Michael and Soe Myat Thu in a performance of Volpone in a squatter village in Yangon

Greetings!

We are happy to announce new projects this year: a Burmese version of Volpone presented in Myanmar this January, a program offering psychosocial support for refugees and migrant workers in Malaysia this spring, and a new youth-led justice project in Afghanistan.
Myanmar

In January, Bond Street Theatre enjoyed the warmth of Yangon, Myanmar, and collaborating with our longtime partners, Thukhuma Khayeethe, on a Burmese version of Ben Jonson's 1605 play Volpone -- a comedy about greed and status. The characters and circumstances were reconfigured to reflect Burmese culture, and highlighted the idea of taking personal responsibility to speak out against injustice -- a new idea in a country recently freed of the strict censorship of the former military dictatorship.

The audience is invited to participate in the ending of the play Volpone

The two companies performed in a variety of public spaces, including a squatter settlement where displaced families from Cyclone Nargis and from poor rural areas had resettled in makeshift houses of bamboo and palm walls and roofs -- all on stilts to avoid the monsoon floods. Having worked on this play over multiple years, here was our test audience! They were enthralled and attentive for the entire hour and a half show, and eagerly contributed to the ending in which the audience gets to decide who is guilty and who is not and why. We heartily thank the Theatre Communications Group for supporting this project!
Later this year, Bond Street will initiate a project in Malaysia for refugee and migrant populations, many of whom have left active conflicts in Myanmar. Working in conjunction with local organizations, we will conduct workshops featuring positive group dynamics with migrants and members of host communities together, and creative self-expression so that migrants can speak out about their situation to the public.

Malaysia is not a signatory of the UN Convention on Refugees, leaving the country’s refugees extremely vulnerable, without legal protections or opportunities, and struggling to survive, send their children to school, and find legal employment. We are grateful to Rational Games Inc. for making this project possible.

Afghanistan

One of our Afghan Youth Teams performs a play about rule of law and access to justice.
Bond Street Theatre began a new yearlong program in Afghanistan, supported by the United States Institute of Peace, to inform communities about their legal rights and access to justice. The youth groups that we trained in eight provinces across the country are now creating mobile theatre plays and media campaigns that will inform and engage the public, including police, justice officials and religious leaders, about legal rights, especially in areas where informal justice systems are the norm.

The program builds on the success of our Provincial Youth Leadership Project, and involves many of the same youth we trained in communication, advocacy and leadership skills. Most of our Provincial Youth Leaders have gone on to form their own organizations and associations in Afghanistan following to our training. Read more about the project on our blog.

And more...

Bond Street members, Meghan Frank and Buba Basishvili, are planning a one-minute play festival as part of the Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre in the country of Georgia. They will work with an array of Georgian artists to create short plays incorporating a variety of theatre styles and social influences in a one-minute play format.

The company is also organizing programs to serve refugees in Lebanon and Greece, and planning new programs in Guatemala in conjunction with former and new partners.