

ASIAN AMERICAN Theatre Revue

BENEATH THE BANYAN TREE **THE MAGIC OF INDIA RETURNS TO THE STAGE**

On Wednesday, February 11th, 2004, *Beneath the Banyan Tree* will return to the stage for five performances at the Gene Frankel Theatre located on 24 Bond Street, NYC. This play, an original script based on a concept by Qurrat Kadwani, is an adaptation of folktales from India. The original production ran April-May, 2003 and was a huge success with South Asian as well as American audiences. Four magical folktales are interwoven to create a plot that includes human as well as non-human characters that display the universal themes of love, revenge, greed, power and sacrifice. With ballet choreography, battle scenes that incorporate elements of South Asian dance forms such as bharatnatyam and kathak, and an extremely gifted and talented cast of ten that features widely known Indian folklore characters with a fresh new look, *Beneath the Banyan Tree* is sure to be a visual spectacle that can be enjoyed by children as well as adults.

The producer of this work and actress, Qurrat Kadwani, is a Bombay-born 22-year old who received her BA in theatre from SUNY Geneseo in three years after directing and acting in numerous productions. Of this current project, she states, "South Asians have to constantly assert their space in American theatre. I wanted to come up with a project that is close to me and can help my culture. This play not only challenges stereotypes of beauty, age and race, but also reinforces that Indian folklore is very similar to the Greek mythology that is learned throughout American education: there are universal themes such as morality, life, sadness, and happiness that can promote the Indian culture in a magical, beautiful way."

Beneath the Banyan Tree opens with Raj, who wants to show half-sisters Sukhu and Dukhu a magical tree that can move and speak. The tree, which in many ways represents a vibrant, magical India, has a rich history that aids the orphans in their travels. The production is sponsored by several organizations such as PRINA-NY (Professional Indian Networking Association), VDesi, Mirchi Restaurant and Namaste America who believe in the project and its ability to cross cultural barriers.

Tickets for this event are \$19 and can be reserved by calling Smarttix at

212-868-4444 or online www.smarttix.com. The show runs from February 11-15. Wednesday-Saturday at 8PM, and Sunday at 3PM. Running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes. Visit www.eyeblickentertainment.com for more info.

Cast: Qurrat Kadwani, Kesav Wable, Rachel Wahl, Luca Pierucci, Erwin Falcon, Joan Fishman, Jenny Tibbels, Rainbow Geffner, Phi Nguyen, Pooja Kumar, Dhaval Mehta.

Indian Choreographer: Ishray Hoque

Ballet Choreographer: Rachel Wahl

Light Designer: Raquel Davis

Costume Designer: Antoine Williams

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