

TEESRI DUNIYA THEATRE

ANNUAL
REPORT
2019-20



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Still from the production of Birthmark
Photo by Jaelyn Turner

Cover image: Still from the production of Counter Offence
Photo by Svetla Atanasova

MISSON

Teesri Duniya Theatre is dedicated to producing politically relevant plays exploring life-affecting issues and creating theatrical styles based on cultural experiences of communities.

Our plays foster critical thinking, connect communities, and generate cross-cultural dialogue. Through our work we build bridges between indigenous, multicultural and other communities. Indigeneity, multicultural diversity and intercultural relations define us.

We give voice to underrepresented stories and tell them in ways that honor the sources they come from.

VALUES

REPRESENTATION

We are color-conscious, not color-blind. While color-blind casting has its advantages, it ultimately promotes an assimilationist view. Presuming that the dominant culture is unified whole, visible minorities are denied their characteristics and social standing. We practice multicultural casting to respect the characters' cultural heritage and color.

ENGAGEMENT

The community is at the heart of everything that we produce. We create and solicity works that deal with internationally pertinent topics, broached at a local level. We engage our audience with public forums, information sessions, and panel discussions prior to, during, and after the presentation. Our panels are comprised of experts with differing viewpoints for a true debate.

QUALITY

Excellence in work is paramount, defined by our 6-E framework, the metrics for judging the success of a production: entertainment, education, enlightenment, engagement, examination, and empowerment.

The respected theatre company puts their money where their mouth is, asking crucial questions and moving the discussion forward.

- Camila Fitzgibbon
Montreal Theatre Hub

“Cultural appropriation must be avoided, but if writers don’t dare to cross the cultural divide with diligence and mutual respect, we will fall short of our visionary goal.

- Steven Orlov
author of *Birthmark*

“Teesri Duniya is one of the most unique theatre companies in Quebec’s distinct society, expanding its horizons, mixing social activism with art.”

- Pat Donnelly
The Montreal Gazette



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Next year, Teesri Duniya Theatre will turn 40.

When the pandemic forced us to shut down our production *Counter Offence* after only two performances, it wasn't merely the stoppage of a production, but the pause of an ongoing artistic struggle against injustices: conjugal abuse, racism, Islamophobia, harassment, displacement, and the like. It was the pause of an artistic practice that developed new plays and playwrights, de-marginalized minorities, raised issues others sideline, and showed the multicultural face of Canada beyond tokenism.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the ancient disparity between the few who have too much at the expense of the many who do not. It made us realize the importance of front-line workers, dutifully risking their lives for a pittance while the rest of us practiced social distancing in safety; these are hospital staff, growers, farm workers, cleaning ladies, men and women serving the counters, care providers, and delivery persons – a majority of them women, immigrants, and visible minorities. **The pandemic has renewed our understanding of the connection between the arts and life**, for we in Teesri Duniya Theatre have always been the voice of the marginalized, responding to their needs with an aesthetic consciousness.

While the pandemic has brought out the best of humanity, of caring and sharing, it also exposed the worst. It has become a medium for some governments around the world to suppress human rights, arrest critics, impose surveillance, and seize unwarranted emergency powers. It has revealed the ugly face of racism, particularly targeting Asians, Muslims, and refugees. Since the beginning of the pandemic in Canada, there has been a 30% increase in domestic violence. These truths are why we produce plays like *Counter Offence* and carry out projects like *Leave Out Racism*, *Going Public*, and *Sharing our Stories, Telling our Lives*.

This pandemic has strengthened our mandate—that relevance, rights, justice, and human dignity are, and always have been, more than a theatrical preoccupation for us. This pandemic has exposed how other pandemics such as poverty, world hunger, and wars go unrecognized. That culture is political and politics for justice and art join hands through artistic imagination.

Looking forward, we don't imagine a digital world or a new normal post-pandemic. The old normal will resume and so will our response to it in the form of an intensified commitment to meaningful arts, the centrality of artists in our society, respect for diversity, and arts in service of a better world rather than as a commodity to consume.

We say “**Change the World One Play at a Time**” because as artists, we can show a way forward and imagine a better world.

Rahul Varma, Artistic and Executive Director

BOARD CHAIR

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

How do we measure success? What metrics do we use to determine when we have arrived at our destination? How far have we come? How much farther do we have to go? Are we there yet?

Teesri Duniya Theatre presented its first play nearly four decades ago with a mission to **change the world one play at a time**. How will we know when our mission is accomplished? If you have been part of the Teesri family for any length of time, you already know the answer to these questions, because the answer is you.

From its very first production, our small theatre company met its objective. After all, simply by existing it had done what no theatre company in Montreal had ever done before, or has done since; it held a creative space for voices that had been invisible and silent on the stages of this city. Everyone in attendance was a participant in a culture-shifting event. World changing? Done.

Of course, world changing is an iterative process. In the years since that first production, we have continued to live and lead the change we wish to foster. As the unfolding events have shown, we have arrived, but we still have a long way to go. The change that we have brought to our stage and to our audiences on this journey, still has more world to explore. The boundaries between us are infinitely permeable; as the world changes us, we must continue to change it.

Culture reflects and is reflected beyond the space it inhabits. We don't know when we will be able to sit side by side as a curtain rises to reveal a new perspective. However, we must not allow social distancing to keep us apart. Whether we sit still or move forward, the world will keep changing. It will change us, but we are not powerless to change it. It may start with one person, then grow to an audience which can become a voice heard around the world.

Changing the world was just the beginning, but it is also the journey and the destination. See you there.

Adrienne Piggott, *President of the Board of Directors*



YEAR AT A GLANCE

35%

OF OUR AUDIENCES ARE
CULTURALLY DIVERSE

75%

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE FOR
PERFORMANCES

50%

INDIGENOUS ATTENDANCE FOR
FIRST NATIONS PLAYS

2019-2020 Season: Are We There Yet?

Teesri Duniya Theatre had yet another comprehensive and vibrant season heightened with the amazing interaction of the public. This season has been very inclusive in terms of the activities, events and productions that took place. New staff was hired, new articles were published, and new talent was discovered.

As usual, Teesri Duniya Theatre continued its community outreach efforts. However, the uniqueness of this season lies in the taking of the initiative of examining where we've come as a society, and how far we have left to go.

Teesri Duniya Theatre has kept its commitment of producing socially relevant plays and exploring life-affecting issues while creating theatrical styles based on the cultural experiences of diverse communities.

Our activities this year managed to present the stories of people, cultures and communities, and audiences eclipsed and underrepresented by mainstream theatre. As for the Teesri Duniya Theatre team, we remain a diverse team, with a strong female presence, coming from various backgrounds and working hand in hand to accomplish our mission of **changing the world, one play at a time.**

PERFORMANCE CALENDAR

BIRTHMARK

November 3-18, 2018

Directed by Liz Valdez and Michelle Soicher

Staged at MAI

HONOUR: CONFESSIONS OF A MUMBAI COURTESAN

October 3-6, 2019

Directed by Mark Cirnigliaro,

with creative consultation by Liz Valdez

Staged at MAI

COUNTER OFFENCE

March 11-29, 2020 (run interrupted by COVID-19)

Directed by Arianna Bardesono,

assistant directed by Alessandra Tom

Staged at The Segal Centre for Performing Arts

MEDIA SUMMARY



“Le texte de Stephen Orlov est courageux, d’une certaine façon à la limite du tabou, abordant un sujet on ne peut plus sensible.”

— Élie Castiel
Séquences
(Birthmark)



“Drawing on her childhood in Mumbai, playwright and solo performer Dipti Mehta has crafted a script which humanizes victims of sex-trafficking, both across the globe and at home. Keenly aware of cultural differences and language barriers between the setting and the Canadian audience, Mehta uses these devices to her advantage.”

— Celine Cardineau,
Montreal Theatre Hub
(Honour)



“Teesri Duniya must be congratulated, together with its co-presenter, the MAI (Montreal Arts Interculturels) for continuing its mission to “change the world, one play at a time.”

-- Byron Toben
Westmount Magazine
(Birthmark)



“If plays are to be judged on a scale of one to ten this one is a fifteen. The script is topical, easy to follow, and performed flawlessly by each member of the cast.”

— Sol Boxenbaum
Last Call With Sol
(Counter Offence)

Photos (top to bottom-left to right):

Patrick Keeler and Stephen Spreekmeester in Birthmark - Photo by Jaclyn Turner; Dipti Mehta in Honour: Confessions of a Mumbai Courtesan. Photo by Teesri; Dalia Charafeddine and Natalie Tannous in Birthmark. Photo by Jaclyn Turner; Amir Nakjavani and Amena Ahmad in Counter Offence. Photo by Svetla Atanasova; Howard Rosenstein and Patrick Keeler in Birthmark. Photo by Jaclyn Turner



BIRTHMARK



Birthmark is a play that challenges mainstream depictions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and youth radicalization in Canada. Set in Montreal, this dark comedy crosses the social and cultural divide between Canada's Jewish and Palestinian communities. The play's story centers on the family of Jamila Hassan, a Palestinian immigrant played by Natalie Tannous, and David Stein, a secular Jewish widower played by Howard Rosenstein. *Birthmark* also featured Patrick Keeler, Stephen Spreekmester and the newly discovered Dalia Charafeddine. Though a very personal story, the play shows a pathway to building a good relationship between the Palestinian and Jewish communities in Canada.



At different historical times, both these groups came to Canada to escape death, persecution, torture, and terror. Both communities brought with them memories that are a living history of the land and the culture they left behind. Nonetheless, conflict at the homeland still affects their relationship in their adopted homes. While many Jews and Palestinians in Canada actively support their ancestral homelands, there's a need for the Diaspora community to engage in sustained discussions about the conflict. The play's relevance is further heightened as it addresses youth radicalization gripping in the Western world. The play addresses misconceptions and stereotypes of the "othered" communities through their own personal stories.

Stephen Orlov tells this story with poignancy and dark humour that is capable of intriguing anyone. For Orlov, politically charged plays must be delivered by characters portraying a range of human frailty and strength along the moral spectrum; characters in conflict true to their times, their place and their culture.



"*Birthmark* is a challenging play," says aspiring director Michelle Soicher. "Wherever your politics lie, you will likely hear a point of view that you disagree with. Theatre gives us a chance to listen and to see the person behind that point of view. Fear drives us to binaries: Us of Them; Right or Left; Palestine or Israel. Binaries are inhumane and static. *Birthmark* is about families, and there is nothing less binary, more ambivalent than family. Somewhere between the cautious wisdom of parents, David and Jamila, and the radical idealism of their children, there is a sliver of understanding. That understanding is the foundation for any lasting peace."

"Despite the seemingly unending and complicated Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East, *Birthmark* offers a platform for dialogues where the Jewish and Arab Diaspora can turn the political conflict abroad into a peace initiative at home," affirmed Artistic Director, Rahul Varma. "It is a local Montreal story addressing a global theme."

(Top) Birthmark poster.
(Below) Production stills.
Photos by Jaclyn Turner.

LIZ VALDEZ ARTIST PROFILE

Director and producer Liz Valdez has been teaching and coaching theatre for over 20 years. During her tenure she has directed over 40 productions not only for Teesri Duniya Theatre, but other Montreal companies such as Tableau D'Hôte. This season she directed Teesri Duniya's production of *Birthmark*, and consulted creatively on *Honour: Confessions of a Mumbai Courtesan*.

In 2019 she won the Montreal English Theatre Award for Outstanding Direction for her work on *Encore*, presented by Tableau D'Hôte Theatre



MICHELLE SOICHER ARTIST PROFILE

Michelle Soicher is a director and stage manager working in Montreal and Toronto. Being queer and Jewish, Michelle has a unique perspective of being an invisible minority and aims to create space for stories that have been pushed to the margins.

Michelle and Liz worked in close collaboration in the direction of *Birthmark*.



HONOUR: CONFESSIONS OF A MUMBAI COURTESAN



Imagine losing your childhood, freedom and trapped to work against your will under the threat of violence. Sadly, this situation is a reality for millions of children, women, and men. Human trafficking continues to be the world's fastest growing crime.

The UN reports that an estimated 24.9 million individuals are trapped in human trafficking rings; the majority of whom are women and children from marginalized and disadvantaged sections of societies.



HONOUR: Confessions of a Mumbai Courtesan is a fun, poignant and deeply moving coming of age story of a girl in a brothel, offering a glimpse into the exotic, dangerous life of Mumbai's real-life brothels and why they exist. Visit India's red light district and meet the eunuch, priest, pimp, mother and daughter who call it home. Attempting to break stereotypes, the show reveals the truth about millions of sex trafficked-girls across the world.

The play raises awareness, and breaks down the social stigma around sex workers, through engaging audiences with music, dance and storytelling. *HONOUR* has won multiple awards, including Best Actress and Best Solo Show at several festivals, and the Nirbhaya Award for showcasing women's issues through art.



In particular, Celine Cardineau's review of *HONOUR* highlights its complexity, stating the story "addresses the interweaving of sex trafficking, sexism, religion, motherhood, and survival. It specifically highlights the capitalization of young women's bodies: the social hierarchies based on a women's sexual or marital status; the gendered violence and manipulation which permeates the sex market; and the act of bartering for one's fate."

Teesri Duniya Theatre applauds Dipti Mehta for creating *HONOUR: Confessions of a Mumbai Courtesan*, which does an incredible job at raising awareness around trafficked and enslaved sex workers.

Production stills from a previous production of Honour. Photos by Alex Waterhouse Hay. A photo of the Honour talkback panel. Photo by Teesri

ZOE ROUX

ARTIST PROFILE

Zoe Roux is a set, costume, and lighting designer based in Montreal. She was awarded 'Outstanding Emerging Artist' at the The Montreal English Theatre Awards for her set and lighting design on *Invasive Species* (Blue Ox productions) and *Smackhead* (We Are One). Other recent credits include: costume and lighting design on *Madame Catherine prépare sa classe de troisième à l'irréremédiable* (Surreal SoReal Theatre), costume and lighting design on *Encore* (Tableau D'Hôte Theatre), set design on *All Flesh is Grass* (THE OTHER THEATRE), and set and lighting on *Winter's Daughter* (Tableau D'Hôte Theatre). As well, she is a past alumni of the The BLACK THEATRE WORKSHOP 2016-2017 Artist Mentorship Program

ON LIGHTING AND SET DESIGN

What do you love most about designing lights for theatre?

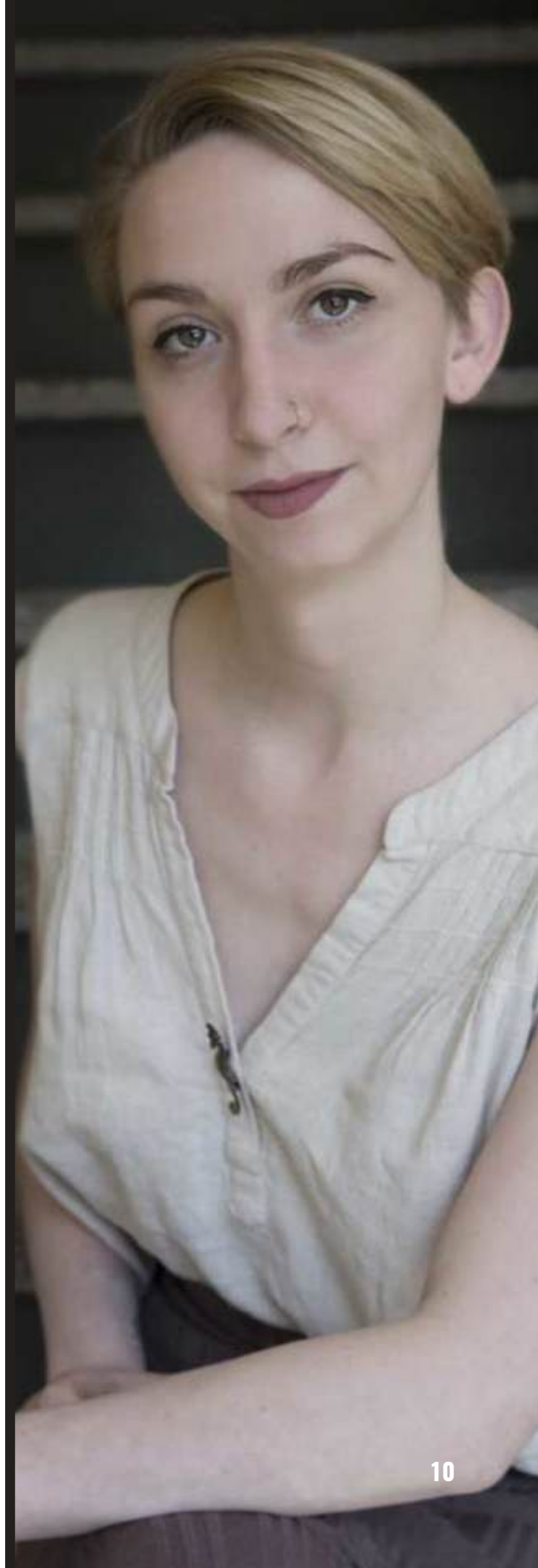
Lighting is like painting space. For me lights tie all the elements together. It brings out the inner feelings of the character and emphasizes the atmosphere of the location. Lighting can be literal, but I like to push it further to illuminate the subconscious.

What excited you most about the set and/or lighting design for Counter Offence?

Collaborating with Arianna on this set design was a really fun challenge. The narrative takes place in many locations, as well as in the past and present. So for this we thought it would be interesting to play with space in a metaphorical way, creating something that feels like a deconstructed memory. The ideas comes from using the different textures of each scene location and using that to create dynamic elements that work as a playground for the actors to explore diverse possibilities.

What is your favourite part of the process for designing a set for theatre?

Finding ways to move past the literal and reveal the deeper needs of the space through symbolic imagery. I enjoy finding ways to communicate with the subconscious of the audience and showing the deeper narrative through visual means. My favourite part [of working on *Counter Offence*] has been seeing all the creative ways the cast has found to use my set.



COUNTER OFFENCE



Written as a murder mystery, *Counter Offence* examines the complexities of competing struggles: the struggle to end violence against women versus the struggle to end racial profiling. In a gripping intercultural story, the play examines the dilemma of a white policeman who arrests a colored wife beater only to be accused of racial profiling.

The play brings the discussion of racial, cultural, gender complexities, and police treatment of minorities to a new level. With original productions of *Counter Offence* and *L’Affaire Farhadi* played out against the background of the 1995 referendum, the conversations on Quebec sovereignty and “money and the ethnic vote” were ever-present. The current production takes into consideration present day issues such as Reasonable Accommodation, the *Charter of Values*, *Law 21*, mosque shootings, and alleged Islamophobia. Our remounted version of *Counter Offence* examines what has changed since the referendum and how far we have come.

The dramatic conflict in *Counter Offence* is a collision of virtues and competing truths.

***Counter Offence* tackles violence against women at the intersection of race, religion, multiculturalism, and gender. It questions how laws tolerate cultural differences and the inflicted violence on women.**

As well, the play begs another question: why do countless women tend to use culture to justify abusive relationships while men use it to maintain power and control?

Teesri Duniya Theatre produced *Counter Offence* in English for the first time in 1995 and again in 1997 (director Jack Langedijk), in French as *L’Affaire Farhadi* in 1999 (director Paul Lefebvre) at le Licorne; and in Italian as *Il Caso Farhadi* (director Bill Glassco, Venice). The play has also been published and anthologized in the *Modern Canadian Plays* edited by Jerry Wasserman.



ARIANNA BARDESONO

ARTIST PROFILE

Arianna is a director and theatre maker raised in Italy, based in Montreal. As a director, she has worked with various Montreal companies (Repercussion Theatre, Teesri Duniya Theatre, Infinitheatre Montréal, Théâtre du Quat’Sous, Talisman Theatre, Imago Theatre and Geordie Theatre).

As a creator, Arianna pushes the boundaries of her own practice, following her curiosity and creating original work committed to innovation both in form and content. Her last work, *Les Voisines*, is an audio walk involving the Hasidic community of Montreal. She has been a resident artist at the Stella Adler School of Acting in NYC, as well as at La ToHu in Montreal, working with circus artists and dancers.

Since 2011, Arianna has been a mentor and teacher at the National Theatre School of Canada where in 2016/17 she was interim Associate Director of the Directing Program. In 2013, Arianna was awarded the John Hirsch Prize for emerging theatre directors with great potential

ON HER APPROACH TO *COUNTER OFFENCE*

Counter Offence was originally written and performed in 1995. The play focused on domestic violence and police racial profiling to expose xenophobia and social inequality in our city and government. With the technological acceleration of time and the ever-growing gap between generations, 25-years-ago feels like a world apart. How can such a play still be relevant 25 years later?

And yet, beyond the surface, not much has changed. Domestic violence has not decreased, making up 15,500 of the 911-calls in the city of Montreal in 2019 alone. Police racial profiling continues to haunt visible minorities on a daily basis and, far too often, it costs them their lives. The Quebec charter of values and recent 21 are only two of the most prominent expressions of the fear of the Other that 9/11 redirected towards Muslims.

Humans remain human. Fear, anger, and violence are among our inescapable companions. *Counter Offence* helps us remember, lest we forget, how situations devolve sometimes when fear moves us, instead of our hearts.



TEESRI DUNIYA IN THE COMMUNITY



BIRTHMARK

The panels for Birthmark revolved around the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; however, the groups approached the theme from a local point of view. The topics discussed included the stance of diaspora communities on the conflict, the potential of peace building between communities, the crisis of local radicalization, the notion of accepting the “other,” and the ways to achieve social harmony.

This production was an enlightening and thought-provoking experience that managed to generate fruitful discussions. The active participation of the audience gave the cast and crew a sense of pride in their work. It was pleasurable to see people from Jewish and Arab backgrounds relate to the characters of the play while telling their own stories and voicing their opinions.

Prominent speakers that participated for the Birthmark panels included:

Ehab Lotayef

(IT Manager at McGill University, activist, poet and writer)

Naftali Cohn

(Professor of Religions and Cultures at Concordia University)

Michelle Soicher

(Director of Birthmark)

Zahia Al-Masri

(Head of Training and Communications at ROMEL)

Ira Robinson

(Professor of Judaic Studies, Dept. of Religion, Concordia University)

Joseph Rosen

(Humanities Professor at Dawson College)

Mary Ellen Davis

(Director, Part-Time Professor, Dept. of Cinema, Concordia University)

Stephen Orlov

(Birthmark’s Playwright)

Rachad Antonius

(Professor of Sociology, UQAM)

Dennis Kosseim

(Professor of Philosophy, College Andre Laurendeau, activist, CPFQ board member)



BRIDGES OF HOPE PANELS AND TALK BACKS

HONOUR: CONFESSIONS OF A MUMBAI COURTESAN

Due to its short run, only one panel took place for *Honour: Confessions of a Mumbai Courtesan*. The panel focused on the artistic forces behind the production and featured Deborah Forde, Rahul Varma and Dipti Mehta, the creator of the show.



COUNTER OFFENCE

The panels for our production of *Counter Offence* were organized to facilitate intercultural conversation and build relationships between artists and communities. They were planned to address a series of pre-determined themes arising from the play and assembled a panel of experts with diverse perspectives to make the dialogue more engaging.

Prominent speakers selected for the Counter Offence panels included:

Maria Peluso

(Professor of Political Science at Concordia University)

Nour Farhat

(Lawyer in Civil and Corporate law and constitutional litigation)

Sue Montgomery

(Former Gazette reporter and CDN-NDG Mayor)

Dolores Chew

(Founding member of Montreal's South Asian Women's Community Centre)

Dr. Katherine Maurer

(Assistant Professor in the McGill School of Social Work)

Derrolton James

(Social Worker with Batshaw Youth and Family Centres)

Tamarack Verrall

(Writer, social activist)

Fo Neimi

(Co-Founder of the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations)

Bianca Braganza



Our panel partners included the Montreal Council of Women, McGill Domestic Violence Clinic, Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, South Asian Women's Community Centre, World Pulse, McGill's Impact Research & McGill School of Social Work.

The Honour and
Birthmark panels.
Photos by Jaclyn Turner

LEAVE OUT RACISM



Leave Out Racism is an initiative of Teesri Duniya Theatre in the form of an interactive project developed in response to the prevalent forms of discrimination based on colour, race, religion, ability, or sexual preference, in today's society.

Specifically, it was envisioned as a response to the significant rise of racial attacks on visible and other minorities since the passing of Law 21 (especially towards Muslim, Sikh and Jewish communities).

On Sunday, January 12, 2020, Teesri Duniya Theatre hosted a public forum at La Poubelle Magnifique where we extended an open invitation to anyone to share their story, testimonial or witness account of racism and discrimination. Moderated by Rahul Varma, we listened to these shared stories, initiated dialogue on these issues, and great discussions ensued.

As the project is ongoing, we are still collecting testimonials, witness accounts and storytelling from folks facing these barriers. Thus far we have interviewed Lawyer Nour Farhat, Sikh leader Taran Singh, public school teacher Nadia Naqvi, and Mandeep Kaur, the female leader of the World Sikh Organization.

The project's ultimate aim is to create a dramatic work based on these shared stories, alongside future public forum/panel events, in order to help heal trauma and increase awareness. This group discussion will allow an open forum for all who wish to share their stories.



GOING PUBLIC

Going Public is our second interactive project in progress. Specifically, this project aims to address the culture of sexual violence and misogyny in our community through public engagement.

Using the methodology of "Telling-and-Listening", it draws on the personal experiences of members of our community. Our goal is to tackle the stigma and culture of silence surrounding experiences of sexual misconduct, and to thus facilitate a collective healing; redressing social trauma and paving the way moving forward through educating and engaging with the public.



Top and bottom:
Speakers at the Leave
Out Racism forum. Middle: Nour
Farhat and members of the
World Sikh Organization.
Photos by Kiki Dranias

SHARING OUR STORIES, TELLING OUR LIVES

Sharing Our Stories, Telling Our Lives was a participatory storytelling and community theatre project conceived with and for the English-speaking Black Community in Montreal (ESBC). Teesri Duniya Theatre acted as fiduciary and provided project oversight.

The project's aim was to support the resilience and vitality of the Montreal ESBC, whose over 40,000 members are doubly marginalized in Quebec as English speakers and as visible minorities. The Montreal's Black Mental Health Connections organization also supported the program, by recruiting multigenerational participants, hosting project activities such as workshops and performances in different neighbourhoods, contributing access to equipment such as computer labs, and ensuring the continued use and relevance of materials as well as relationships developed.

The project used storytelling, a cultural tradition of the African diaspora, to support the resilience and vitality of the Montreal ESBC. The project aimed specifically to:

- Strengthen both the individual and the collective sense of cultural identity through cultural production.
- Create and reinforce inter-generational links by sharing personal, family, and community history.
- Revise the way we represent and engage ESBC youth.
- Highlight the diversity within the English-speaking Black community, allowing different voices, experiences, and life stories to be heard and valued, both within and outside the community.
- Create a model that can be used by other English-speaking, visible minority communities in Quebec.

The first two phases of the project took place across Montreal over a two-year period from August 2018 through March 2020. The project coordinator was Sheron Edey.

For phase three of the project, Deborah Forde will write an hour-long narrative piece based on the findings of the discussion circles and ininterview workshops.



The SOSTOL team in performance and together afterwards.
Photos by Sheron Edey

FIREWORKS PLAYWRIGHT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



The Firework's Playwrights' Development Program is an intensive, structured, and guided learning/creating workshop experience that aims to assist emerging, socially engaged writers, particularly Black, Indigenous and artists of colour, to develop their written voice and professional profile. Central activities included the development of a play, from inception to its presentation in public readings.

We at Teesri Duniya Theatre have experience in understanding and fighting the social barriers confronted by culturally diverse and marginalized playwrights and plays. The company has the history, context and expertise to work within a dramaturgical process that is sensitive to the playwrights' culture and identity, and topics they are writing about.



The professional mentorship the playwrights receive is also immensely helpful in overcoming social and industry-related barriers on their career path. The Fireworks Program therefore promotes the emerging playwrights' work to established artists and the local and national theatre community. Through public performance, their work will receive widespread visibility, recognition and a professional boost.

The 2019-2020 Season cohort featured 12 emerging playwrights, participating in workshops from November to February. Our goal (over 10 consecutive four-hour weekly workshops), is not only to increase the pool of socially-engaged work, but also to assist in gaining a better understanding of, and connection to the arts ecology in which we work. This program's objective is to develop new plays using culturally-sensitive dramaturgy that explores new forms of aesthetics.



2019-2020 FIREWORKS PARTICIPANTS

Zaynab Bourezza - *M1ndf0ck_*

Azin Mohammad - *Trifekta Babe*

Kay Komizara - *Monstrologyka*

Kyungseo Min - *Yankee Princess*

Laura Flynn - *Ceasefire*

Camille Mankumah - *All I have is a Name*

Baharan BANaihmedi - *We should take a shower!*

Nicole Leroux - *A Life Lost*

Dipti Gupta - *Boriya Bistar/Baggage*

Alida Esmail - *HIJAB*

Seeley Quest - *Untitled*

Charles Gao - *Untitled*

PLAYWRIGHT PROFILES

AZIN MOHAMMADI

Azin wrote the play *Trifekta Babe*. It is a short feminist, absurdist three-act play that demonstrates the importance of womxn supporting and destroying one another. The online debut was directed by Alessandra Tom and performed by Tiernan Cornford, Jaqueline Van de Greer, Maureen Adelson, Cheyenne Schaub, and Kelly Craig.



NICOLE LEROUX

Nicole's play, *A Life Lost*, tells the tale of an unwed mother's fight against the church to reclaim the newborn baby she gave up. The showcase was directed by Michelle Soicher and performed by France Maurice, Holly Gauthier-Frankel, Micheal Briganti, and Val Mervis.



ZAYNAB BOUREZZA

Zaynab's *M1ndf0ck_* is the story of a writer's alter egos, crammed in the space between her ears, slowly dying while they should be working. The digital performance was directed by Quinlan Green and performed by Christine Rodriquez, Shalini Lal, and Gilda Monreal.



TEESRI DUNIYA'S DONOR RECOGNITION EVENT



On March 10, 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, Teesri Duniya Theatre had the honor and privilege of welcoming its donors to the Segal Center for the Performing Arts. We organized this evening to say 'Thank you' to them for their vital support to the Teesri Duniya Theatre. This event was the first of what we hope becomes an annual celebration.

We were honoured to have amongst us Mr. Drew Wawin, District Vice-president and Ms. Fiona Hirst from the TD Bank, and Mr. Barry Cole and Ms. Nancy Wells from the Cole Foundation. Thank you.



Our thank you goes to the Cole Foundation for supporting most of our productions, and to the RBC Foundation for supporting our Emerging Artists Program. We deeply appreciate the Brian Bronfman Foundation for supporting our peace-building work, and we are indebted to the Chadha Family Foundation for its exemplary patronage.

Last but not least, we thank the McGill Institute for Health and Social Policy, we acknowledge our partnership with Dr. Shahin Sheriff and IMPACT-McGill for our work on addressing sexual violence.

We are grateful to the Canada Council for the Arts, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, Conseil des Arts de Montréal and the Canadian Heritage – their support validates the myriad works we do. We thank the Emploi Québec for trusting us to develop the artistic workforce.



We thank Opera de Montreal, Portus 360, Lush Hand-made Cosmetics and Festival TransAmériques for their generous gift offer items up for bids during the event. And thank you to the Lush Cosmetics - all our patrons received a gift box filled with unique products.

In this time of crisis, cultural organizations like ours are particularly affected as survival depends on people, companies and foundations. As uncertainty lies ahead, we are grateful to our funders for their generosity to organizations like ours that ensure our ability to maintain operation and be the first lines of response for community members in the aftermath.

The Segal Center for the Performing Arts located on the unceded territory of Tiohtià:ke/Montréal, the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá people.

Candid photos of the donor recognition event.
Photos by Svetla Atanasova

PRINCIPLE DONORS

Teesri Duniya Theatre would like to thank all of the people and organizations that make its important work possible.



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2019-2020

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