Dear Friends,

Happy Spring! Now that we have fully thawed out, we are ready to spring into action. Many exciting projects are unfolding throughout this year!

- **Elections in Afghanistan** - our Voter Education Project continues.
- **Women’s prison in Herat** - theatre for women in Afghanistan’s prisons.
- **Youth initiative in Myanmar** - engaging youth in combating violence.
- **Volpone-Yangon** - premiering our new production with Burmese theatre troupe.
- And new programs in other areas of need: Haiti, Syria, and possibly Azerbaijan.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) for latest news.
Check our [blog](#) for updates from the field.
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In the face of global challenges, Bond Street Theatre continues to bring creative, humanitarian assistance to troubled communities around the world... thanks to our donors! Your support makes our work possible.

**Afghanistan: Elections, Prisons & Extremism**

"We were unaware of our rights before, but now we know how important it is for us to vote."
(Salih Jah, Kandahar)

**Voter Education**

Success! Our Voter Education & Fraud Mitigation project informed audiences in six provinces about the April 5th Afghan presidential election. Our 5 Afghan theatre troupes (including 3 all-female groups) reached nearly 150,000 people.

The energy of live theatre made a huge impact on audiences, and many changed their minds from skepticism to enthusiasm for the elections. In Kandahar, audiences saying "yes, I will vote" increased by 221% following the performances!

The secret of the theatre groups’ success? The shows are laced with comedy which encourages passers-by to stay and watch. After each show, the audience has the opportunity to join the actors on stage to enact what they would do in a situation.

The campaign focused especially on women and youth to encourage their participation in the election process.

"I thought because I am a woman, my vote does not count. But now I learn that the votes of men and women are equal. This encourages me to vote and motivate other women." - Robina, Kandahar
The Election Project continues!
On June 14th, Afghans return to the polls for the "run-off" election between the top two contenders. Due to our success in reaching difficult regions and scores of women, the United States Institute of Peace requested that we continue our voter education project to promote the run-off.

"I recommend continuing this theatre program because it is very important. There is no electricity outside the city of Kandahar to watch TV and many people don’t have radio. Theatre puts undivided focus on a single important issue and makes us take action." - Teacher, Jamal-e Karz Baba School
Read many more quotes and anecdotes from the field on our blog. For more photos, click here.

Women’s Prison Program
We have been awarded a generous grant from Dining for Women to bring creative theatre programs to women in Afghan prisons. Most of the women are imprisoned for violating social and moral codes such as running away from home, escaping an abusive husband, or even being a victim of sexual assault.

In partnership with Simorgh Theatre, we will provide incarcerated women in the Herat Women’s Prison, one of the largest women’s prisons in Afghanistan, with creative, educational programs that build self-esteem, encourage self-expression, and improve communication and leadership skills. Participants will gain the confidence to manage their lives during incarceration and be better able to re-enter society upon release.

The project begins this fall. This initial phase provides the model for programs to be implemented in women’s prisons across Afghanistan as we continue our commitment to theatre for social justice.

Countering Violent Extremism
Bond Street is currently developing programs to address violent extremism using creative practices. We are researching current methods and developing a model program that can be applied to counter violent extremism in Afghanistan and globally. We will keep you updated on the program’s progress.

Myanmar: Challenging New Freedoms

Volpone-Yangon
Bond Street returned to Myanmar (Burma) in February to continue our collaboration with Thukhuma Khayeeth (TK), developing a dual-language production of Ben Jonson’s Volpone.

The satirical play about greed and corruption offers a medium to explore the challenges of Myanmar’s new openness and current secular unrest. The goal is to encourage audiences to deeply consider current issues and motivate them toward peaceful action and respect. As TK Director Thila Min says, “People are happy to take advantage of the new freedoms, but they do not accept personal responsibility.”

Performing such a play in Myanmar would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. During the military dictatorship, contemporary theatre, and any social commentary, was forbidden. We are eager to see how audiences receive this new ground-breaking production, while taking into account the safety of our partners.

Our adaptation titled Volpone-Yangon blends Burmese and Western performance styles, combining elements from traditional Burmese zat pwe and European commedia dell’arte, and is performed in Burmese. The play makes its world premiere in Yangon at the end of this year with potential tours to Mandalay and Lashio. We plan to bring the show to the US in 2019!

Read more in Michael’s blog post: Comedy as Commentary - Volpone in Myanmar.
Youth Initiative: Theatre for Civic Engagement

We begin a major initiative to engage youth in conflict resolution in Myanmar, thanks to funding from the Open Society Foundation. As Myanmar opens to new freedoms, sectarian conflict is on the rise. Many conflicts had been previously contained by the authoritarian regime.

Youth are caught in the transition without the tools to understand their role and responsibilities in a free society. Our Youth Initiative will address issues of diversity and mutual respect, and engage youth in theatre-based activities that promote community engagement and conflict prevention.

The new project, which begins in July, is conducted in collaboration with Thukhuma Khayeethe, Myanmar’s first contemporary theatre group, and the first dedicated to social improvement through the powerful voice of theatre.

NYC: Taming the Paper Tigers

Our new show for young audiences *Amelia and Her Paper Tigers* is ready to launch! We took the show on a test drive this spring and Amelia is now fit for flight across the tri-state area.

This fun and funny educational performance helps children learn to confront their fears through stories from the life of famous aviator, Amelia Earhart – with comedy, song, puppetry, and even stilts!

"It’s like Disney... in a good way! The show appeals to little kids and has humor for adults. There’s something for everyone!" said an audience member at a recent performance.

Amelia Earhart continues to be a role model for women breaking barriers around the world, and we are proud to celebrate her legacy! We are looking to bring the show to schools, libraries, and other venues. Let us know of a school or venue near you!

"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.” – Amelia Earhart

Around the world: Coming Up

**Bhopal:** Last December we brought Bhopal, our co-production with Indian-American company Epic Actors Workshop, to festivals in India and Nepal. The play about the Union Carbide chemical explosion in Bhopal, India, will be performed here in the US in 2014-15. We'll keep you posted!

**Haiti:** We are preparing for continued engagement in Haiti in collaboration with the women’s group FAIILEK and other groups, to support the Haitian community as it continues to recover from the 2010 earthquake. Three years have passed and the world has turned its attention elsewhere - but Haiti still needs our help!

**Syrian refugees:** We are developing a comprehensive program of psychosocial support for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Turkey and are pursuing funding to implement programming this year.