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## **BOND STREET THEATRE RECEIVES \$9,000 GRANT FROM THE ASIAN CULTURAL COUNCIL TO CONTINUE WORK IN MYANMAR (BURMA)**

***Building on two years of creative collaboration, Bond Street Theatre returns to Burma to work with local artists on social issues***

New York, NY, July 30, 2011 - Bond Street Theatre has been awarded a \$9,000 grant from the [Asian Cultural Council](#) to continue its theatre programming with [Gitameit Music Center](#) and its resident theatre group, Thukhuma Khayethe (Art Travelers), in Yangon, Burma. Bond Street Theatre and Thukhuma Khayethe will create a new play about the current social issues facing the Burmese people. The four-week project will commence in December 2011 and continue into January 2012.

*"Let's show real life in Burma now, but with advice for the future to inspire future leaders,"* proposes Thila Min, Director of Thukhuma Khayethe.

Under Burma's ruling regime, the country has become one of the world's most impoverished nations, infamous for ethnic cleansing, retaliation against protest, and consistent disregard for human rights. In this environment, there is little room for creativity, self-expression or social discourse through the arts. Although the traditional arts continue, contemporary theatre has been silenced.

Bond Street members Joanna Sherman, Michael McGuigan, and Anna Zastrow began working in the country in 2009 and returned in 2010 as Cultural Envoys through the US Embassy in Yangon. The two theatre groups, Bond Street and Thukhuma Khayethe, created a performance about children's hygiene and brought it to rural schools and orphanages along Burma's conflict-ridden border with Thailand.

*"Young theatre artists are hungry for outside stimuli and dialogue with the greater world of theatre,"* says Bond Street's Artistic Director Joanna Sherman. *"Our goal is to help revitalize theatre in Burma, especially as a tool to address human rights, community education, and improved life skills for children and youth."*

Thukhuma Khayethe is a perfect partner for this collaboration. Following the devastating Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the artists of the Gitameit Music School traveled to the delta to help survivors in the destroyed villages. Here, the group discovered first hand the healing and inspirational nature of music and theatre as they created activities for traumatized children. Since then, Thukhuma Khayethe has continued their outreach work for youth in Burma, and extended their studies to include international theatre collaborations. Now, as the theatrical arm of Gitameit, Thukhuma Khayethe stands as a model for other artists to emulate. The US-Burmese partnership will continue to introduce new theatrical ideas to artists and audiences in Burma.



Michael McGuigan performs in *The Handwashing Show*

The [Asian Cultural Council](#) (ACC) is the only organization in the world whose sole mission is to support cultural exchange between the United States and Asia, and within the countries of Asia. The ACC promotes international dialogue, understanding, and respect through cultural exchanges, and nurtures the individual talents of artists and scholars in the United States and Asia. Since 1963, the ACC has provided grant assistance to approximately 6,000 Asian and American artists, scholars, and specialists in the arts. It has supported cultural leaders in over twenty different fields and in more than twenty-five countries in Asia.

Bond Street Theatre is deeply honored to receive the Asian Cultural Council's recognition and support. The grant is being awarded through ACC's **American Artists and Museum Professionals Program Fund** in recognition of *"Bond Street Theatre's outstanding work to date and of the important contribution this project will make to fostering cultural exchanges and global dialogue."*



Bond Street Theatre and Thukhuma Khayethe

**Gitameit Music Center**, the host organization, is unique in Burma. The music school brings promising young musicians from the furthest reaches of the country and gives them the opportunity to study with great instructors. Gitameit Director Moe Naing attracts teachers from around the world to the school, and actively promotes the value of cross-disciplinary artistic study.

**Bond Street Theatre** and **Thukhuma Khayethe** will work on a jointly created play addressing social issues in Burma for presentation in the country, and bring the production to the USA in the next years.

The ACC-supported project will further the Burmese ensemble's ability to create contemporary theatre, improve their theatre management skills, and provide both groups with the opportunity to exchange performing and teaching methods.

Bond Street Theatre will also continue its work with the Gitameit Music School, presenting their students with theatre-based activities they can use as they continue their outreach programs for children who have been traumatized by recent conflicts and disasters.

**For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Olivia Harris at 212-254-4614 or [olivia@bondst.org](mailto:olivia@bondst.org).**

***Bond Street Theatre, founded in 1978, creates theatre that crosses cultural borders and initiates theatre-based projects for education, conflict resolution and healing in areas of conflict and poverty globally. The company collaborates with local artists to enjoy the benefits of artistic exchange and promotes the value of the arts in shaping a peaceful future. Recipient of a MacArthur Award, the company has also received support from the Trust for Mutual Understanding, ArtsLink, the Theatre Communications Group, Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, Association for Performing Arts Presenters, Asian Cultural Council, US Institute for Peace, US Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs, NEA, US Embassies, and others, and performs in theatres and festivals worldwide.***

***Bond Street Theatre is a non-profit organization, and an NGO in association with the UN-DPI.***

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION and STORIES:**

***Bond Street on the Road* blog -----**

<http://www.bondstreetblog.blogspot.com/>

***Artistic-Humanitarian* work -----**

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*American Theatre* article "Can Laughter Set You Free?" by Michael McGuigan -----  
<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/68850192/Can-Laughter-Set-You-Free>

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