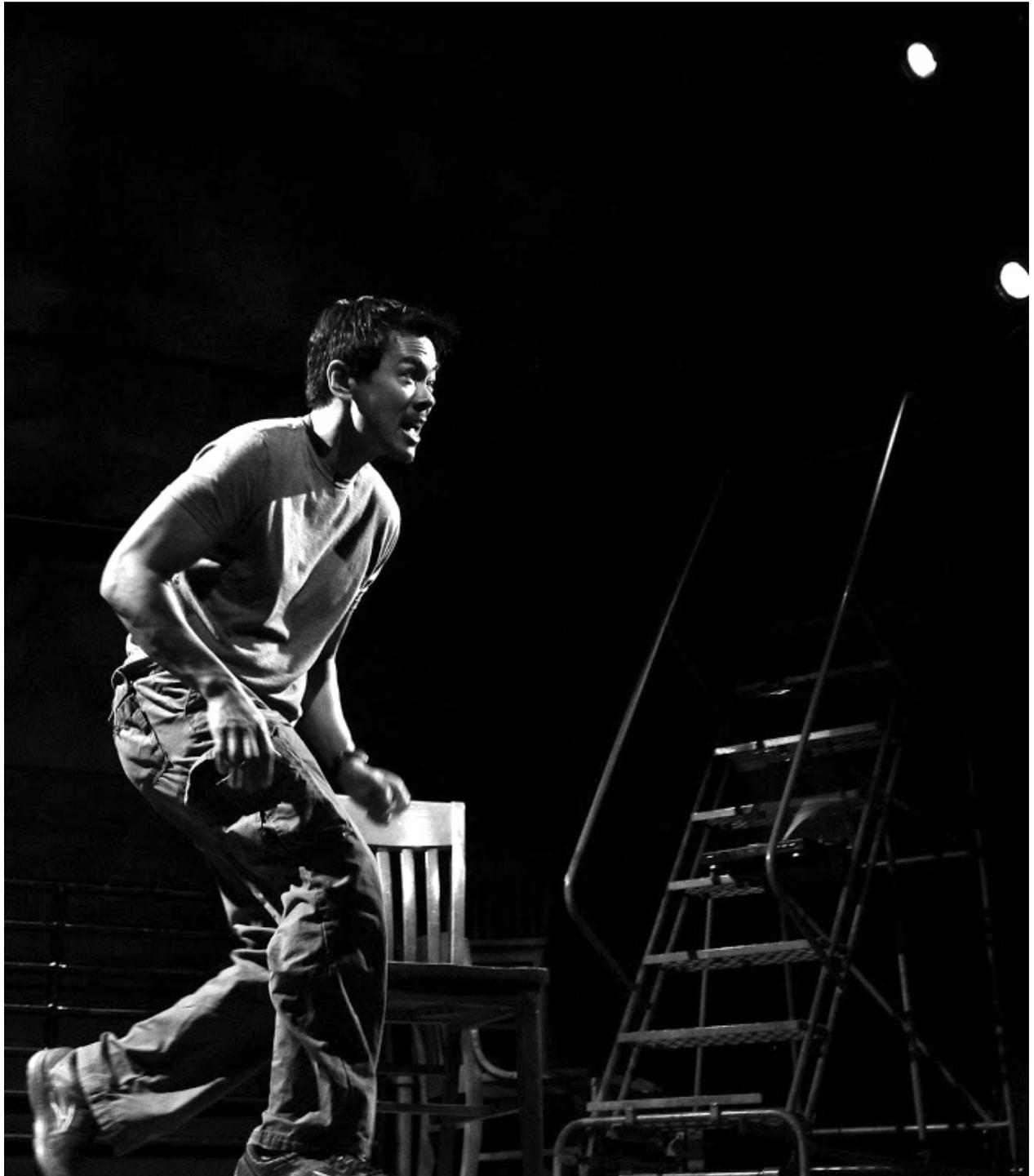


# De La Fuente Takes Spotlight as Gordon Hirabayashi in Seattle

By [Roxanne Ray](#)

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Joel de la Fuente as Gordon Hirabayashi in *Hold These Truths*. • Photo by Lia Chang

Following the staged readings of Jeanne Sakata's play, *Hold These Truths*, at Theatre Off Jackson earlier this year in February, this one-man play about internment-protester Gordon Hirabayashi will soon receive a full production at **ACT Theatre**.

The latest actor to portray Hirabayashi is Joel de la Fuente, who also stars in the original Netflix series, *Hemlock Grove*.

De la Fuente was cast in *Hold These Truths* by director Lisa Rothe. De la Fuente and Rothe both trained in the same acting school many years prior, before Rothe became a director. It was through Rothe that de la Fuente met the playwright Sakata.

As an actor, de la Fuente says he appreciates that Sakata also began her career as an actor. "I think that has led to a very fruitful collaboration and one that benefits from us all speaking the same language most of the time," de la Fuente says.

Rehearsing for *Hold These Truths* has been a process of discovery for de la Fuente.

"As someone who prides himself on his knowledge of Asian American history, I was shocked that I had never heard of Gordon when I first read the play in 2009," de la Fuente says.

"Gordon's place in history—and his whole story—are so quintessentially American," he adds. "I felt compelled to help others learn of him, too."

But de la Fuente encountered some challenges in preparing for this one-person show. "This is my first one-person show," he says, "and it wasn't until I was in the midst of rehearsals that it occurred to me how much we rely on others to help tell a story."

He adds, jokingly: "I like to tell people that while I love Jeanne's play, hanging out with the cast is extremely boring."



Director Lisa Rothe and actor Joel de la Fuente. • Photo by Erika Kauffman

De la Fuente says he does appreciate the collaborations that arise with the other artists working on the show.

“I am lucky because while there’s only one actor, I have Jeanne [Sakata], an excellent playwright, and Lisa Rothe, a brilliant director, as well as a top notch design team like Cat Starmer (lights), Mikiko Suzuki MacAdams (set), Daniel Kluge (sound) and Margaret Wheedon (costumes).”

Despite all the assistance, de la Fuente truly stands alone onstage.

“The crux of drama is conflict,” he says, “and the challenge in this piece was always: ‘how can we best discover and play this conflict as one person?’”

Other difficulties arose during the national tour of *Hold These Truths*.

“The biggest challenges in touring the show thus far have been adapting the show

to fit in different theatrical spaces,” de la Fuente says. “We have performed the show on sets of existing shows, making use of different light plots, with different audience configurations.”

After all of this touring, de la Fuente says he is pleased to be performing the play in Seattle.

“Seattle was the place we always dreamed of bringing our production,” he says. “This is Gordon’s town. This is where much of the story takes place.”

De la Fuente finds in this production not only a historical connection to Seattle, but also a spiritual one.

“To me, there is something very sacred about telling his story here, in his first community,” he says. “I am eager to see the University of Washington and to walk on the campus, as Gordon did.”

Hold These Truths *will be performed from July 31 to August 3 at ACT Theatre, 700 Union Street, Seattle. for more information, visit [www.acttheatre.org/tickets/onstage/holdthesetruths](http://www.acttheatre.org/tickets/onstage/holdthesetruths).*