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The Fruits of Our Collective Labor: Plays by Three South Asian Playwrights in Chicago



Three South Asian playwrights are being produced in Chicago this month: Rajiv Joseph at Shattered Globe Theatre, Rohina Malik at 16th Street Theater, and Shane Sakhrani at Rasaka Theatre Company. This is no small matter. It is a huge feat in Chicago's cultural sector and the result of a tremendous amount of hard work performed by countless individuals over the last two decades.

We particularly celebrate this moment because for us at Silk Road Rising, years of persistent effort are bearing fruit. Our strategy to expand the representation of South Asian American playwrights on Chicago's stages has been multi-pronged: develop an artistic community, promote playwrights digitally, commission new work, and produce South Asian American artists.

- Create an Artistic Community:** Early in our company's history, we recognized that South Asian American theatre artists were dispersed, without a central network, throughout the United States, and many felt isolated and ignored. In response, Silk Road Rising mounted [The First National South Asian American Theatre Conference](#) in Chicago in 2007. At this historic event, over 25 theatre artists of South Asian heritage from California, Illinois, Minneapolis, New York, and Washington, D.C. were invited to attend a conversation that spanned four days and focused on the challenges of building a South Asian American theatre arts movement and identifying strategies for developing and growing this movement. Artists arrived at the conference representing only themselves. They left with a sense of community and shared purpose.
- Promote Artists Digitally:** In 2009, we launched [SouthAsianPlaywrights.org](#), a dynamic website created to showcase and promote primarily American and Canadian playwrights of South Asian descent. The website creates greater visibility for the thirty playwrights featured on the site and promotes each playwright's work to theatre companies, cultural organizations, and academic institutions, as well as to artistic directors, producers, and all other interested parties. The belief is that enhanced exposure will increase the number of productions these talented playwrights receive.
- Commission New Work:** We invest in South Asian American artists by commissioning new plays and providing them with financial support so that they can focus on writing. We offer workshops in which playwrights can hear and then hone their scripts in a supportive setting. We present plays-in-progress as part of our staged reading series, providing an opportunity for playwrights to work with actors and directors, and for playwrights and audiences to engage one another. We then produce selected plays as fully-staged productions, culminating out of the aforementioned steps.
- Produce South Asian Artists:** Silk Road Rising has produced the works of thirteen South Asian playwrights as either productions or staged readings. In so doing, we've introduced their voices to Chicago's artistic directors and the broader theatre-going community. These works include: [Celestial Motions](#) by Mrinalini Kamath (2005); [Publish or Perish](#) by Anuvab Pal (2006); [Double Happiness](#) by Gitanjali Kapila (2006); [Balacarita: The Adventures of Young Krishna](#) by Bhasa (2006); [Merchant on Venice](#) by Shishir Kurup (2007); [Sankalpan](#) by Lina Patel (2007); [The Doctor is Indian](#) by Shane Sakhrani (2012); [Dishwasher Dreams](#) by Alaudin Ullah (2013); [The Lake Effect](#) by Rajiv Joseph (2013); [Yasmina's Necklace](#) (2014) and [Unveiled](#) (2015) by Rohina Malik; [Brahman/i](#) by Aditi Brennan

The three playwrights receiving productions this month have all worked with Silk Road Rising. We co-commissioned and produced the World Premiere of Rajiv Joseph's *The Lake Effect* (recipient of the 2013 Jeff Award for Best New Work). We produced an enhanced staged reading of Rohina Malik's *Yasmina's Necklace* to help her further develop the script; it is now receiving a World Premiere production at 16th Street Theatre. We also produced Malik's one woman play *Unveiled*, as part of *Silk Road Solos 2015*. We introduced Shane Sakhrani to Chicago audiences with an enhanced staged reading of his comedy *The Doctor is Indian*; several of the artists involved with that staged reading are now mounting Sakhrani's play *A Widow of No Importance* at Rasaka Theatre Company.

We can't wait to see the following three productions and hope that you will too!

Rajiv Joseph's *Animals Out of Paper*

Shattered Globe Theatre presents
Animals Out of Paper

Written by Rajiv Joseph, Pulitzer Prize
Finalist for *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*

Directed by Devon de Mayo

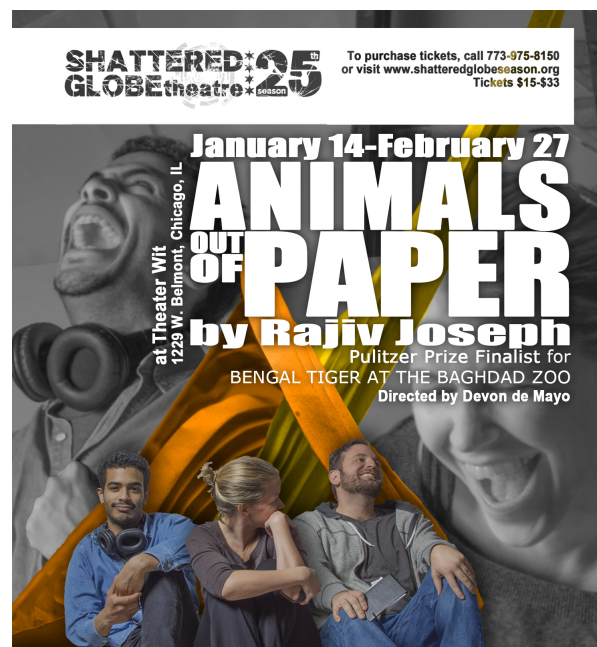
January 14th – February 27th

At Theater Wit (1229 W. Belmont,
Chicago, IL)

"Mr. Joseph's observant, pitch-perfect script...is really quite ambitious, dealing ruthlessly...with the fragility of happiness, the tragedy of impulsiveness and the tenuousness of hope." - *The New York Times*

For tickets and info visit: www.shatteredglobeseason.org

USE CODE "FOLD" FOR \$5 OFF REGULAR PRICED TICKETS!



Shane Sakhrani's *A Widow of No Importance*



Rasaka Theatre presents the Midwest premiere of Shane Sakhrani's romantic comedy
A Widow of No Importance

Written by Shane Sakhrani
Directed by Lavina Jadhvani

January 15 – February 21, 2016

At Victory Gardens Biograph Theater,
2433 N. Lincoln Ave, Chicago

"Fun, Clever, and Hilarious!" - *L.A. Weekly*

For tickets and info, call 773-871-3000 or visit
Rasakatheatre.com or Victorygardens.org

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16th Street Theatre presents the World Premiere of Rohina Malik's **Yasmina's Necklace**

Directed by Ann Filmer

January 21 – February 27, 2016

Meet Abdul Samee: his father is Iraqi, his mother is Puerto Rican-but if you ask him, he'll say he's Italian. Longing to shed his cultural identity he changes his name to Sam, marries an American and does everything in his power to turn his back on his heritage. But when Sam meets Yasmina, a beautiful woman from his father's homeland, he begins to learn that a tree without roots cannot stand for long.



For tickets and info visit 16th Street Theatre online [HERE >>](#)

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