Today I Live

Workshop production of a new play written by Susan-Jane Harrison
Directed by Jessa Brie Berkner

Friday, October 5, 2012    8:00 p.m.
Wyatt Pavilion Theatre

The length of this production is one hour and 15 minutes without intermission. Please be advised that this production contains adult language including profanity. Before the performance begins, please note the exit closest to your seat. Kindly silence your cell phone, pager and other electronic devices. Video, photographic or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited by law. Food and drink are not permitted in the theater. Thank you for your cooperation.

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Director’s Note

It is a rare gift to collaborate in the development of a new work with a brilliant artist, and I am honored to be a part of the process that has birthed this beautiful play. As a playwright, Susan-Jane Harrison combines her depth of research with an uncanny ear for dialogue, all the while engaging a true empathy for the human condition ... something that I suspect is born from her work as an actor. The journey Niaz and Michael take toward healing, exploring territory regarding female artistry and the effects of trauma and displacement I have rarely seen held so honestly. I hope you enjoy the fruits of these labors as much as I have.

- Jessa Brie Berkner

About the Play

Development

“Today I Live” has been workshopped in London at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and staged there for public reading in 2010 and 2011. Each draft has been entirely different, a new exploration of emergent themes. This iteration has been supported by a week of in depth workshops which occurred this summer thanks to the 2012 Margrit Mondavi Fellowship of which the playwright is a recipient. This is the first time that the playwright is also acting the role of “Niaz.”

This current process forms practical research for the playwright/actor’s MFA thesis, entitled “The Divided Self,” an exploration of the awkward and collaborative relationship within the self, as actor/playwright. For more information, please visit susanjaneharrison.com/todayilive/.

Themes

“Today I Live” resides in the present and the past, the poetic and the mundane, and often, simultaneously. The trauma of displacement forces one to evaluate one’s own identity again and again. This shared experience both divides and unites us from those we love. There is a dynamic tension in longing to name ourselves as much as we long to forget.

“We come to this country from many places. Assimilation is a task of self-forgetting. What does it mean to live? Whenever, wherever we are? Our identity, like old maps must be resurrected, the original footsteps of our begetting, threaded back into the paths we walk today.”

- Susan-Jane Harrison

About the Playwright

Susan-Jane Harrison is currently an MFA candidate in Dramatic Art at UC Davis. She trained as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. There, she was fortunate to receive mentorship, which also fostered her work as a writer. As a young writer, she was the recipient of a First Bite Award from BBC Radio 4. The BBC subsequently produced and aired her radio play, “Alaska,” starring Michael Sheen. A second radio play, “The Quetzal” (also about immigration) has been aired on the PBS Satellite Network. “Today I Live” is her first stage play.
Today I Live
(a workshop production)

Written by
Susan-Jane Harrison

with
Susan-Jane Harrison,* Johnny Moreno,*
Soren Santos, Simon Vance*

The Setting
The play takes place in London, England: the present/1820 respectively and simultaneously

1. The Artist/The Designer: Studio flat in Southwark, overlooking the Thames/a flat in Highgate – the present, afternoon
2. Listening: the flat in Highgate, evening of the same day
3. Procrastination/Bathing: the studio in Southwark, a week later
4. I Can’t Wait: the studio in Southwark, continuing on...
5. Mapmaker’s Reunion: the flat in Southwark - evening
6. The Map: The flat in Southwark, a few days later, the middle of the night
7. Sea Monsters: the flat in Southwark, a week later
8. Gestures: the flat in Southwark, continuing on...
9. The Nude Man: the flat in Southwark, two weeks later, evening
10. Shared Bed: the flat in Southwark, morning of next day
11. Measuring/Love Offering: the flat in Southwark, a few days later, midday
12. Fruit, Fairies and Fists: the flat in Southwark, following on...
13. Drunk in a Red Dress: the flat in Southwark, a week later
14. Dreaming in Ink: the flat in Southwark, continuing on...
15. Majnun, Rostam & Sohrab: the flat in Southwark, morning of the next day

CAST (in order of appearance)

Niaz..........................................................SUSAN-JANE HARRISON*
Farhad........................................................JOHNNY MORENO*
Michael.....................................................SIMON VANCE*
Padraic......................................................SOREN SANTOS

*S membres of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 45,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. www.actorsequity.org.
PERFORMER BIOS

SUSAN-JANE HARRISON* (Niaz) trained as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. She is currently an MFA candidate at UC Davis. She has performed in London and regionally throughout the U.K. In the Bay Area, her work has been seen at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, ACT, Aurora Theatre Company, A Travelling Jewish Theater, Woman’s Will and Center REP, where she won a Shellie Award for Best Actress for the role of Eliza in “Pygmalion.” She has taught at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and danced with Akat and Bollywood Groove.

JOHNNY MORENO* (Farhad) was last seen in S.F. Playhouse’s My Fair Lady. Other theater credits include Period of Adjustment also at S.F. Playhouse, On the Waterfront at San Jose Stage Company, Gibraltar with Thick Description, Displaced at Marin Theatre Company, Picasso at the Lapin Agile at Center Repertory Theater, Mary Stuart at the American Conservatory Theater, and Pentecost at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Film credits include Callback (winner of the Chicago Indie Fest for Best Film), Upside Out (with Olympia Dukakis), and I’m Still Here.

SOREN SANTOS (Padraic) is a San Francisco Bay Area native and graduate of the Claire Trevor School of the Arts (Honors in Acting). Soren is thrilled to be working on Today I Live. Having worked previously in Los Angeles, Seattle and the Bay Area, Soren appeared most recently in St. Louis with Counter-Balance Theatre’s world premiere adaptation of Jane Eyre. Soren is a dedicated physical theatre performer and Core Artist with Ragged Wing Ensemble, and he can be seen next in their October production of Within the Wheel. He would like to thank George for his guidance, his family for their support, and Marlene for her love and friendship.

SIMON VANCE* (Michael) Over the past twenty years Simon has worked with many Bay Area companies including Aurora, TheatreWorks, Marin Theatre Company and TheatreFIRST, but has focused his energy over the past decade on audiobooks (recording more than 600 books) becoming one of the top narrators in the business with many awards to his name including six prestigious Audi Awards from the Audio Publishers Association. TV credits include Nash Bridges (CBS) and The Evidence (ABC). His most noteworthy audiobooks include The Millennium Trilogy by Steig Larsson.

CONCEPT ARTIST BIOS

JESSA BRIE BERKNER (Director) is an Adjunct Faculty Member with the California Institute of Integral Studies and Movement Director for Laney College. Berkner studied theater at USC and with the Scuola Internazionale del’ Attore Comico in Italy. She is Founding Director of the Oakland Theatre Arts Initiative, building theater programs in public schools. She wrote, directed and produced the critically acclaimed The Last Night of the Barbery Coast, a play based in the mythical structure of the tarot. As a theater artist in the San Francisco Bay Area, she has performed with A.C.T., Marin Theatre Company, SF Shakes, TheatreWorks, Center Rep, San Jose Stage Co. and the Aurora Theatre, among others. Professional awards include an Emmy (Motion Capture Specialist), Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle, Dean Goodman, and Shellie Best Actress awards. As Theatre Director at Oakland Technical High School, she has created a nationally-awarded winning program which has toured the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. Here, she directed Naomi Iizuka’s Hamlet: Blood in the Brain to sold-out houses. Les Waters (Actors Theatre of Louisville; Berkeley Rep) and Jonathan Moscone (Cal Shakes) mentored Berkner through her MFA candidacy at CIH. jessabrieberkner.com.

DAN CATO WILSON (Sound Designer/Musician) is a recording artist, composer, and sound designer at UC Davis Department of Theatre and Dance. He has very much enjoyed being a part of creating new art and looks forward to future collaborations with other performers.

BRIAN COLLENTINE (Choreographer for “Dreaming in Ink”) is a creative director, dancer and purveyor of organic food. He has been studying, dancing and creating movement scores with Anna Halprin for over twelve years and is a member of her Sea Ranch Collective. He performed a lead role with Ms. Halprin in her seminal piece on death and dying, Intensive Care. In 2009 he performed in and was design director for the Spirit of Place, a site specific, environmental piece by Ms. Halprin at Stern Grove in San Francisco. Currently he is working on a piece with the S.F. Contemporary Music Players for performance at the Yerba Buena Center of the Arts’ 100 year tribute to John Cage. Mr. Collentine’s continuing work is the relationship between design and movement and its influence on the creative process.

TRAVIS KERR (Scenic Consultant/Technical Director) Starting into his second year in the MFA program, Travis is very excited to explore this new play. He has a background in scenic and light design, recently working on Under My Skin at The Pasadena Playhouse, 12th Night at Shakespeare Santa Cruz, and The Death of the Novel at San Jose Repertory Theatre. He would like to express gratitude to Susan-Jane for this fun and exciting exploration and his family and friends for their support and love.

DEE LOREE SWEGER (Costume Design) spent most of her life growing up in the Central Valley. Attending Escalon High School she participated in the Drama Club, then Modesto Junior College, finally graduating Summa Cum Laude from CSU Stanislaus with a B.A. in Technical Theatre. She is currently a second-year MFA student in Dramatic Art here at UC Davis, where her emphasis and true passion is costume design. Upon obtaining her degree, she hopes to give back to her Native American tribe, and the Native American nation as a whole, through her work.

Special Thanks

• Lloyd Trott and the RADA Graduate Reading Series for their ongoing support.
• Chini Saadat, Sajad Salehi, and Fatemeh Sahloieei for their assistance with farsi and ongoing support.
• Nasser Rhamani Nejad for his encouragement and passion for “Shahnameh.”
• Sajad T. O’Maellaigh for his ongoing interest in the play, Gaelic translations/pronunciations and willingness to be engaged.
• Patrick Russell for his feedback and encouragement.
• Hanna Berrigan who directed the processes in England, for her commitment and skillful directing.
• Jessa Brie Berkner for her tremendous encouragement and respectful facilitating.
• Sculptor Vivien Whitaker and her husband David Megginson in Derbyshire, for their ongoing support and standing offer of hospitality.
• Margrit Mondavi for her generosity in setting up the Mondavi Fellowship which has made this iteration possible.
• Professor Bella Merlin, for her personal support and interest.
• Eric Stegall at ITDP.
• The parents of Susan-Jane Harrison, including Margaret Harris, without whose ongoing support and love none of this would be possible.
• Arnoldo Arevalo, Susan-Jane’s husband for his devotion, listening, understanding and looking after the children while she writes.
• Susan-Jane is also indebted to Professor Peter Lichtenfels and Jess Curtis for their teaching of Space Place and Time/Scripting and Scoring, respectively. These classes had a huge impact on the restructure and re-envision of this draft of the play in a short space of time.
The UC Davis Department of Theatre & Dance’s ITDP offers opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff from across the campus community to further research through practical exploration and application. The goal is to expand understanding of creative power, of different kinds of knowledge, especially the embodied, and of communication that offers insight into different cultures and peoples. ITDP encourages cutting edge research and production across fields of practice and in dialogue with the diverse community of Davis and beyond.

Production Staff
Production Manager
Eric Steggall
Technical Director
Daniel Neeland
Facilities Manager/Audio Supervisor
Ned Jacobson
Publicity Director
Janice Bisgaard
Costume Shop Director
Roxanne Flemling
Master Electrician
Michael Hill
Costume Shop Lead/Cutter
Heather Brown
Scene Technician/Properties
Byron Rudrow
Scene Technician/Charge Artist
John Murphy
Company Managers
Avery Lincoln
Stitchers
Erica Kalingking
Stock Assistant
Pete Cocke
Webmaster
Hilary Rhees
Graphic Designers
Nicole Devera
Publicity Assistant
Lisa Gong
Photographers
Yuko Kanai

Faculty
LARRY BÔGAD: Performance Studies
DAVID GRENEK: Choreography
LYNETTE HUNTER: Department Chair, Performance Studies
JOHN IACOVELLI: Scenic Design
PETER LICHTENFELS: Directing, Acting, Performance Studies
BELLA MERLIN: Acting
MAGGIE MORGAN: Costume Design
THOMAS J. MUNN: Lighting Design
JON D. ROSSINI: Performance Studies

COMING SOON

ITDP: Merce Cunningham/John Cage Workshop/Lecture
Taught by Visiting Artist Andrea Weber
Mon, Oct. 8, 4:10-5:50 p.m.
University Club Studio
Open only to UC Davis Students/Free of charge

The Haunt at Wright Hall
A performance-based haunted house and costume dance party.
Thu-Sun, Oct. 25-28 and Tue-Wed, Oct. 30-31
Various locations at Wright Hall
Haunted house: 7:30-10:30 p.m. starting every 15 minutes
Dance party: 7:30-Midnight
Tickets: $15 (or $10 for dance only)
Tickets sold only at Main Theatre, Wright Hall box office before the show

ITDP: Fractalicious!
Produced by Bryan Reynolds & Transversal Theater Company
Wed-Thu, Nov. 5-6, time TBA
Lab A, Wright Hall
Open to the public/Free of charge
Limited seating — first come, first served

ITDP: Nectare
Choreography by Iu-Hui Chua & Christine Germain
Thu-Fri, Nov. 15-16, 8 p.m.
University Club Studio, UC Davis
Open to the public/Free of charge

The Bacchae by Euripides
Directed by Granada Artist-in-Residence Barry McGovern
Translated by Derek Mahon
Thu-Sat, Nov. 29-Dec. 1 and Dec. 6-8, 8 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 2, 2 p.m.
Main Theatre, Wright Hall, UC Davis
General $17/19; Students, Children, Seniors $12/14

ITDP: Dead Man’s Cell Phone
Written by Sarah Ruhl
Directed by Kevin Adamski
Thu-Sun, Dec. 6-9, 8 p.m.
Wyatt Pavilion Theatre, UC Davis
Open to the public/Suggested donations at the door
Limited seating — first come, first served

Tickets/Information: theatredance.ucdavis.edu