

**For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe, BRAVA Marketing Associate Phone: (415) 641-7657 x8

Fax: (866) 641-7684

Email: edris@brava.org

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Brava! For Women in the Arts

& RasaNova Theater  
present

# **Burqavaganza**

**WHO:** Brava! For Women in the Arts, RasaNova Theater

**WHAT:** Burqavaganza by **Shahid Nadeem**, Directed by **Vidhu Singh**

**WHERE:** Brava Theater Center, 2781-24th Street at York, San Francisco, CA 94110

**WHEN:** May 16, 2013 – June 2, 2013, Thurs, Fri, Sat at 8 PM, Sun 3 PM\*

\*except Sunday May 26 7 PM show

**TICKETS:** \$15

**Burqavaganza** - a love story in the time of jihad - is a sassy, provocative Bollywood extravaganza, written by Pakistan's most prolific and progressive playwright, **Shahid Nadeem**, co-founder of Ajoka Theatre in Lahore, Pakistan. Burqavaganza uses the burqa as a metaphor for a society that thrives on double standards and covering up the truth. The entire cast, male and female, wears a burqa. Burqavaganza goes toe to toe with the long standing obsession with the burqa, face-veil, niqab, hijab, parda - and offers a side-splitting critique on rising fundamentalism, political corruption, and the War on Terror. Banned in Pakistan by the National Arts Council in 2010, Burqavaganza is a ground breaking political satire that provokes the audience to rethink and lift the veil of prejudice, outdated values, and hypocrisy within all societies. Ajoka Theatre continues to perform the play in defiance of the ban.

## **ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

BRAVA Artist-in-Residence, Vidhu Singh is a San Francisco based theater director, dramaturge and scholar. She has a Master's degree in Dramatic Art from the University of California at Santa Barbara with a Western theater focus and a doctorate in Asian theater from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. During her doctoral research, Vidhu investigated a historic Indian theater experiment of the 1990s. Ten 'Theatre Laboratory Network' companies received substantial funding to create cutting-edge theater in their regions and develop actor-training methodologies that blended Indian and Western actor-training techniques. Vidhu became part of a nation-wide experiment with theater companies working in a multiplicity of languages, where she had the privilege of documenting the work of several pioneering theater directors. She has been the Managing Director of the Asian American Theater Company and taught theater at Foothill College, where she developed a multicultural theatre studies curriculum that focused on engaging students from at-risk, under-served communities in the performing arts. A graduate of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, Vidhu belongs to an international theater directors collective, World Wide Lab, which did its inaugural residency at the Watermill Center in October 2011 followed by a second residency at the Irondale Center in August 2012. World Wide Lab will have their third residency at the Irondale Center in August 2013. As a professional director, Vidhu has explored provocative contemporary plays in a variety of theatrical styles. In 2004, she founded RasaNova Theater to produce bold new plays from across the globe including South Asia and its diaspora. Her recent production, *Dancing on Glass* by Ram Ganesh Kamatham, was selected for the National Asian American Theater Festival in June 2011. Vidhu has played a key role in nurturing South Asian theater in the Bay Area.

## **ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

Shahid Nadeem, the founder and Executive Director of Ajoka Theatre and Pakistan's leading playwright, is known for his bold and politically charged plays. He has written over 40 plays and adapted several plays which have been performed all over Pakistan and quite widely in India as well. Seven collections of his plays have been published in Urdu and Punjabi and six collections in Gurmukhi Punjabi in India. A selection of his plays (in English translation) was published by Oxford University Press Pakistan in 2008. Shahid was awarded the President of Pakistan's Pride of Performance award for literature in 2009. He was also awarded a fellowship by Getty Research Institute/Pen International as Feuchtwanger International Writer in 2001. During his stay in Los Angeles in 2001, some of his plays were given staged readings and he lectured at various U.S. universities. Shahid is also a renowned theater and television director. He has directed many popular TV drama serials and stage plays including "Burqavaganza", "Hotel Mohenjo Daro", "Dara" and "Destination USA/Amrika Chalo". His telefilm "An Act of Terror" was nominated for Scottish BAFTA and screened at London's Asian Film Festival in 2009. His

documentary on Bishop John Joseph "A Sun Sets In" was selected by the South Asian Film Festival for worldwide screening.

He has been a prisoner of conscience in Pakistan on three occasions. He has worked for Amnesty International as its international campaign coordinator and communications officer in London and Hong Kong. He is also a freelance journalist and contributes cultural columns for different Pakistani newspapers. In May 2012, Shahid received the Otto Award for Political Theatre bestowed on Ajoka Theatre at a ceremony held at New York's Castillo Theatre.

### **BRAVA! FOR WOMEN IN THE ARTS**

Brava! For Women in the Arts celebrates its 26th year as a professional arts organization dedicated to cultivating the artistic expression of women, youth, LGBT, people of color and other unheard voices through the ownership and operation of Brava Theater Center. BRAVA's producing history includes award-winning premieres by Diana Son, Eve Ensler, Debbie Swisher, Reno, Cherylene Lee, Suzan-Lori Parks, Culture Clash, Joan Holden, Anne Galjour, Elizabeth Summers, Kate Rigg, Dan Guerrero, and Mabou Mines, as well as works by internationally known playwrights like Jesusa Rodriguez and Liliana Felipe of Mexico, Jorge Drexler of Uruguay, and Ojos de Brujo and Ismael Serrano of Spain. BRAVA's current artistic programming includes traditional and contemporary music festivals, a variety of film festivals, contemporary and experimental theatrical productions, international comedy shows, lectures and professional dance productions - making BRAVA one of the most eclectic and multi-faceted arts venues in the Bay Area. BRAVA's resident youth programs include the long standing SF Running crew which pairs youth with professional mentors and hands on opportunities for technical theatre training; Cuicacalli Escuela de Danza, traditional and contemporary dance training for youth, Famooly Productions Salsa Band workshops and Loco Bloco dance and drum ensemble. Brava is committed to providing affordable space for artistic development and presentation and quality professional arts training for underserved youth in the San Francisco community.

### **RASANOVA THEATER COMPANY**

Vidhu Singh founded RasaNova Theater in 2004 to produce bold new plays from South Asia and its diaspora, the United States and other world theater traditions. Previous RasaNova productions include The Rebel Courtesan, Bhopal, and On a Muggy Night in Mumbai. Most recently, RasaNova produced Dancing On Glass, by Ram Ganesh Kamatham, first produced at CounterPULSE in San Francisco and later selected for inclusion in Los Angeles at the National Asian American Theater Festival.