



"Hacienda Heights"

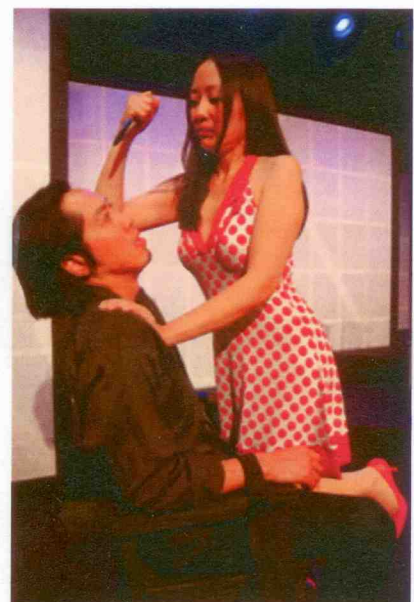
Twisted Lives

By [William Hong](#)

Lodestone's tenth and final season begins with *Ten to Life*, a collection of four one-act plays that keep you shocked, fearful, and always guessing.

Lodestone Theatre Ensemble kicks off its tenth and final season with *Ten to Life*, a four-act twister of a show. Lodestone gathered four writers (Nic Cha Kim, Annette Lee, Tim Lounibos and Judy Soo Hoo) from various points of its history to create four different stories, loosely linked together by several reoccurring themes, each directed by Alberto Issac. Magical realism is this show's genre, borrowing elements from *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*. Common tropes found in each vignette include Bob Marley's "Be Happy" as an ironic leitmotif, the significance of events that occurred 10 years earlier, and the complex relationships between men and women. Of course, no Lodestone production would be complete without the group's signature brand of raunchy humor, sexual deviance and willingness to show skin. This definitely isn't your grandpa's Asian American (East West Players) show.

The first vignette, "Hacienda Heights" (pictured above), starts off with a troubled high school student Max (Ewan Chung) whose plans to enact revenge on his school mates is interrupted when a particularly nosy census worker, Roger (Feodor Chin), arrives. Roger's arrival and subsequent interaction with Max's lustful mother (Janet Song) and abrasive grandmother (Emily Kuroda) delays Max's plans. Roger seems to know the dysfunctional family rather well, much to Max's dismay.



The next story, "RE:verse," adopts a lighter tone but is just as twisted. A young man (Chung) desperately seeks comprehensive plastic surgery to look his best for a ten year high school reunion. At the reunion, a confident Jason (Chin) seeks to rekindle a spark with his old high school sweet heart Jenny (Jully Lee). It's a love triangle with a unique twist, easily the most humorous and entertaining of the four. The finale and casting of the first act will most likely influence how the audience will assume this story will pan out, even though two acts are unrelated, plot wise.

In "Be Happy," a shrink (Chin) tries to treat his agoraphobic wife Linda (Peggy Ahn), who has reoccurring nightmares about needles and dolls. Their relationship begins to head south when Linda begins to realize the true nature of her husband's treatment. Their seemingly commonplace conversation slowly uncorks subtle hints that lead up to another left-field surprise.



"The Red Dress" follows an intensely intimate, happily married couple. Their happiness is strained when the wife, Rebecca (Song), develops a strange obsession for renewing an expensive warranty on her red dress, much to her financially strapped husband's (Elpidio Ebuena) chagrin. In the backdrop, Rebecca's grandma (Kuroda) flashes hints that there's more to her than meets the eye. This last story bookends the show in the same tone "Hacienda Heights" kicks it off: dark and disturbing. This is the most dramatic of the four.

In contrast to watching a more elaborate East West Players production, watching Lodestone shows in the cozy confines of the GTC Burbank theater makes for a more intimate experience, particularly for the pieces that involve fewer actors. Lodestone excels at doing a lot with a small cast and limited stage props. The acting is solid, and *Gillmore Girls* fans will be pleased that Kuroda (who played Lane Kim's cantankerous mother) unleashes her signature cackling wit in full force.

Watching *Ten to Life* is like reading a good Richard Matheson story: intriguingly suspenseful, occasionally unnerving and will leave you guessing until the very end. Combine that with the group's distinct raunchy edge, and you have another classic Lodestone production.

Ten to Life plays on Thursday-Sunday through June 7th. For more information, click [here](#).

Date Posted: 5/22/2009