Theatre for Peace at Home and Around the World

Getting Out the Vote in Afghanistan

In July-August, we initiated our Voter Education & Fraud Mitigation project in Afghanistan. The Afghan theatre groups we trained over the last two years are performing in towns and villages in six provinces to encourage Afghans to vote in the presidential elections on April 5, 2014. The project is especially aimed at women whose rights are dependent on the new leadership, and youth who are voting for the first time!

Women and the Election

Women’s participation in the election is essential. Conservative forces have been chipping away at women’s hard-won freedoms, such as laws that ban child marriage and rape. Our women’s theatres are excellent role models of women speaking out, and the plays provide the opportunity for audience dialogue at the end.

“This theatre project has given me new courage to speak out!”
-- Ayesha, Nangarhar Women’s Theatre troupe in Jalalabad.

The results have been remarkable, with more than half the audience changing their minds from “why vote” to “I must vote!”

We thank the United States Institute of Peace and our generous donors for supporting the project.

Myanmar Opens to New Theatre

Bond Street Theatre returned to Myanmar (Burma) this past spring to continue working on a dual-language production of Ben Johnson’s Volpone with Thukhuma Khayeethe (TK), Myanmar’s first contemporary theatre company. The collaboration included enlightening discussions about Myanmar’s cultural history, its new openness, Buddhism, the roots of the recent secular violence, and theatre’s ability to address these issues. The satirical play warns against the potential abuses that come with economic growth as Myanmar opens to the world, and the violence that often emerges with newly acquired freedoms. As TK Director Thila Min says,

“People are happy to take advantage of new freedoms, but they do not accept personal responsibility.”

New Project: Syrian Refugees

The civil war in Syria rages on and two million refugees have left their country. Nearly 600,000 have fled into Turkey and subsist in cramped encampments along the Syrian border. Children and adults are suffering the trauma of being uprooted, losing all property and possessions, and having little support to help them in their new environment.

Bond Street is teaming up with Turkish aid organization, Support to Life, to create a comprehensive program of psychosocial support for women, youth and children. Arts programming provides a positive outlet to express distressing memories and process traumatic experiences.

Having worked with Afghan refugees in Pakistan, in refugee camps during the war in Kosovo, and in the tent camps of post-earthquake Haiti, Bond Street Theatre continues its mission to support people and communities in crisis.
Afghan Prison Project

Inspired by the joyful response from women in prisons in Herat, Jalalabad and Kabul, we are creating a program specially for Women’s Prisons and juvenile correction centers. Most women are incarcerated for “moral” crimes, such as escaping forced marriages or domestic abuse. 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.

Amelia Earhart lands in NYC!

Company members Hedy Lamann-Rosen and Ilanne Saltzman, with guest director Gretchen van Lente, have created a new show for young audiences, Amelia and Her Paper Tigers.

Based on the life of the famous aviator, Amelia Earhart, this fun, funny, and educational performance helps children learn to confront their fears. Ilanna takes on 8 roles in the show, including Amelia’s own Lockheed Vega plane, while Hedy plays the dauntless Amelia.

Amelia Earhart continues to be a role model for women breaking barriers around the world, and we’re proud to celebrate her legacy!

“The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do. You can act to change and control your life; and the procedure, the process is its own reward.” -- Amelia Earhart

Would you like the Amelia to come to your school or theatre? Please contact Ilanna at ilanna@bondst.org or Hedy at heedy@bondst.org.

Upcoming Projects

Bhopal: We brought Bhopal, our co-production with Indian-American company Epic Actors Workshop, to festivals in India and Nepal in 2012 and US in 2013. The play about the Union Carbide chemical explosion in Bhopal, India, will come to New York in 2014. We’ll keep you posted!

Haiti: We are preparing to continue our engagement in Haiti and collaborate further with the women’s company FAVILEK and other groups, to support the Haitian community as it attempts to recover from the 2010 earthquake. Three years have passed and the world has turned its attention elsewhere… but Haiti still needs our help.

Myanmar: Time for Change... cont’d

During our month-long collaboration with Thukhuma Khayeethe, we studied Burmese and Western performance styles and how they can blend in style, character, music, dance, and structure. We looked at films of famous old zat pwe performances, Burma’s traditional all-night entertainment, and images of the European commedia dell’arte. Our play will begin with a nat pwe, a traditional dance to the spirits and a lavish affair in keeping with the themes in Volpone-Yangon.

Now the script has been completed and it’s time to learn our lines... in Burmese! When we return to Myanmar, we will fully stage the play. Since contemporary theatre had been forbidden under the military regime, we are curious how audiences will take to the new style.

The play will premiere in Yangon and tour to Mandalay and Lashio. In 2014-15, we plan to take the show to neighboring countries and bring the play to the US.

We thank the Theatre Communications Group for a Global Connections grant in support of the project.

Be a part of Bond Street Theatre’s creative work around the world.

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Thanks to our 2013 Interns: Chris deFilipp, Lauren Lindsey, Katherine Connolly, Ruby Hanney, Alyssa Trombitas and Louise McDonald.

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