience. Takhashi blends live video with martial arts and movement around Kim as the centerpiece. This is all complimented by a pulsating soundtrack of live music (with Dibyarka Chatterjee playing **tabla**), an integral component in this production.

There is no shortage of stylized martial arts here. Some of Lee's most famous fight scenes are cleverly staged and played with the film's original soundtrack. The result makes for rousing entertainment. There are touches of humor, but the presentation is never campy.

Soomi Kim is a commanding presence as Bruce Lee. It takes mere seconds to see beyond her gender, and she convincingly portrays one of the most popular male action stars of the 20th century. Bruce Lee himself would be proud.

Kim is more than ably assisted by an appropriately racially-varied cast of versatile actors/martial artists. In particular Walker Lewis scores mightily as numerous characters including a smarmy Hollywood director and actor Chuck Norris.

Lucrecia Briceno's lighting design is excellent and effectively supports the video and dreamlike sequences. Jen Shyu has created an almost psychedelic soundtrack ingeniously mingling sound bites with her music.

While I did not see this play at HERE's American Living Room Festival in 2006 as a work-in-progress, it's clear that the entire creative team has elevated the production to a finished product.

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