

***King and I* Yunhap News article translation**

<Korean International student plays the key role in major American Musical Theater>

Cast as Luntha in "King and I" by Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma, one of the major musical Theater companies in America.

(Seoul=Yunhap News) Journalist Min-Jung Kim = "I didn't think it would be this difficult to stand on an American musical stage. I would like to be a regular on Broadway with outstanding talent so that I can offer the right networks and information for next generation Korean performers who would like to on a Broadway as well.

Cha came to United States during his middle school years, he became one of the first Korean born to play a major role on main stage musical theater in United States.

Hyungjin Cha, (American name Hugh Cha. 28), is a hot issue of the United States and Korean musical scene as he is about to play Luntha in King and I at Lyric Theater of Oklahoma starting July 9th.

During our phone interview on 24th, Cha said, "It was one of my life time goals to play Luntha, however, the dream came true much earlier than I expected. I want to eventually become an exceptionally talented actor who can play any role in America regardless of my skin color and ethnicity."

'King and I', is one of the most difficult and rare musicals in United States for Asian performers to showcase their talent on main stage. Luntha, having an affair with the King's consort Tuptim and eventually runs away, is said to be the most challenging and fascinating role an Asian performer to play.

Although it is not an official Broadway production, the popularity and size of the musical, director, and majority of actors are Broadway veterans. News of Cha playing major role in this production signifies a 'green light' for his Broadway debut in near future.

"Someone else whom I performed together in NYC theaters in the past was already cast as Luntha. However, he had his sudden Broadway debut and no longer was able to participate. He recommended my name to the director. You must have networks in the Theater industry. For now,

Korean performers are barely surviving on their own in the United States.

Cha finished his military service in Korea, studied in London and currently is attending "Boston Conservatory" to study his MFA in Musical Theater.

He explained, "There are some Korean actors out there on TV/Film in the United States, but rarely on Musical Theater. It is because only a handful of musicals are written for Asians to play"

Based on a research by an organization in New York called, AAPAC(Asian American Performers Action Coalition) in 2012, there were 3,530 roles were offered in between 2006~2011. Only 54 roles were offered to Asian American and Asian performers.

Cha who auditioned at least 180 times in NYC during the past year said, "I came to United States when I was a teenager and I can't say my American accent is perfect.", "I've witnessed from numerous callbacks where the creative team chose to cast Caucasians over a performer of another race who were equal in talent. In order to overcome, I can't just be good at what I do. I must be exceptional."

Cha said he only achieved his primary goal. His ultimate goal is to overcome his skin color and ethnicity.

To achieve his goal, Cha continues his study at Boston Conservatory but also is consistently performing at Off and Off-Off Broadway theaters in NYC.

"After the performance, I will be going back to school to craft my skills to an exceptional level and to challenge myself to be on a Broadway stage. If I can prove that color and ethnicity can be no obstacles to perform even a Caucasian character, wouldn't others who wish to be on Broadway automatically step forward in achieving their dream?"

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