Kahani

A Devised Theatre Piece about Social Justice and Interculturalism

By Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership Fellow Irfana Majumdar and the students of Kalamazoo College

All proceeds will go towards the costs of Kahani traveling to NIRMAN, Varanasi, India, July, 2012.

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May 10–13, 2012
Thursday 7:30 PM
Friday & Saturday 8 PM, Sunday 2 PM

Nelda K. Balch Playhouse • Kalamazoo College
Box Office/Info: 269.337.7333 • www.kzoo.edu/theatre

OUR 48th SEASON | 2011 - 2012 | THEATRE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
THEATRE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

On behalf of our faculty, staff, guests artists and especially students, welcome to the 48th season of Festival Playhouse of Kalamazoo College! In conjunction with the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, we present a series of provocative, humorous and innovative plays that unite performance, text, and design while exploring what it might mean to live in a socially just world.

In our Fall production, award-winning author David Hare pulled no punches in STUFF HAPPENS, which profiled the events at the White House, and U.N. leading up to the U.S./Iraqi war.

In Winter, we presented the outrageous political farce, CLOUD NINE by Caryl Churchill. One of the sharpest, politicized, and funniest plays ever written, The New York Times called it “an evening of inspired lunacy.”

This Spring has seen two plays: As part of our Senior Performance Series, senior Hutch Pimentel directed the Michigan premiere of BACK OF THE THROAT by Youssef El Guindi, a Kafkaesque post-9-11 story of two agents who visit Khaled, an Arab-American writer, for “routine questioning.”

We culminate our Theatre and Social Justice season with the World Premiere of KAHANI – the Hindi term for “story” - a New Play Devised by Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership Fellow and Guest Artist Director Irfana Majumdar and students of Kalamazoo College. The production is based loosely on the Hindi novel “Mai”, by Geetanjali Shree, as well as stories by regional 20th century women writers. KAHANI uses different methods of storytelling to explore the implicit power and hierarchical structures within the family and society. This truly interdisciplinary and international project from Theatre Arts, the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, and Center for International Programs will also perform at the Nirman School in India this July. As an AC-SJL Visiting Fellow, director, filmmaker, and theatre educator Irfana Majumdar was in residence with us from January through May. We will miss her greatly!

We are proud that our student playwrights (in this case, Fran Hoepfner, K’13, and David Landskroener, K’14) participated in the THEATRE KALAMAZOO NEW PLAYFEST, produced at The Epic Center in downtown Kalamazoo in February. The highest gift we can ever offer to an audience is brand new work from the young artists of the future of our theatre.

As always, we featured the work of our “best and the brightest” in student-directed plays, young artists who support the great tradition at Kalamazoo College of students creating their own theatre in our Senior Performance Series. As well as BACK OF THE THROAT, senior Kyle McCord directed Israel Horovitz’s LINE in Winter in the Dungeon Theatre.

As you can see from the above, we continue to strive to make the theatre experience at the center of the liberal arts environment: an intersection of knowledge, creativity and education for our entire community.

Theatre that is always provocative. Theatre that is always thoughtful. Thank you for choosing the theatre tonight!

Ed Menta

Professor & Director of Theatre
KAHANI Ensemble Statements

Working for social justice can only happen when we begin to look deeply at ourselves and our relationships, when we begin to understand through questions and questioning, rather than wanting answers and making statements. When we create and retell stories, trying to unravel layers and make connections. When we learn to see the pardas (veils) that we have placed in our lives and around the world, becoming attached to these pardas, forgetting what is behind and beyond.

My role in this process has been to try to keep opening up pathways for the ensemble to explore. The most fascinating moments were watching the landscapes and stories they created every day. It can only be magic – what emerges when energy is concentrated, and we focus on communicating, visualizing, helping each other execute, crossing paths and keeping on working. This performance is a part of this intense, creative activity and exploration of justice in our world.

Irfana

The process of devising scenes has often been a roller coaster to witness. In the progress of the production the acting members of the Ensemble drew from prompting assignments to create snippets of theatre that were sometimes incredibly serious, intense, or poignant...other times so hilarious we all had tears in our eyes from laughing at the end. There were silly umbrella dances, creepy teddy bears that refused to be pulled on tricycles the way that was intended, beautiful billowing curtains, passionate kisses, ridiculous accents, moments of death, moments of birth, and so many moments of trying to figure out what a scene told us or portrayed about the way life works. As the stage manager, watching the students develop confidence in their ability to create these scene assignments (often with very little time..."Take this list of instructions, these are your partners, you have 25 minutes until we perform!"...) was really a treat to watch. My favorite times though were when they stopped thinking of them as “assignments” and just played with all the process had to offer. The stage was their oyster--I loved witnessing the team realize their creative freedom and grab hold of this chance just to explore.

Kat

Adults should play make believe too. Little kids have the fascinating ability to create and create without even knowing at the beginning what it is they are making. But adults have the equally fascinating ability to set out and say, “This is what I want to create, and this is my vision.” Yet, somewhere along the way the spontaneity of the make believe gets lost on adults and they focus too much on the vision. Being a part of KAHANI has helped me to channel both my adult and my little kid. When we as the ensemble create, we have a vision, and without becoming attached to it, use it as guidance to create and make the make believe. And eventually, that make believe transforms into what we have to present to you today.

Sammy

My first semester at K I took a memoir writing class taught by Gail Griffin that taught me the importance of Telling Secrets, but most of all, what stories have to be told. For me, KAHANI was one of those stories. It isn’t just an interpretation of the text Mai, but intermingled bits and pieces of our own lives and passions. KAHANI is a connectedness, not only for a driver for social justice, but our own experience, and the culminate story we can tell together.

McKenna

I think it’s fascinating, the idea of revising the world. As soon as the past is past, and even while it’s the present, we have our ways of constructing it, forming it, shaping it even simply by what and why we remember things. A lot of our work has circled that idea, and it makes me want to keep questioning the text, the show, and what I think I know—who are you within yourself? How did that smile come about? Am I seeing the people around me authentically? I love immersing myself in these kinds of thoughts?

Fiona

Ever since the auditions I’ve been consistently impressed by the speed in which our ensemble can create scene. True, the scenes aren’t always polished and sometimes aren’t utilized, but they all display a variety of perspectives, images, and ideas.

Cameron

As a student of theater and literature, my life is positively saturated with words. I am constantly astounded by their colors, textures, patterns, their nuances and connotations, their volumes and intricacies. Adapting a play from a work of literature has only heightened my awareness of the astounding power of words.
KAHANI is a compilation of thought, feeling, relationships, and movement that rises to a resounding climax through Geetanjali Shree’s beautiful prose. The process has allowed me to combine my passions and come away as a better thinker, reader, actress, and world citizen.

Jane

Childhood is an incredible thing to reflect on. It is the basis of our being, it seems so long ago that I can barely remember and yet I feel it hasn’t fully ended. We are bodies on a stage with a passion and a message come along on a journey through childhood as we narrate Mai.

Anya

My freshman year, I learned about The Performance Group, one of the coolest devised theatre companies in history. My sophomore year, I learned that a life in commercial theatre would drive me to an early grave. My junior year, the fear of death by Broadway created a passion for alternative methods and I decided that to study this kind of theatre in depth. So in my senior year, I get to live onstage - doing one of the coolest productions in MAI history.

Sam

My favorite part about the production of KAHANI is the way we have designed such a malleable set. Using only boxes and strips of cloth, along with a few choice objects, we are able to create whole worlds.

Alden

When choosing colleges a year ago, I picked Kalamazoo College because of its academic prestige, international scope and dedication to social justice. Working on KAHANI has allowed me to explore those three avenues in a matter that has challenged and transformed the way I approach the creative process as a student, an actor and a concerned global citizen.

Joe
~The use of any recording device is strictly prohibited. Switch cellular phones and anything else that makes noise to silent during the performance.

~Patrons who leave their seat during the performance will be re-seated at the discretion of the house manager.

~Festival Playhouse gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Dorothy U. Dalton Foundation.

~Festival Playhouse gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the John S. Bolin (K'65) and Sandra A. Blaine Bolin (K'65) in memory of Nelda K. Balch.
The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival XLIV

Presented and Produced by
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theatre education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theatre productions. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships grants and awards for actors, playwrights, designers stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

A faculty colleague attends those productions that are entered on the Associate level. This includes a response session with the company following the performance. The director will be provided with a written response to the work, a copy of which will be forwarded to the regional chair. The response may be accompanied by nominations for awards, including the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship Auditions. An associate production is not eligible for tour to the festival, though the institution is eligible for all other awards.

Last year more than 1,200 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theatre department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theatres across the nation.

PRODUCTION BIOS

Katie Anderson (Sound Board Op) is a first-year Theater Arts major. She was the Light Board Op for the winter production of Cloud Nine and is excited to be working on such a unique production.

Kathleen Barrett (Production Stage Manager) is a junior Theatre Arts and HDSR double major. She is excited to be back in the swing of K life after six months abroad. Kat has been consistently active in the Theatre Arts Department since her first quarter on campus with previous work including stage managing and light designing DING, DONG, MY HYMEN'S GONE, being thrown around the stage as 10-year-old Tommy in THE WHO'S TO MY, and sound designing ALISON SHIELDS (for which she received ACTF recognition). She sends love and thanks to the friends who make home a wonderful place to return to every night.

Sam Bertken (Ensemble) is a senior Theatre Arts major who is proud to be finishing out his time with the department in this courageous production. Intrigued by the notion of devising original work since his first year at K, he has developed a passion for this particular form that culminated in his Theatre Arts SIP and this final piece. Sam looks forward to moving on to study physical theatre techniques and improvisation in the hopes of being able to continue to create original work. He would like to thank the entire Theatre Arts department faculty and staff for making this transformation possible.

Tammer Boutros (Spot Op) is a junior Chemistry and Theatre Double major. He wants to eventually get paid to blow stuff up. Being a chemistry/theatre double major he believes that the special effects industry could be a perfect fit for him.

Fiona Carey (Ensemble) is a sophomore AN/SO major with a French minor. Her most recent theatre work was as Mrs. Saunders in K's production of CLOUD NINE last winter; she's also worked with the Interlochen Shakespeare Festival and Parallel 45, a northern Michigan theatre. Fiona is expectantly happy to be a part of the project, working with such great people on such rewarding material, and can't give enough thanks.

Swapna Gudipati (House Manager) is a junior Biology/Biochemistry and Molecular Biology major. She has appeared previously in DING, DONG, MY HYMEN'S GONE. She is thankful to the members of SLAM for their support in her endeavors.
Jane Huffman (Ensemble) is a first-year who is planning to double-major in Theater Arts and English Literature. The process expanded her intellectual and creative boundaries and allowed her to grow as an actress, a student, and a world citizen. She extends a giant thank you to the theater arts faculty for their vision and organization, the KAHANI ensemble for their spectacular dedication and wisdom, and her friends and family for their constant love.

Sammy Jolly (Ensemble) is first-year Spanish major whose most recent role was in the Festival Playhouse production of STUFF HAPPENS. She would like to thank everyone involved in the production of KAHANI for all the hard work, creativity, and faith in this unfamiliar process.

McKenna M. Kring (Ensemble) is a first-year who is currently undecided, but is toying with Visual Arts, Creative Writing, and Psychology. This is McKenna’s first interaction with the Festival Playhouse. Previously she participated heavily in her high school’s theater department. She’s happy to be ankle deep in the theater’s river again, and looks forward to wading deeper in the future.

Irfana Majumdar (Director) is the director of the NIRMAN Theatre Studio at NIRMAN in Varanasi, India. She is a visiting fellow at the ARCUS Centre for Social Justice Leadership, and visiting instructor in the Department of Theatre Arts at Kalamazoo College. She has an AB ’03 in Theatre, Literature, and Gender Studies from the University of Chicago. At NIRMAN, she directs and devises new and classic work, teaches theatre, organises workshops and residencies with visiting artists, and continues her own training.

Any Opshinsky (Ensemble) is a first-year with an intended Theater Arts major. She appeared last quarter as Victoria and Ellen in CLOUD NINE. She is incredibly thankful to have been given the chance to develop and collaborate with Irfana and the rest of the KAHANI ensemble to create their own theatrical piece.

Alden Phillips (Ensemble) is a junior Theatre Arts/English major and is very excited to be a part of the KAHANI ensemble. He just returned home from studying abroad in Madrid, Spain, where he might have stayed permanently if he didn't miss his dog so much.

Marissa Rossman (Spot Op) is a junior History/Theatre Arts double major who recently appeared as Shelly, Beth, and Jean in the Dungeon production of BACK OF THE THROAT. She enjoys drinking coffee, learning trivia, and having friends.

Cameron Schneberger (Ensemble) is a first-year who is ecstatic to participate in his third play for Festival Playhouse. He would like to thank his previous director Kjerstie Johanson for encouraging his on stage endeavors and encouraging his love of theater.

Phoebe Solomon (Light Board Op) is a junior Philosophy major with a Theatre Arts minor. She was sucked into the theater by evil forces and can’t seem to escape now. She is thrilled to work alongside a fabulous stage management team and vibrant cast.

James Villar (Spot Op) is a Psychology and Theater Arts major. His most recent roles have been a role supporting in STUFF HAPPENS in the fall and as Betty in CLOUD NINE in the winter. He is more than happy to be working in the theater from a different perspective, off-stage and getting much more theater experience.

Joseph Westerfield (Ensemble) is a first-year AN/AS and Theatre double major from Longview, Washington. This is Joseph's third production for Festival Playhouse. Aside from his coursework, Joseph also participates in Service Learning and Monkapult.

Abby Wood (Assistant Stage Manager) is a junior Theatre Arts and English double major and this her first show after coming back from study abroad in Thailand but she did a lot of stuff before that. She would like to thank everyone who kept her sane during this quarter, you know who you are.
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