



Snapped up: Melinda Chua will play Kim.

Star to shine in musical

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From Broadway New York to Palmerston North, *Miss Saigon*'s leading lady has been revealed as none other than American actress Melinda Chua.

The star has played the character of Kim in *Miss Saigon* thousands of times, on stage at the glitzy Broadway Theatre on Broadway in New York and around the world.

In the past three years, she's been touring her favourite role, and in August will be at the Regent on Broadway for an exclusive New Zealand appearance.

Abbey Theatre chairman Allan Nargy flew to Chicago to wrangle the deal, which will see Ms Chua join a cast of Palmerston North actors for the August 14-29 show, directed by Stephen Robinson.

Regent marketing manager Bruce Warwick said he could not say how much it cost to bring the star to Manawatu for the 12 performances, but gave assurances it would be worth it.

"Since the Regent on Broadway opened in 1998, she will be the only Broadway star we have had on Broadway.

"She's not appearing anywhere else in the country, we are bringing her in - it's a real coup. *Miss Saigon* is a world-acclaimed musical, it's never been performed in Auckland or Wellington, but it will be here in Palmerston North." In a post on Chua's blog, the star enthuses about arriving in New Zealand.

"Yeah, that's right! I will be travelling to New Zealand to play Kim in a new production of *Miss Saigon*!!! I am so excited, and totally looking forward to meeting my newest *Saigon* family!"

"I am so grateful for this incredible opportunity to do the show I love one more time and experience a new culture... time to learn some Kiwi slang..."

Chua will be joined by locals Karl Perigo, Scott Andrew and Carrie Green, together with a large ensemble of Manawatu-based Chinese, Japanese and Asian singers and dancers and a full Orchestra.

■ Set in 1975 in the days before Saigon's fall to Communist forces at the end of the Vietnam War, *Miss Saigon* is the epic love story between an American GI and a young Vietnamese woman. The musical has been seen by over 30 million people in 25 countries worldwide.