Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity
PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PING CHONG + COMPANY

Friday, April 5, and Saturday, April 6 at 7:30 PM
Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity

Written by
Ping Chong and Sara Zatz, with Ryan Conarro

Directed by
Ping Chong

In collaboration with the performers
Ferdous Dehghan
Kadin Herring
Tiffany Yasmin Hosein
Amir Khafagy
Maha Syed

Artistic Team
Production Supervisor: Courtney Golden
Projection Designer: Katherine Freer
Lighting Director: Marika Kent
Projections Supervisor: Brendan Chapin
Lighting Supervisor: Elizabeth M. Stewart
Company Manager: Kristina Varshavskaya
Executive Director, Ping Chong + Company: Bruce Allardice

Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity is part of an ongoing series of community-specific oral history theater works known as the Undesirable Elements series. Begun in 1992 by Ping Chong + Company, each production is made in a specific community, with local participants testifying to their real lives and experiences. The script is based on interviews with the participants who then share their own true stories in the final production. Since 1992, over 60 productions have been made across the United States and abroad. Recent productions have explored themes as far ranging as the disability experience, Native American identity, the experiences of refugees in the U.S., and the experiences of survivors of sexual abuse. Ping Chong + Company has created documentaries, toolkits, training workshops, and arts education programs for communities who wish to use the arts to address social justice issues in their own work.

Beyond Sacred was originally commissioned by LaGuardia Performing Arts Center, where it premiered in April 2015. The premiere production was made possible by a grant from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Building Bridges: Campus Community Engagement Grants Program, which is funded by the Arts Program of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Building Bridges Program, the grant-making arm of the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art. The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art is an extension of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

This production is part of Ping Chong + Company’s Beyond Sacred National Initiative, to use theater and art to foster dialogue and understanding around Muslim identity in the United States. The Beyond Sacred National Initiative is further supported by the Building Bridges Program.

Please silence your cell phones and note that food, drink, and unauthorized photography and recording are prohibited.
About Ferdous Dehqan
“I am very proud to be part of this amazing performance. The main reason I joined this show is that I wanted to give a different image of Muslims to Non-Muslim communities at the time of increasing Islamophobia and when Muslim identity has become the scapegoat of American society. This show and my story humanize Muslims and challenge the common stereotypes that we hold against Muslim identity and Islam as a whole. I hope this performance could create more understanding about diversity and tolerance towards other cultures and backgrounds. I dedicate this show to my family and fellow Muslims who are struggling to find their place in this country.”

About Tiffany Yasmin Hosein
“Because I have been chosen to be part of Ping Chong’s documentary piece and the company has embraced me, I have felt a deep connection to arts and theater. I am studying Speech Theater Arts at York College, I am currently in my junior year, enjoying every bit of it. I am hoping to expand on my experiences by becoming socially active within the theater community. I have an Associates in the Arts Degree in Public Relations Communications. I enjoy traveling, acting and I enjoy listening and making music like everyone else. Being Muslim to me means being true to myself and doing good upon others. I would like to use my skills and talents to give a learning experience and something special to others.”

About Kadin Herring
“My name is Kadin Herring. Surviving a quarter mid-life crisis, I’ve become more forgiving, even fond of my upbringing in a cookie cutter American suburb. Seeing that I’ve encountered so many experiences outside my own background makes me think that was supposed to be the American experience. As a child, I always loved my name, my small mole on my cheek, novels and talking. Not much has changed since my early days for I still love my name and my mole; I edit stories for The New York Times and love my therapy sessions.”

About Amir Khafagy
“It’s important for me to be a part of this show because it challenges the media narrative and the stereotypes against Muslims in the United States. Doing the show has allowed me to connect with a variety of different audiences of eclectic backgrounds, and allows me to express myself in a way that I otherwise wouldn’t be able to. This production has added so much joy and meaning to my life.”

About Maha Syed
“I am a human rights and gender equity advocate in New York City, continuing my lifelong efforts to destroy the patriarchy. I am excited to share my story with you and hope you take away something from our performance. I would like to dedicate this performance to my parents who have always allowed me the freedom to form and manipulate my own identity and perceptions of culture and faith. I have done nothing but present them with challenges and received only love in return. And thank you to bell hooks.”
About Ping Chong + Company

Ping Chong + Company produces theatrical works addressing the important cultural and civic issues of our
times, striving to reach the widest audiences with the greatest level of artistic innovation and social integrity.
The New York City-based company was founded in 1975 by leading theatrical innovator Ping Chong with a
mission to create works of theater and art that explore the intersections of race, culture, history, art, media and
technology in the modern world. Today, Ping Chong + Company produces original works by a close-knit
ensemble of affiliated artists, under the artistic leadership of Ping Chong. Productions range from intimate oral
history projects to grand scale cinematic multidisciplinary productions featuring puppets, performers, and full
music and projection scores. The art reveals beauty, precision, and a commitment to social justice. For more
information about Ping Chong + Company, visit www.pingchong.org

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Communications Group, and many generous individual donors.

Ping Chong + Company Staff:
Ping Chong, Artistic Director
Bruce Allardice, Executive Director
Sara Zatz, Associate Director
Ryan Conarro, Artistic Collaborator in Residence | Community Projects Associate
Jane Jung, Director of Operations and Planning
Kristina Varshavskaya, Company Manager
Christina Bixland, Education Director
Chaesong Kim, Communications Associate

About Asia Society Texas Center

With 13 locations throughout the world, Asia Society is the leading educational organization promoting mutual
understanding and strengthening partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the
West. Asia Society Texas Center executes the global mission with a local focus, enriching and engaging the vast
diversity of Houston through innovative, relevant programs in arts and culture, business and policy, education,
and community outreach.

About the Muslim Series

Through a multidisciplinary approach that utilizes Asia Society’s breadth of programming opportunities, this
series explores the artistic talents and stories of American Muslims to inspire our community to better
understand one another.
Asia Society hosts today's leading voices, providing commentary on events in news, society, and culture. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect Asia Society views.