

Theatre for Peace in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Haiti & Guatemala

Afghan Women Speak Out thru Theatre



Photo: Bond Street Theatre

Bond Street trained these young actresses in Jalalabad... they discovered theatre for the first time and love it!

“Theatre is like a guiding light in our society!” says new director, Farahnaz, 19

Live theatre is an excellent way to bring information to women in isolated areas, yet women in many areas of Afghanistan face danger by appearing on stage. Our solution? Create all-female theatre groups to perform *just for women*. In Jalalabad, our new all-female troupe (above) is proud of their new dramatic talents, but still cover their faces with their certificates for the photo. The group created a play about women’s rights to education, forced marriage, and the harsh effects of local traditions. *Zan Zede Zan, Zan Barai Zan (Women Against Women, Women For Women)* was performed at the Nangarhar Women’s Prison, shelters, and women’s shuras in the villages. Audiences were amazed at the girls’ talents and thrilled to see live theatre for the first time.

BST member Sahar wrote, **“Hearing their life stories, they already are some of the most courageous individuals I have met, but this is a new outlet for them to demonstrate that.”**

The women’s group is now a new wing of Nangarhar Theatre, a professional company committed to social theatre. The company brings plays on women’s rights into dangerous border areas but, for security, without female actors. The men dress as women to



Photo: Bond Street Theatre

Roya & Tahera of White Star Company in Kabul perform *Rights are Not Given, They Must Be Taken*.

play female roles. Although they still may not share the stage, the company welcomes the new actresses. Nangarhar Theatre is the third group in our 2-year Theatre for Social Development project. Next, we work with Kandahar Theatre. ➔

Myanmar: Time for Change?



Photo: Bond Street Theatre

Actors from Thukhuma Khayeethe of Myanmar explore Commedia dell’arte with BST. The companies are collaborating on Ben Johnson’s “Volpone” for performances in English and Burmese. At left, Than Htut Oo (top), Soe Moe Thu (L), Thura Thein (R)

BST returned to Myanmar (Burma) this past January to continue working with **Thukhuma Khayeethe** (Art Travelers). The company has grown from 4 members to 10 since we began working together in 2009. Last year, the groups traveled to border villages with our show for children about hand-washing. Since the 2011 election in Myanmar, theatre groups like TK are beginning to speak out more freely as the mood in the country shifts towards hope. ➔

“Women Say Enough!” in Haiti

BST teamed up with **FAVILEK (Women Victims Stand Up, Get Up)** again this Spring to create *Fanm Yo Di Ase! (Women Say Enough!)*. The show confronts the violence women face in the tent camps where 400,000 people still live two years after the devastating earthquake. FAVILEK performed in local communities and on Haitian National TV to spread their message to replace violence with love. ➔

Acting for Peace in Guatemala



Photo: Ilanna Saltzman

BST partnered with **Ida’s Hjelpfond** to initiate a theatre program at Oasis, an orphanage for survivors of abuse, and helped the girls create an original performance. ➔

The girls share laughter in an image theatre workshop.

Read more about theatre in Afghanistan, Burmese political change, strong Haitian women, & the girls of Guatemala. ➔

Left: Audience members in Kabul voice their opinions in a post-show discussion. The audience is also invited on stage to act out their ideas.



Photo: Bond Street Theatre



Photo: Joanna Sherman



Photo: Bond Street Theatre

R: FAVILEK performs a scene about the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Center: Mask-making in Myanmar with Art Travelers.

Afghan Women Speak Out... cont'd

The Nangarhar Theatre men's troupe created a performance titled *Za Zangal Qanoon (The Law of the Jungle)*, a play using classic tales to illustrate the problem of corruption and importance of following the rule of law. The men performed for the Regional Police and for boys at the Juvenile Corrections Center, Drug Addiction Treatment Center, and other centers for youth.

Over the last **10 years**, Bond Street has worked with theatre groups across Afghanistan, using creative means to bring information to isolated areas, and entertaining children and adults who have minimal access to live theatre. Audiences are happy to see the shows and often cry and embrace the actors afterwards. We thank the **United States Institute of Peace** and **US Embassy in Kabul** for giving us this wonderful opportunity.

Afghan Prison Project

Inspired by the overwhelming response from women in prisons in Herat, Jalalabad and Kabul, we are creating a program specially for Afghan Women's Prisons and juvenile centers. Most women are incarcerated for "moral" crimes, such as escaping forced marriages or domestic abuse, and are not accepted by their families upon release. The program uses theatre to help the women tell their stories, build their self-confidence, learn their rights, and find the courage to re-enter society. ●



Photo: Joanna Sherman



Photo: Ilanna Saltzman

Thank you to our 2012 Interns (L-R): Heddy Lahmann, Zoe Travis, Darielle Shandler, Charlotte Drover, stilt-walkers all!

Girls in Antigua meet the cricket, star of BST's show about hope.



Myanmar: Time for Change... cont'd

Since the military junta in 1962, contemporary theatre has been heavily censored or forbidden altogether. We chose the play, *Volpone*, since it takes on greed, power and corruption that reflects Myanmar's political reality as well as our current global financial crisis. In the process, we discovered similarities between the archetypes and stylization of the European Commedia and classical Burmese theatre.

The two companies finished Act 1 of the dual-language adaptation in February. Thukhuma Khayethe and BST hope to complete the work in the coming year, and embark on a tour in Southeast Asia. We thank the **Asian Cultural Council** for its generous support. ●

"Women Say Enough!" in Haiti... cont'd

Anna, Christina, and Josh worked closely with 11 members of FAVILEK, ages 20-60, to build on BST's 2011 theatre training and create the new performance. *Women Say Enough!* is a call to action for all Haitians to stop violence against women.

Following our work, the women reported renewed confidence: "*We feel so much stronger now!*" FAVILEK is poised to continue performances, and has begun teaching theatre to young girls and former sex workers, counseling and helping the girls make better choices for their lives. We thank the **Jewish-American Joint Distribution Committee**, the **US Embassy in Haiti**, and our generous **individual donors** for supporting the project. ●

Peace in Guatemala... cont'd

Thanks to **Ida's Hjelpefond**, **Davis Projects for Peace**, and **International House New York**, Christina, Ilanna and Olivia led two weeks of workshops in physical skills, voice and improvisation to 16 girls at Oasis. The older girls created *El Cambio Empieza Por Ti y Por Mi (Change Begins With You and With Me)*, a play to spread the message that Guatemalans must break the cycle of malevolence with hope. The troupe performed for youth from all over Guatemala in July. BST is helping Oasis staff create a long-term arts program to provide the girls an emotional outlet. ●

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