

## On the Road in India and Afghanistan

### Cultural Bridges India



Wedding of the Fishes performance created in workshop with BST & Patachitra folk artists.

Photo: Meghan Frank

This year we began an exciting new project in India. Our 11-actor team was a model of cultural diplomacy: 3 from Afghanistan, 4 from the US, and 4 from India!

Our goal was to reach out to Muslim youth and other disadvantaged populations in India. The journey was diverse beyond our expectations. Our work brought us to rural women in the poorest area of north Bihar, street children in the slums of Kolkata and Delhi, amazing folk artists and dancers in West Bengal, and the Hindu-Muslim neighborhoods of Hyderabad.

Our objective is to use theatre-based techniques to enhance the lives of people in some of the poorest communities, and to uplift through our educational and entertaining performances. More important, we train teachers, local artists, and students to use these theatre-based skills in their work with children.

Working in partnership with excellent theatre artists – Exile Theatre of Afghanistan, Purvabhyas and Mandala Theatres of Delhi, Banglanatak of Kolkata, puppeteer Jenny Romaine of the USA – we reached more than 10,000 children, teachers and audiences, and made a fine example of cultural harmony!

More on back...



Photo: Meghan Frank

## Check out...

- See our NEW website design at: [www.bondst.org](http://www.bondst.org)
- See more photos on [Flickr.com](http://Flickr.com)
- Follow our global projects with Bond Street's ON THE ROAD BLOG: [www.bondstreetblog.blogspot.com](http://www.bondstreetblog.blogspot.com)

### Helping Afghan Girls



Workshop with street-working girls at Aschiana in Afghanistan.

Photo: Meghan Frank

Our 5th trip to Afghanistan, we began a new arts project particularly targeting Afghan girls. Despite progress, 60% of girls age 7-13 still do not attend school. The lack of teachers and travel safety are a few of the problems, but many children, both boys and girls, must work all day to help their families.

Our aim is to give girls a boost of confidence, stimulate their imagination, and encourage self-expression through artistic exercises of all sorts. Creative and confident children are the hope of this war-weary nation's future.

This May, three of us gave workshops at the Aschiana Center for street-working children in Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul. We return in October to work with an all-girl's theatre group in the northern city of Kunduz who dare to perform on stage and create plays about their lives. More on back...

### Shinbone Alley Stilt Band in China



Photo: Bond Street Theatre

The Band performs for Golden Week at the Shanghai Clown Festival in China. After a popular NYC Parks tour this summer, the Band is ready for a new global foray. The Band, an entertaining adjunct to Bond Street

Theatre, plays Dixieland classics and music from around the world. Watch the Shinbone Alley Stilt Band video on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

## MORE NEWS

**WORLD THEATRE CORPS, a new initiative, will connect artists with humanitarian projects globally. The WTC has already been recognized for its merit and the Bond Street team is looking to the future: finding seed money and setting up hubs in Africa, Asia and the USA. •**

### AFGHANISTAN:

In the dusty northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, the Aschiana Center is an oasis for children who work or beg on the streets. The Center provides one hour of basic education and hot meals daily for the children, and vocational training for young adults, male and female.

Our work began with the vocational students, preparing them to assist us in teaching the children. The trainees were enthusiastic learners, and the children loved the theatre games, all of which were aimed at building confidence, imagination and trust. Our goal is that the trainees continue the program with the children, especially the girls who have little access to creative physical play. •

**THE MECHANICAL, a new work, brings the outcast creature from Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, into the true story of a sensational chess-playing robot built in 1775. The fantastical chess-playing robot built in 1775. The fantastical script, written by ensemble member Michael McGuigan, is a new direction for the group: the play is verbal and geared for US audiences. The new work will premiere in June 2008. •**



Performance at Afghan Girls School in Mazar. Photo: Mustafa Ahmady



Stilt workshop for Patachitra folk artists, India. Photo: Joanna Sherman

## INDIA

The US-Afghan-Indian team shared theatre exercises designed to improve self-expression and presentation skills, cooperation and trust, imagination and creative problem-solving. These exercises are intrinsic to theatre and useful to both actors and non-actors of all ages. The groups are creating a new workbook of practices to assist other organizations that work with youth, and initiating the South Asian Social Theatre Institute in Delhi as a center for training.

### Project Highlights:

- *Experiments with Theatre*, a play created with 50 vocational students and 8 street-working children. Most were on stage for the first time. A parent told us after the show "I have never seen my child so strong and outspoken!"
- *Workshops for the Patachitra painter-storytellers of West Bengal*. These artists practice a traditional folk form of singing and painting. The workshops helped improve their presentation style while keeping their traditions intact.

œ *Workshops for women in a rural village in northern Bihar*. The women were so shy that we thought no one would return, but the next day the class had doubled! We taught self-expression through song, dance and acting, and confidence-boosting techniques such as stilt-walking and partner balances.

œ *Mask-making and acting for 30 children from Bastar*, a violent area in central India. These refugee children had been traumatized by years of Maoist rebel activities. We gave them uplifting, image-making games to address their emotions and fears.

œ *The Kite's Tale*, an uplifting street show created by our three-country team about children's rights and teamwork that brought laughter and applause to thousands of children and adults.

We appreciate the support from some excellent organizations: UNICEF, the Gandhi Center, Banglanatak, COVA and others. We thank the **US Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs** for funding this far-reaching project and understanding the power of the arts to cross borders and spread good will. œ

**T**hanks to our dedicated donors, we can continue our work in India and Afghanistan. Please **DONATE** online at [www.bondst.org](http://www.bondst.org)

## Grants this year from...

- ART/NY for organizational support.
- The Riverside Church Sharing Fund to bring our programs to children in Afghanistan;
- New Generations Grant from the Doris Duke and Andrew Mellon Foundations via the Theatre Communications Group to support our projects with emerging Afghan artists;
- The US Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to support our work with Muslim youth in India;
- NEA to present *Beyond the Mirror* in California;
- NYSCA to develop an original play, *The Mechanical*;
- DCA for the summer Stilt Band tour in New York.

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Joanna Sherman - Artistic Director; Michael McGuigan - Managing Director; Meghan Frank - Program Director; Sean Nowell - Muscial Director; Christina Gelsone - Actor; Rob Lok - Actor; Luanne Dietrich - Actor; Matt Schmidt - Actor; Brian Foley - Actor; Sima Wolf - Actor, musician; Joe Schuffle - Musician; Bruce Williamson - Musician, composer; Elizabeth! - Musician; Fred Collins - Fight Choreographer; Sage Clemenco - Adminstrator; Eleni Sakellis - Development Intern; Soraia Salvador - Intern; Andrea Sandor - Intern; Jenny Romaine - Guest Artist.